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D O Thomas

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Editorial: D O Thomas

D O Thomas retired in 1996 from editing this journal. If we include its pre-cursor, *The Price-Priestley Newsletter*, 'DO', as he is affectionately known, was not only instrumental in founding the newsletter and the journal, but was an editor of both for twenty years. They were, it is true, collaborative efforts, but the initiatives came from him. We both felt that Rational Dissent, the traditions which it embodied and its relationship with the wider world of the Enlightenment had received insufficient treatment in mainstream journals. Our aim was not to create a specialist journal to publish work which might not have been considered by established journals, although our journal would certainly do that. It was to create a journal which would stand in its own right alongside mainstream journals and raise the profile of its subject matter. We believe that we have achieved that. It is gratifying to find *E&D* abbreviated alongside the likes of *JHI*, *EHR* and *BJECS* in major monographs and syntheses. Yet it was DO who took the necessary action to realise our vision, and naturally I was happy to give what assistance I could. This festschrift, however, is not just to recognise his foundational role for the journal, it is also in recognition of his major contribution to the subject through his work on Richard Price and Rational Dissent and to say 'thank you' for the inspiration, assistance and hospitality he has given to countless scholars over a long career.

David Thomas, 'DO', was born and brought up in Rhuthun in Denbighshire, North Wales. He was a pupil at Denbigh Grammar School but did not complete his 'A' levels. At the age of seventeen he was offered a job in the Midland Bank and, in view of the limited employment opportunities at the time, decided to accept it. Later he found his training in the bank extremely useful in understanding the complexities of Richard Price's work on annuities and reversionary payments. In 1943, after two years in the bank, he joined the RAF. He served until 1946 during which time he was stationed for most of the time in the Middle East including one and a half years in Iraq. At the end of his service he took advantage of a scheme for demobilizing into University. He went to the University College of Wales, Bangor, where he studied

philosophy. At this time his studies were impeded by the discovery that he had spondylitis which made movement slow and difficult. He has suffered from the condition and related eye problems ever since, but he never complains about it. On one notable occasion in recent years, I visited him not long after he had taken delivery of a scanner which magnified texts and helped him to compensate for deteriorating sight. I imagine that concentrated reading can become possible after one gains a facility in using it, but at any given moment there are relatively few magnified words on the screen. This did not deter DO; with its assistance he was already reading Gibbon's *Decline and Fall.*

After completing his degree in philosophy, DO went on to study the British idealists for his MA. The subject was an unfashionable one at the time, and his choice was an early indication of his independence of mind and unwillingness to allow his work to be shaped by current philosophical or scholarly trends. On completing his MA, he moved from Bangor to London where, for his PhD, he studied the political philosophy of Richard Price under the supervision of H B Acton. DO's choice of subject had been influenced by the publication in 1948 of Price's *A review of the principal questions in morals*, edited by D D Raphael. It proved a happy decision for Richard Price became his life's work. The PhD was awarded in 1956 but the year before he was appointed tutor in philosophy and psychology at Coleg Harlech, an institution which provides education for 'mature students', some of whom subsequently go on to university. It was too not long, however, before DO was offered a lectureship in philosophy at the University College of Wales, Aberystywth. He took up the appointment in January 1960 and spent the rest of his academic career at Aberystwyth, becoming a Reader in Philosophy before he took early retirement in 1983. It was at Aberystwyth that DO met his wife, Beryl, who is a medical doctor. Her forensic skill led her to crack Price's shorthand and enabled them to publish Price's shorthand journal. They have one daughter, Janet, who after a spell working for publishers in London, now has her own office in Aberystwyth.

During his years teaching at Aberystwyth, DO made a major contribution to academic life, serving on important Faculty

Committees and as a Non-Professorial Staff representative on the College Senate. Within the Philosophy Department he proved to be a popular lecturer. His courses in moral and political philosophy attracted students across the faculties. His teaching centred on key texts. He would dissect them with great skill, introducing students to difficult concepts, posing them a series of questions, explaining the possible alternative answers, and, where appropriate, drawing on contemporary issues. He has often observed that students may remember only one thing from each lecture they attend and that making lectures too complex or overburdened with factual detail makes them less memorable. He certainly followed his own counsel, for students would leave his lectures arguing over his questions and repair to the local cafés to continue the argument.

DO's clarity of exposition needs no special pleading since he has demonstrated it time and again in print. Bernard Peach's account of their collaboration shows that it was informed by his formidable scholarship and scrupulous attention to detail. His practices are derived from scholarly humility, awareness of human fallibility and his generous spirit. When *The Price-Priestley Newsletter* began, he made it an axiom that all citations and quotations which are accessible should be checked. That remains our practice to this day. While it has strengthened the scholarly reliability of the journal, it has also enhanced its reputation and won the gratitude of many contributors. The final observation I wish to make about DO's work is that he has an almost unique capacity to combine history, history of ideas and philosophy. In his study of Richard Price, we are presented with a finely researched and authoritative historical account of Price and his age. We are also introduced to the contemporary meaning of key concepts, as, for example, in his discussion of Price's understanding of notions of conscience, candour, liberty, or love of country; more than that, we are drawn into philosophical discussion of the nature of moral choice, of political freedom and obligation, and of patriotism. These are presented with fine intellectual clarity in a limpid prose in which the artifice is concealed. None the less, when one reads DO one knows that one's intellectual powers are going to being tested and that one's moral personality may be subjected to a few awkward questions. This is quite intentional. While he is perfectly

aware of the danger of taking texts out of context and of constructing simplistic arguments across the divide of history, DO has never been afraid to draw attention to the values of Rational Dissent and to recommend their consideration for citizens today. Since his retirement, he has continued to be a productive scholar, as the bibliography compiled by James Dybikowski demonstrates. At the same time he has lived the life of an active citizen, not only through the political participation which Price recommended, but also through voluntary charitable work for the Alzheimer's Society and for Crossroads which provides support for carers looking after the chronically ill.

DO has identified Rational Dissenting principles as, 'the need to encourage men to act in accordance with their consciences, the need to keep consciences fully informed, and the need to encourage men to accept responsibility not only for their own welfare but also for the well-being of their community.' In his teaching, his writing and work for others, he has shown that it is possible to live by these high ideals and that they remain relevant to the needs of our own age. We hope that he will accept this festschrift in heartfelt appreciation of his life and work.

MHF

D O Thomas: An Appreciation

W Bernard Peach

DO and Beryl Thomas met my wife, Amby and me, late at night on Friday 16 July, 1982, as we debarked from a bus in Aberystwyth. We were scheduled to travel by train, but the railway strike put us on a bus from London to Cheltenham, much delayed as the bus lines did a remarkable job of accommodating the discommoded train passengers. Our bus in fact provided a delightful trip as it went hither and thither through the countryside from Cheltenham to Aberystwyth, modifying its regularly scheduled route.

DO and Beryl gave us a delicious supper and a comfortable bed that was most welcome after thirty hours of no sleep. They had provided an entire floor of 'Orlandon', their attractive town house at 32 North Parade, and made every arrangement for our comfort during an extended visit of two weeks; all of this with a natural ease and friendliness that made us feel they did not feel they were making any sacrifice, although of course they were.

I had brought with me from the Duke University Press three copies of the galleys of the first volume of the *Correspondence of Richard Price* that had been produced over the previous three years from the manuscript originally prepared by DO over many more years. During the next two weeks we worked long hours proof-reading these galleys and dealing with other issues concerning the projected second and third volumes.

I was prepared to work on the galleys straight through and thought this would be necessary to finish. Fortunately DO tempered that daunting prospect with a flexibility that made the work not only more enjoyable but over a two week period undoubtedly more efficient. First, he suggested, we should make a general survey of everything we needed to do. Careful proof reading, not only line by line but word by word and sometimes letter by letter, was the main task but there were other things as well, such as comparison of our corrections with those of the proof readers at the Duke University Press, transferring our marks to their copy, anticipating problems in subsequent volumes, checking questionable readings against micro-film copies and a dozen other things.

After this survey DO made an estimate of what we needed to accomplish each day in order to finish with some time left for problems we had not anticipated, of which we had many, and we were underway. DO had also included in his estimate the amount of *free* time needed in order to proceed with this close and demanding work in a way that kept it from becoming tedious and consequently inefficient.

A typical day had us at about 9.00 a.m. at his large desk in his spacious study side by side with our rulers, inching our way down each galley sheet; tea about 11.00 and back at the desk until lunch about 1.00 p.m. We would often take a walk along the terraces and promenade after lunch and get back to the desk until afternoon tea, followed by more work at the desk until time for sherry and dinner with Amby and Beryl. After dinner we usually worked until 11.00 or 12.00 before calling it a day.

Several days on this schedule would often earn some additional free time. On one occasion Beryl drove us south to New Quay to visit her parents who lived in a bungalow on a cliff with a magnificent view of the Cardiganshire coast. On another, we drove east up the Rheidol Valley to Devils Bridge. The others waited while I climbed down and up five hundred or so steps beside the beautiful waterfall and through the luxuriant foliage finding a new scene worth a picture at nearly every step. Another free afternoon found us at one on DO's favorite places, on the sand dunes at the estuary where the Dovey empties into Cardigan Bay.

These were all delightful and scenic trips which Amby and I thoroughly enjoyed. Furthermore, the distances were short enough that DO and I could still get a substantial amount of work done in the mornings and evenings. In addition to these side trips, the walks along the Prom, up to the National Library, and around Aberystwyth were an essential part of DO's plan to keep us from going stale at our work.

On one of our walks up to the National Library we experienced the interesting variation of picking our way through piles of shards of glass bottles on a stretch of Penglais Road that had also become aromatically attractive to anyone fond of beer. A large truck with a large load of beer had gone out of control coming down the hill,

scattering its load along the street, smashing into cars and store fronts before coming to rest. Fortunately no one was hurt.

The whole fortnight was a paradigm of a combination, more accurately a synthesis, of work and pleasure. In fact because of DO's planning, the work itself, not becoming tedious, was a pleasure. Volume I of *The correspondence of Richard Price* was published the following year. Volume II followed in 1991 and Volume III in 1994, both of them much aided by various discussions in this period of two weeks.

We could not persuade DO and Beryl to return the favor of a visit with us in the United States so while the second volume languished at the press DO continued to contribute aid by correspondence to his less informed and less experienced co-editor. Indeed, if *The correspondence of W Bernard Peach and D O Thomas* (subtitled *Regarding the correspondence of Richard Price*) were ever to be published it would easily make a matching three volumes, most of which would consist of DO's help to me. He was not only extraordinarily patient but extraordinarily full and clear in the help provided. He saved me from various infelicities, some outright errors; and of course it was a pleasure to profit from the depth and extent of his knowledge of Richard Price and his philosophical, theological, historical, scientific, economic, social and cultural background.

I have tried to express my appreciation for his extensive professional help in the preface to volume III. Here I hope to have gone further in the expression of that appreciation and to have added appreciation of a more personal nature as well. To borrow from Joseph Priestley on Richard Price, in real hospitality I question whether Dr. Thomas ever had a superior.

W Bernard Peach
Durham, North Carolina

SMITH AND BENTHAM ON JURISPRUDENCE: ENGLISH UTILITARIANISM IN CONTRAST WITH THE SCOTTISH ENLIGHTENMENT

Yoshio Nagai

Smith and Bentham on fiction

The original or social contract was regarded not only by David Hume but also by Jeremy Bentham as a fiction. But there were, however, many other fictions which Hume and other Scottish philosophers might have found useful but which Bentham rejected entirely. Adam Smith believed that the fictions in English Common Law were not always vicious and could even be regarded as admirable for reasons other than those adduced by Sir William Blackstone. For instance, the circumstance that the different courts in England were originally principally supported by fees led them to draw to themselves as many suits as possible. Smith noted,

> The court of King's Bench, instituted for the trials of criminal causes only, took cognizance of civil suits; the plaintiff pretending that the defendant, in not doing him justice, had been guilty of some trespass or misdemeanour. The Court of the Exchequer, instituted for the levying of the king's revenue, and for enforcing the payment of such debts only as were due to the king, took cognizance of all other contract debts, the plaintiff alleging that he could not pay the king, because the defendant would not pay him. In consequence of such fictions, it came, in many cases, to depend altogether upon the parties before what court they could chose to have their cause tried; and each court endeavoured, by superior dispatch and impartiality, to draw to itself as many cause as it could. The present admirable constitution of the courts of justice in England was, perhaps, originally in a great measure, formed by this emulation.... [1]

As can be seen, for Smith, fictions were tools for the judges to give 'the speediest and most effectual remedy' to the aggrieved parties.

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[1] Adam Smith, *The wealth of nations* (1776)), V, I, b.21. The edition used is the Glasgow edition, gen eds R H Campbell and A S Skinner, textual ed. W B Todd (Oxford, 1976).

Here we must remember that it was not the usefulness of fictions, but the admirable results of free competition among the different courts that Smith wanted to stress.[2] This characteristically defines the difference between Smith and Bentham, both of whom published their respective books in 1776, for one his last book, for the other his first.[3]

The wealth of nations is full of observations in terms of sociology of knowledge. For instance, Smith explained the corruption of what he described as 'law language' as follows. 'It has been the custom in modern Europe to regulate, upon most occasions, the payment of the attorneys and clerks of the court, according to the number of pages which they had occasion to write;... In order to increase their payments, the attorneys and clerks have continued to multiply words beyond all necessity, to the corruption of the law language of, I believe, every court of justice in Europe.'[4] Then he went on to point out that the like temptation gave birth to the like corruption of legal proceedings.

Bentham endeavoured to select the legal terminology suitable for expressing the possible strictest meanings, and sometimes when he failed to do so, even invented words. But he was not interested in explaining how and why the abuses of 'law language' arose. For Smith what had emerged through past custom and practice, could be explained in terms of his economic theories such as the effect or lack of free competition. For Bentham,

> Common law, as it styles itself in England, judiciary law, as it might more aptly be styled every where, that fictitious composition which has no known person for its author, no known assemblage of words for its substance, forms every

[2] Another example of English legal fictions is 'the artificial and fictitious writ of ejectment, the most effectual remedy for an unjuster outer or dispossession of land'. *Wealth of nations*, V, I, b.21.

[3] Bentham's earliest work, *A fragment on government* (1776) was a fragment of a much longer work, an extensive critique of Sir William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the laws of England.* This remained in manuscript until the last century and was published in 1928 as *A Comment on Blackstone's Commentaries.* Bentham's prime target was Blackstone's defence of tradition in law.

[4] *Wealth of nations*, V, i, b,22.

> where the main body of the legal fabric.... Shreds and scraps of real law, stuck on upon that imaginary ground, compose the furniture of every national code ... he who ... wants an example of a complete body of law to refer to, must begin with making one.[5]

Smith and Bentham on morality

It may be said that enquiries into the 'law of government' in eighteenth-century Britain started with a statement of Bernard Mandeville and ended with Smith's abortive work on jurisprudence, which was to follow *Wealth of nations.* This great achievement in the history of economics was obviously part of Smith's project on jurisprudence. In his preface to *The fable of the bees* (1714), Mandeville declared that, 'Laws and government are to the political bodies of civil societies, what the vital spirits and life itself are to the natural bodies of animated creatures.' He never went further than this statement. Smith tackled the tasks that Mandeville left untouched. For him, 'jurisprudence is the theory of the general principles of law and government'. It was this jurisprudence that Smith pursued or tried to construct as his sole object. Law itself, he went on to say, had 'four great objects' which were 'Justice, Police, Revenue and Arms.'

Smith can be said to have held ideas of justice in common with Bentham. For Smith the object of justice is security from injury, and it is the foundation of civil government.'[6] Bentham argued in

[5] *An introduction to the principles of morals and legislation* (1789; 2 vols., London, 1823) I, pref. xiii-xiv. The sentence following that cited is also of importance. 'Of this logic of the will, the science of law, considered in respect of its form, is the most considerable branch, – the most important application. It is to the art of legislation, what the science of anatomy is to the art of medicine: with this difference that the subject of it is what the artist has to work with, instead of what he has to operate upon.' Furthermore, I would like to draw attention to the fact that Bentham needed two systems for the making of law, 'parallel and connected systems, running on together, the one of legislative provisions, the other of political reasons, each offering the other correction and support.' Ibid., xv.

[6] This is taken from the notes of his lectures on jurisprudence. These student notes were eventually edited and published by E Cannan in 1896

the same way in relation to liberty. However, they differed in many ideas. Smith's idea of jurisprudence was natural, Bentham's was utilitarian. To take, for example, punishment, Smith founded it on resentment:

> Injury naturally excites the resentment of the spectator, and the punishment of the offender is reasonable as far as the indifferent spectator can go along with it. This is the natural measure of punishment. It is to be observed that our first approbation of punishment is not founded upon regard to public utility, which is commonly taken to be the foundation of it. It is our sympathy with the resentment of the sufferers that is the real principle.[7]

Smith took the example of exporting wool, which was then a capital crime, noting that 'the exportation of wool is *naturally* no crime'[my ital]. Accepting that people generally were convinced that the practice was detrimental to the national economy, and was, in other words, contrary to public utility, Smith argued that 'no injury, no evidence, could be got against the offenders.' Bentham could not have known this statement of Smith which had yet to be published,[8] but it indicates his prior opposition to a theory of punishment which would become the core of Bentham's legal studies. However, Bentham may have known the *Theory of moral sentiments,* and he stated clearly his criticism of the sympathy

with the title of *Lectures on Justice, Police, Revenue and Arms*. A modern edition, that used here, is *Lectures on jurisprudence* ed. R L Meek, D D Raphael & P G Stein (Oxford, 1978). This work contains two sets of student notes, the one (A) dated 1762-63, and the other (B) 1766, of Smith's lectures on jurisprudence at Glasgow University, plus an early draft of part of the *Wealth of nations* and two fragments on the division of labour. The reference here is to (B), 5; cf. (B) 1.

[7] *Lectures on jurisprudence,* (B), 181-2; cf. (A), ii, 88-94. It should be noted that punishment, according to Smith, is not always proportionate to the crime. 'The punishment which is commonly inflicted on theft is certainly not at all proportional to the crime. It is greatly too severe, and such as the resentment of the injured persons would not require.' Ibid. (A), ii,149; cf. (A)147-8.) Smith did not intend to make resentment the sole and final determinant of punishment. It can be said of Bentham that he tried to clarify and complete Smith's ambiguous theory of punishment.

[8] See note 6.

theory of morals in his *An introduction to the principles of morals and legislation* (ch.1, 11-18).

> What one expects to find in a principle is something that points out some external consideration, as a means of warranting and guiding internal sentiments of approbation and disapprobation, which does neither more nor less than hold up each of these sentiments as a ground and standard for itself.[9]

In addition to this, Bentham found fault with the principle of sympathy and antipathy for its assertion, 'if you hate much, punish much, if you hate little, punish little. Punish as you hate.'[10]

Bentham, however, failed to appreciate the role of the impartial spectator in Smith's moral theory. He therefore branded the principle of sympathy and antipathy, in one instance, as the principle of caprice, and in another, the phantastic principle.[11] Here we can clearly see Bentham's position in relation to Smith. It is true that if we look at their roles in Lord Shelburne's circle, Smith seems to us a practical policy adviser or member of a think tank, while Bentham appears as a patronized philosopher, yet in general Smith was an analyser and philosopher, and Bentham was a practical law reformer. And in so far as Smith's position rested on natural jurisprudence, in the way that his system of political economy simply and obviously rested on that of natural liberty, Smith was, broadly speaking, on the side of Blackstone, and therefore could not escape from being a victim of Bentham's criticism. Smith's quest was to provide the legislator with a science of legislation, that is, a science which would provide the foundation on which policies and arts of the legislature and of the executive could be based, or the principles by means of which the existing customs and institutions were given their *raison d'être*. The results of his 'toil and trouble', the *Theory of moral sentiments* and *The wealth of nations* represent the peaks of the Scottish Enlightenment, and superseded the work of his master, Francis Hutcheson.

[9] *IPML*, ch.II, xiii.

[10] *IPML*, ch.II, xiii.

[11] *IPML*, ch.II, note 11, first printed in January, 1789.

Nevertheless, according to Bentham, the principle of sympathy and antipathy did, in reality, not differ so much from his own. He wrote,

> It is manifest that the dictates of this principle (i.e. that of sympathy and antipathy) will frequently coincide with those of utility, though perhaps without intending any such effect. Probably more frequently than not: and hence it is that the business of penal justice is carried upon that sort of tolerable footing upon which we see it carried on in common at this day. For what more natural or more general ground of hatred to a practice can there be, than the mischievousness of such practice? What all men are exposed to suffer by, all men will be disposed to hate.[12]

Thus Bentham accepted existing customs and institutions for an entirely different reason than Smith, that is, one derived from the principle of utility. This principle required 'some external consideration'[13] which in the system of sympathy and antipathy would be provided by the impartial spectator. Yet Bentham never mentioned the idea of the impartial spectator. For Smith, unreasonable things such as some of the fictions were not condemned in so far as they brought with them some benefits. In contrast, Bentham aimed to create an entirely rational system and condemned all unreasonable things. I am of the opinion that it was through this change of mode of thinking that Scottish Enlightenment philosophy was replaced by English Utilitarianism. The science of a legislator became the art of a legislator, and, in Bentham's later thought, the legislator was the people.

Natural and utilitarian jurisprudence

> English law was ... formed into a system before the discovery of Justinian's Pandects; and its courts established and their method pretty much fixed, before the other courts in Europe were instituted, or the civil or cannon law came to be of any great weight. It is for this reason that it borrows less from those laws than the law of any other nations in Europe: and is for that reason more deserving of attention of

[12] *IPML*, ch.II, xv.

[13] *IPML*, ch.I, xii.

> a speculative man than any other, as being formed on the naturall (sic) sentiments of mankind.[14]

This historical estimate of English law by Smith is connected with his approbation of judge-made law. He was of the opinion that judge-made law was less liable to be guided by political and religious objectives than statute law. Smith even asserted that 'common law ... is found to be much more equitable than that which is founded on Statute only, for the same reason as what is founded on practice and experience must be better adapted to particular cases than that which is derived from theory only.'[15] Here again we find Smith anticipating criticism of Bentham. It seems likely that Smith paid less attention than Bentham to the corrupt customs attending the fictions and the vicious caprice of the common law. Bentham was more familiar than Smith with the absurd world of lawyers, and it was therefore natural that he led the counter-attack on natural law theories. Yet it should never be forgotten that the happiness and welfare of nations was their common wish. Smith wrote in the *Theory of moral sentiments*:

> Wisdom of every state or commonwealth endeavours, as well as it can, to employ the force of the society to restrain those who are subject to its authority from hurting or disturbing the happiness of one another. The rules that it establishes for this purpose constitute the civil and criminal of each particular state or country.

Bentham would have never disagreed with this statement. In particular, Bentham would have greatly approved of the following, with the exception of the closing words.

> The principles, upon which these rules either are, or ought, to be founded, are the subject of a particular science, of all sciences by far the most important, but hitherto, perhaps, the least cultivated, that of natural jurisprudence.[16]

This must remind Bentham scholars of the first several paragraphs of *A fragment on government* (1776),

[14] *Lectures on jurisprudence*, (A), ii, 74-5.

[15] *Lectures on rhetoric and belles lettres*, ed. J C Bryce (Oxford, 1983), ii, 200.

[16] *Theory of moral sentiments*, VI, ii, intro., 2.

> Correspondent to *discovery* and *improvement* in the natural world, is *reformation* in the moral;... perhaps among such observations as would be best calculated to serve as grounds for reformation, are some which, being observations of matters of fact hitherto either incompletely noticed, or not at all would, when produced, appear capable of bearing the name of discoveries; with so little method and precision have the consequences of this fundamental axioms, *it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong*, been as yet developped (sic).

Here natural jurisprudence together with natural theology have been eclipsed. Utilitarian jurisprudence was founded on the 'pain and pleasure' principle. The people were subject to no authority other than the laws of nature, understood in a secular sense. Once we add to utilitarian jurisprudence, the principle of population by Malthus and the law of diminishing returns (i.e. the law of rent) by Ricardo, then we have the backbone of the new generation of English (not Scottish) Classical Economics.

Science and the art of legislation

The essential difference between Smith and Bentham lies in that the one had no interest in codification, whereas the other had not other interest than that. Smith's lifetime interest was to construct 'the theory of the general principles of law and government',[17] which was originally proposed by Mandeville at the beginning of the century. That 'theory of general principles' was, of course, a science – Smith called it the 'science of a legislator', while codification, belonged, as Bentham said, to an art, which Smith held in low repute. He remarked of it with some contempt, as 'the skill of that insidious and crafty animal, vulgarly called a statesman or politician, whose councils are direct by the momentary fluctuations of affairs'.[18] He did of course believe that there must be a real legislator whose work would assisted by his jurisprudential science.

At the outset of his study of jurisprudence, Smith made clear the requisite qualities for the jurists,

[17] *Lectures on jurisprudence* (B), 5.

[18] *Wealth of nations* (1776), IV, ii, 39.

> Those who write upon the principles of jurisprudence, consider only what the person to whom the obligation is due, ought to think himself entitled to exact by force; what every impartial spectator would approve of him for exacting, or what a judge or arbiter, to whom he had submitted his case, and who had undertaken to do him justice, ought to oblige the other person to suffer or to perform.[19]

Here we see that there are, as far as Smith's suggestion refers to legal obligation, both the common ground of Smith and Bentham, and the different approaches between them. And Smith stressed that science has not been so much developed, and added 'the rules which it [state or commonwealth] establishes for this purpose, constitute the civil and criminal law of each particular state or country. The principles upon which those rules either are, or ought to be founded, are the subjects of a particular science, of all sciences by far the most important, but hitherto, perhaps the least cultivated, that of natural jurisprudence'.[20] Bentham could claim a similar pioneering status for his own work on legislation.

Soon after Smith published his *Theory of moral sentiments* in 1759, which we should remember set out a moral theory as the foundation for his jurisprudence, he turned to consider the principles of jurisprudence. From student notes of his lectures on jurisprudence taken in 1762-3, we know that he had already defined the objects and scope of his jurisprudence. It began with the following passage:

> Jurisprudence is the theory of the rules by which civil government ought to be directed.... We will find that there are four things which will be the design of every government: 1st The first and chief design of every system of government is to maintain justice;... When this end ... is secured, the government will next be desirous of promoting the opulence of the state. This produces what we call police.[21]

[19] *Theory of moral sentiments* (1759), II, iv, 8. Smith distinguished these requisite qualities from those of casuist.

[20] *Theory of moral sentiments*, VI, ii, intro. 2.

[21] *Lectures on jurisprudence*, (A), i, 1.

The object of 'justice' was 'to give each one the secure and peaceable possession of his own property'. In treating of moral justice in his *Theory of moral sentiments*, Smith sought to provide a moral basis for his theory of justice. He then went on to discuss the nature of police, which had much broader connotations in the eighteenth century than today. According to Smith, police concerned the prosperity of the nation. 'Whatever regulations are made with respect to trade, commerce, agriculture, manufactures of the country are considered as belonging to the police'. In addition to these economic activities, police included (1) the cleanness, (2) security and (3) cheapness of provisions, the last of which might be included within the economic activities. Smith then proceeded to the third and fourth designs of government, the revenue and plans of peace and war. It was a framework of thinking which he retained, with some revisions, up to his death.

In the notes taken from his lectures on justice in 1766, we find Smith arguing that 'the four great objects of law are Justice, Police, Revenue and Arms [including the Laws of Nations]', the last three forming the seeds of his political economy.[22] Had he not concentrated on the study of the theory of these four (or five) dimensions of justice and had entered instead into their codification, his political economy would never have come into being. And as his jurisprudence was, as he himself called it, natural jurisprudence, so his political economy, as part of it, was properly to be called natural political economy, which he himself called 'the obvious and simple system of natural liberty'.[23] Before going on to discuss his political economy, I shall therefore briefly discuss his theory of justice.

Justice and natural liberty

> There is, however, another virtue, of which the observance is not left to the freedom of our wills, which may be extorted by force, and of which the violation exposes to resentment, and consequently to punishment. This virtue is justice; the violation of justice is injury: it does real and positive hurt to some particular persons from motives, which are naturally

[22] Ibid., (B), 5.

[23] *Wealth of Nations*, IV, ix, 51.

> disapproved of. It is, therefore, the proper object of resentment, and of punishment, which is the natural consequence of resentment.[24]

'Naturally disapproved' would mean the disapprobation of not only the party concerned, but of the impartial spectator. Smith's position, was, therefore, as Haakonssen has suggested, 'a strictly retributive theory of punishment'.[25] It is needless to say that this was quite the opposite of Bentham's theory of punishment. This suggests also that their jurisprudential theories were entirely different. This should be borne in mind in considering in Bentham's position in relation to Smith. In short, Smith's retributive theory of punishment was based on his principle of sympathy.

Although Smith served Lord Shelburne as an adviser, that did not alter the essential nature of his jurisprudence which aspired to be a science, 'the science of a legislator, whose deliberations ought to be governed by general principles which are always the same'.[26] The substantial content of this science, or natural jurisprudence, consisted 'the obvious and simple system of natural liberty', which asserted firmly that it was of definite importance to make clear the boundary of the duties to the state, and of the law which binds the people. To take an example of natural liberty:

> To remove a man who has committed no misdemeanour from the parish where he chuses to reside, is an evident violation of natural liberty and justice.[27]

As we see, Smith 'natural' was a criterion for criticizing both feudal remnants and the mercantile system in modern society. The above passage was an attack on the 'ill-contrived law of settlement', which invaded the fundamental right of human beings. 'The common people of England, however, so jealous of their liberty, but like the common people of most other countries never rightly understanding wherein it consists, have now for more than a century together suffered themselves to be exposed to this

[24] *Theory of moral sentiments*, II, ii, I, 5.

[25] Knud Haaksonssen, *The Science of a legislator. The natural jurisprudence of David Hume and Adam Smith* (Cambridge, 1981), 94.

[26] *Wealth of nations*, IV, ii, 39.

[27] *Wealth of nations*, I, x, c.59.

oppression without remedy'.[28] Smith's science, therefore, as a whole, aimed at freeing 'the common people' from feudal or mercantile restraints. This business can also have a good effect on 'the system of natural liberty'. The abolition of the settlement law would have freed the people from restriction on their choice of residence. The same could be said of the poor law, which Malthus and Owen later attacked. Another example of unnecessary restraints would be those on the free employment of stock:

> The law, which prohibited the manufacturer from exercising the trade of a shopkeeper, endeavoured to force this division in the employment of stock to go on faster than it might otherwise have done. The law, which obliged the farmer to exercise the trade of a corn merchant, endeavoured to hinder from it going so fast. Both laws were evident violations of natural liberty and therefore unjust....[29]

Bentham was very close to this position, as shown in his *Defence of usury* (1787) and *Observations on the restrictive and prohibitory commercial system* (1821). Viewed, however, from another angle, this 'obvious and simple system of natural liberty' severely circumscribed the right of the state to intervene, and the following could not have been dictum of Bentham:

> The attention of the sovereign can be at best but a very general and vague consideration of what is likely to contribute to the better cultivation of the greater part of his dominions. The attention of the landlord is a particular and minute consideration of what is likely to be the most advantageous application of every inch of ground upon his estate.[30]

The sovereign, therefore, should restrain from intervening in individuals pursuing their own interests in their own way. This is the main message of Smith's 'obvious and simple system of natural liberty'. It was here that Smith said that 'the sovereign is completely discharged from a duty ... of superintending the

[28] *Wealth of nations*, I, x, c.59.
[29] *Wealth of nations,* IV, v.b.16.
[30] *Wealth of nations*, V, ii, c.18.

industry of private people, and of directing it towards the employments most suitable to the interest of the society.'[31]

Thus Smith opened up the way on which Bentham proceeded further. To Bentham, legislation was the goal. Bentham himself was a legislator. Smith, at the end of Book Four of the *Wealth of Nations*, defined the three duties of the sovereign under his system of natural liberty as (1) providing for the defence of the country (2) administering justice, and (3) maintaining certain public works in the interests of the community. In so doing, he left a legacy of fully developed principles of the 'obvious and simple system of natural liberty', while leaving room for the further development of the study of jurisprudence.

The transition from the principle of sympathy to that of utility

Smith declared that superfluous regulations inflicted on the people by a set of vested interests, which Bentham called 'sinister interests', should be abolished. 'The obvious and simple system of natural liberty' would then emerge as a result of adminstrative measures. In this sense, this system would be of artificial origin. However, we must take notice of the fact that economic laws are undercurrents in 'that system'. For instance, Book Three of the *Wealth of Nations*, entitled 'Of the different progress of opulence in different nations' treats 'the natural progress of opulence in different nations', that is, the natural order of stock investments. Smith followed up his discussion in Book Three with an investigation of political economy in Book Four, in which he argued in favour of natural liberty:

> All systems either of preference or of restrains, therefore, being thus completely taken away, the obvious and simple system of natural liberty establishes itself of its own accord. Everyman, as long as he does not violate the laws of justice, is left perfectly free to pursue his own interest in his own way, and to bring both his industry and capital into competition with those of any other man, or order of man.[32]

It is important to note that Smith did not envisage this system as one of ruthless individualism; in his system 'natural' also means

[31] *Wealth of nations,* IV, ix, 51.
[32] *Wealth of nations,* IV, ix, 51.

fair and sometimes strict. We can see an example in Smith's argument on taxation, four maxims of which are famous: the first was 'the equality of taxation'; the second, 'the tax ... ought to be certain, and not arbitrary. The time of payment, the manner of payment, the quantity to be paid, ought to be clear and plain to the contributor, and to every person'; the third, 'every tax ought to be levied at the time, or in the manner in which it is most likely to be convenient for the contributor to pay it'; and the fourth, 'every tax ought to be so contrived as both to take out and to keep out of the pockets of the people as little as possible, over and above what it brings into the publick treasury of the state'.[33]

Smith regarded these maxims as 'the evident justice and utility', to which Bentham would not have been opposed. However, one can discern a considerable difference between the two. Smith proceeded to explore the question of who is the real bearer of a certain tax, for a tax could be transferred to others. This analysis was carried out on the basis of his arguments developed in Book One concerning the three major categories of income. Bentham ignored this; his basic attitude towards taxes was clearly seen in his slogan or title 'Supply without burden' (1795) or, 'Official aptitude maximized; expense minimised' (1830), which meant that he concentrated on an entirely different field from Smith. Unlike Smith, his efforts were directed towards finding the means of reducing as much as possible every tax to be taken out of the pockets of the people, 'what it brings into the publick treasury of the state'. If there was this great difference between Smith and Bentham, Smith may never the less be regarded as providing a spring-board for Bentham. When he took off from that board, a kind of contraction and expansion took place at one and the same time.

Bentham never accepted a retributive theory of punishment. His penal code aimed to be preventive. Smith's notion of punishment seems to have relied considerably on 'the obvious and simple system of natural liberty'. Or rather, Smith seemed to believe that the state would fulfil its duties including the education of the poor, and that the 'obvious and simple system of natural liberty' would

[33] *Wealth of nations*, V, ii, b.3-6.

be a firm and equitable system. One could only decide the appropriate punishment for a crime, after it was committed, for that required the judgement of the impartial spectator. This was, I believe, why Bentham contracted Smith's principle of sympathy. He disregarded the theory of the impartial spectator. His early concerns were different from those of Smith. He concentrated on drawing up a theory and code of penal law, which aimed as its first principle at preventing a crime by means of showing how a corresponding punishment is to allocated to it, rather than on punishment after a crime has been committed. He therefore required a well-defined penal code, according to which greater pain would be inflicted on a miscreant than the pleasure he might gain by the committing the crime. In his idea of punishment, Bentham left as legacy for Robert Owen, who also, like Bentham, added an explanation to each article of the constitution for the coming new moral world, *The revolution in mind and practice of the human race* (1849).

If Bentham did not need the same kind of theory of justice as Smith, that does not mean that he was indifferent to justice. Rather to him justice lay in the prevention of crime, or the correction of criminals, as clearly seen in his Panopticon scheme. The contrast with Smith's jurisprudence is remarkable as the following demonstrates:

> The business of government is to promote the happiness of society by punishing and rewarding. That part of its business, which consists in punishing, is more particularly the subject of penal law. In proportion as an act tends to disturb that happiness, in proportion as the tendency of it is pernicious, will be the demand it creates for punishment. What happiness consists of we have already seen; enjoyment of pleasures, security from pain.[34]

This suggestion can call forth the variety of arguments on tendencies of an act, its material consequences, intentions, motives, a man's dispositions, but never the theory of justice which Smith developed. I am not wrong, I venture to say that it is only upon this understanding that we can make sense of Bentham's attitude

[34] *Introduction to the principles of morals and legislation*, VII. 1.

towards the principle of sympathy and antipathy in his *Introduction to the principles of morals and legislation*, though Smith himself never used the term 'antipathy'.

> ...By the principle of sympathy of antipathy, I mean that principle which approves or disapproves of certain actions, not on account of their tending to augment the happiness, nor yet on account of their tending to diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question, but merely because a man finds himself disposed to approve or disapprove of them; holding up that approbation or disapprobation as a sufficient reason for itself, and disclaiming the necessity of looking out for any extrinsic ground. Thus far in the general department of morals: and in the particular department of politics, measuring out the quantum (as well as determining the ground) of punishment, by degree of the disapprobation.[35]

Bentham may be said to have contracted or simplified Smith's principle of sympathy too much, but one can see that this contraction was necessary and sufficient for Bentham's purpose. It was a basic moral theory for penal law that the early Bentham needed. Later, it is true, he himself recognized that his point of view was too narrowly confined. He confessed in the Additional Note to this passage in January 1789, that the,

> ....principle of sympathy and antipathy: a term preferred at first, on account of its impartiality, to the principle of caprice. The choice of appellative, in the above respects too narrow, was owing to my not having, at that time, extending views over the civil branch of law, any otherwise than as I found it inseparably involved in the penal. But when we come to the former branch, we shall see the phantastic principle making at least as great a figure there, as the principle of sympathy and antipathy in the latter.[36]

The Scottish Enlightenment, and notably Smith, sought to unmask the principles of modern society, and in so doing to explain and to go beyond the teasing paradoxes of Mandeville: 'Knaves turn'd

[35] *Introduction to the principles of morals and legislation*, II, 11.

[36] *Introduction to the principles of morals and legislation*, 24.

honest'; Private vices publick benefits'; or, 'human frailty ... may be turn'd to the advantage of civil society'. In Smith's moral theory it was of first importance to explain how the virtues, by which community can be sustained, could be formed. Bentham had no such task, but had taken on new and more complicated tasks of codification. This required a form of reductionism which can be seen in his use of the term antipathy. He evaluated positive and negative things by the same scale; as pain was the negative pleasure, punishment was the negative reward. He chose the word antipathy because it signified negative sympathy. This was very different from Smith's views, for him, although resentment may be said to be a kind of antipathy, it was only appropriate if it was sanctioned by the sympathy of the impartial spectator. Here we see how Bentham's principle of utility differed from that of the sympathy.

If Bentham contracted Smith's notion of sympathy, he expanded his idea of utility. Smith sometimes remarked on the principle of utility. It was one of two principles of allegiance and obedience rather than a moral principle. Smith said, 'this principle or duty of allegiance and obedience seems to be founded on two principles. <The> first we may call the principle of authority, and the 2d. the principle of common or general interest,'[37] or 'those of authority <?and> of public or generall utility'.[38] Of the latter principle, Smith said,

> Every one is sensible of the necessity of this principle to preserve justice and peace in the society. By civil institutions, the poorest may get redress of injuries from the wealthiest and most powerful and tho' there may be some irregularities in particular cases, as undoubtedly there are, yet we submit to them to avoid greater evils. It is the sense of public utility, more than of private, which influences men to obedience.[39]

Smith associated the principle of authority with the Tories and that of utility with the Whigs.

[37] *Lectures on justice* (A), V, 119.

[38] *Lectures on justice* (A),V, 129; cf. ibid. (B), 12.

[39] *Lectures on justice* (B), 13-14, cf. ibid., 94.

Although utility was a subject of no little importance in the *Theory of moral sentiments*, which devoted the whole of Part Four to it and so formed a substantial part of the work, yet it was not a principle but an element, an aesthetic element., as the title of Part Four indicates: 'Of the effect of utility upon the sentiment of approbation'. In contrast, Bentham developed the principle of utility not only as a legislative, but also as a moral principle. According to him, nobody can live entirely independent of the principle of utility. 'By the natural constitution of the human frame, on most occasions of their lives, men in general embrace this principle, without thinking of it'.[40] It is evident that in Bentham's philosophy nature was physical, whereas in Smith's theory of morals it was social or human, for it was what was approved by the impartial spectator or science of a legislator. For Bentham, the 'extrinsic ground' which he considered necessary for judging an act or approving or disapproving of an individual's behaviour, was also objective and so provided a sure way of settling disputes for no valid objection could be made against it. The principle of utility was therefore a principle of harmony or of harmonizing.[41] Thus we can see how it replaced Smith's principle of sympathy.

Utilitarianism as the basis of the English political economy

In Scotland no one developed Smith's legacy, whereas in England Bentham opened the way up for codification by narrowing and rejecting the principle of sympathy, which, as we have seen, formed the foundation for Smith's science of the legislator. In this way the principle of utility could be developed as a moral as well as jurisprudential theory, although it was for the needs of the latter, notably creating a penal code, that the principle replaced that of the greatest happiness of the greatest number. It was opposed not only to Smith's natural jurisprudence, but also that of Sir William Blackstone who deployed the Lockean theory of natural law in the defence of the English Common law. Throughout his life Bentham, openly or tacitly, waged war against English natural jurisprudence

[40] *Introduction to the principles of morals and legislation*, I, 12.

[41] See, *Fragment on government*, ch.4.

and no less so Scottish philosophy in order to enshrine the principle of utility in statute law.

The principle of utility also came to have a profound effect on political economy. Even though Bentham was a financial and economic jurist his work gave birth to English classical political economy. The first representative of this school was Thomas Malthus whose *Essay on the principle of population* (1798) drew on the pleasure and pain principle. He argued that, 'to avoid evil, and to pursue the good, seem to be the great duty and business of man; and this world appears to be peculiarly calculated to afford opportunity of the most unremitted exertion of this kind'.[42] Both Bentham and Malthus shared the opinion that it was necessary to be driven by fear of poverty to set people to work. Malthus said 'Locke, if I recollect, says, that the endeavour to avoid pain, rather than the pursuit of pleasure, is the great stimulus to action in life.'[43] As Smith had already said the same thing, Malthus could quote him.[44] Although Bentham and Malhus differed over religion, their perception of the function of nature was identical and did not depend upon a belief in the Deity.

Malthus had derived his principle of population and of political economy from that utility. Whereas Smith in his political economy analysed the objective world – of commodities and stocks – defined by the relations of one man (or one set of men) to another, Malthus's political economy aimed at explaining the objective world by the objects themselves. This led him to discover the laws of diminishing returns, which was anticipated by James Anderson.[45] This proved to be the progenitor of Ricardo's theory of rent, which distinguished the second generation of English classical economists from the first.

[42] T R Malthus, *An essay on the principle of population, as it affects the future improvement of Society; with remarks on the speculations of W. Godwin, M. Condorcet and other writers* (London, 1798), 359-60.

[43] *Essay on the principle of population*, 359.

[44] Cf. *Theory of moral sentiments*, III, 2, 15.

[45] James Anderson (1739-1808, Scottish agricultural economist who published his ideas in his *Recreations in agriculture, natural history, arts and miscellaneous literature* (6 vols., London, 1799-1802).

Ricardo's starting point was somewhat different from that of Malthus, yet he accepted Malthus's two principles and the two men were quite intimate with each other. Ricardo's natural inclination was to separate the essential from the inessential. His vision was narrower than most utilitarians, and his focus almost exclusively on finance and the economy. Such clinical thinking informed by his expertise as a stockbroker was turned to great profit when along with Nathan Rothschild he made a killing on the London stock exchange through early knowledge of Wellington's victory at Waterloo. Apart from that extraordinary gain achieved in extraordinary times, he did in fact share in Bentham's belief that harmony in the economic world, or political economy could be achieved. His acceptance of Say's law is indicative of such a belief, for Say argued that 'supply creates demand', so that increases in supply would not cause depression rather demand would adjust to that increase as a result of its impact upon the price mechanism.[46]

In 1818 Ricardo was given Bentham's *Plan of Parliamentary reform*. His reaction was both critical and favourable:

> I regret that this book is so full of invective against those from whom he differs, yet I am convinced by his arguments. There is no class in the community whose interests are so clearly on the side of good government as the people, – all other classes may have private interests opposed to those of the people.[47]

In 1819 Ricardo became an MP for Portalington in Ireland. As an MP, he adopted the Benthamite programme of reform in its essentials: shorter parliaments, broader male representation and voting by secret ballot. He differed over details in which he remained more moderate than Bentham, favouring triennial rather than annual parliaments and the extension of the franchise and he was willing to settle for less than universal male suffrage. He believed that 'the great problem then is to obtain security that the

[46] Jean Baptiste Say (1767-1832), put forward this law in his *A Treatise on Political Economy*, 1803.

[47] *The works and correspondence of David Ricardo*, ed. by Piero Sraffa with the collaboration of M H Dobb (11 vols, Cambridge: University Press, for the Royal Economic Society, 1951-73), VII, Ricardo to Trower, 22 March 1818.

representatives shall be chosen by the unbiased good sense of the people'.[48] Both he and Bentham believed that secret ballots provided a crucial part of that security, but both shared an underlying optimism expressed by Ricardo when he noted that 'Mr. Burke has said that the people may err but it can never be from design'.[49]

Ricardo approved of another aspect of Bentham's reform proposals, those for educational reform based on utilitarian classification of subjects and priorities as detailed out in his *Chrestomathia* (1815-17) including the (unsuccessful) proposal for a Chrestomathic School. However, there was less continuity between the first and second generation of Benthamites over the question of political economy. When he was shown the manuscript of Dumont's translation of *True alarm,* he was deeply critical. He wrote to Mill,

> As far as I am able to judge it contains some very able and just views of the subject on which it treats, which I should be sorry should be wholly lost to the public, but at the same time I am of opinion that it contains some radical defects which will prevent it, as a whole, from effecting much good without considerable alterations.[50]

In a fairly long letter, Ricardo outlined his reservations. First, Bentham ignored the fact that the circulation of paper money was restricted by means of the value of precious metals. Secondly, he did not take into consideration the effects of unrestricted issues of paper money upon foreign relations, and

[48] Ricardo to Trower, 22 March 181, loc. cit.

[49] Ibid. Ricardo is paraphrasing a passage from Burke's early pamphlet, *Thoughts on cause of the present discontents* (1770): 'The people have no interest in disorder. When they do wrong, it is their error, and not their crime. See Ian Harris ed., *Edmund Burke. Pre-Revolutionary writings* (Cambridge, 1993), 120. For the variations in Benthamite proposals for parliamentary reform and in their representative theory, see, Elie Halévy, trans by Mary Morris with pref. By John Plamenatz, *The growth of philosophic radicalism* (1928, new edn. London, 1972), pt.III, esp. 404-431.

[50] Ricardo to Mill, 1 Jan. 1811, W*orks and correspondence of David Ricardo*, VI.

thirdly, though Bentham supposed that the increase of paper money would bring with the benefits of increases in capital and commodities, in reality it would only result in depreciation. We can see here clearly the character of the new generation of political economists whose hard-headedness seems to cast Bentham almost in a utopian light.

By this time the transition from Scottish Enlightened thought to English Utilitarianism was complete. Lord Shelburne had sent his son to learn political economy from Smith's disciple and theoretical successor, Dugald Stewart. But the traffic changed direction when James Mill who had attended Dugald Stewart's lectures settled in London in 1800. He became one of Bentham's disciples, and ultimately the supreme propagandist for the Benthamite cause. In the process he carried with him leading Scottish intellectuals; the *Edinburgh Review*, to which he contributed, shifted its broad Whig stance to close identification with the philosophic radicals of Bentham's coterie.

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DEMOCRATIC VIRTUES: BETWEEN CANDOUR AND PREFERENCE FALSIFICATION

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I

In the intellectual armoury of those who sought political reform in Britain at the end of the eighteenth century we can identify two principles which assumed increasing prominence. The first was the willingness to import into political argument a commitment to candour, thereby drawing on traditions rooted in religious dissent. The second was a growing acceptance that democracy would prove to be the most effective system for the protection of individual liberty against the threat of tyranny. One finds these commitments, albeit very differently nuanced, in the work of writers such as Richard Price, Joseph Priestley, Thomas Paine and William Godwin – and these are only the most prominent examples. Candour becomes seen as a necessary political virtue, just as it had previously been seen as necessary to the integrity of one's religious beliefs and one's standing as a religious person that one be willing to speak as guided by the dictates of conscience. The willingness by those within the traditions of Rational Dissent to generalize the virtues of candour from religious to political contexts becomes increasingly prominent towards the end of the eighteenth century. It finds paradigmatic expression in the last, revolutionary, decade in Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), in which the religious history of the doctrine is replaced by a rationalist commitment to the progressive development of all forms of political and moral truth. But Godwin's path was very substantially laid by others, not least by Richard Price, who believed it was essential to protect the right,

> that every man has ... to profess and practise, without molestation or the loss of any civil privilege, that mode of religious faith and worship which he thinks most acceptable

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to his maker; and also to discuss freely by speaking, writing, and publishing all speculative points, provided he does not by any overt act or direct invasion of the rights of others, break the peace, or attempt to injure any one in his person, property, or good name.[1]

Candour is sometimes characterised more broadly: Robert Robinson's position, for example was that candour involves 'an openness to conviction, a willingness to accept one's views as mistaken, and honouring those who sought to demonstrate one's errors.'[2] However, although these communicative and deliberative aspects of candour are significant, they do not displace the core element of unrestrained communication, guided, in the view of Rational Dissenters, by reason. The associated respect for others is best understood as a part of the characterisation of the nature of candid expression, rather than an independent set of constraints on that expression. This is in keeping with the recognition that, by the end of the eighteenth century, candour was promoted as an essential moral virtue – one which suggested a character marked by purity, integrity, and freedom from moral blemish, and by a sweet and reasonable disposition, free from rancour and malice and guided by an unremitting zeal for the pursuit of knowledge.[3] This view was especially widespread among those who supported toleration, relief from subscription, and parliamentary reform. In the opening years of the French Revolution, the belief that it was an

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[1] Cit. D O Thomas, *Ymateb i chwyldro / Response to revolution* (Abertawe / Swansea, 1989), 39. D O's *The honest mind: the thought and work of Richard Price* (Oxford, 1977) discusses candour on a number of occasions - and was the starting point for my own recognition of the importance to Godwin of his background in dissent.

[2] See Martin Fitzpatrick's 'Toleration and Truth', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 1 (1982), 17. This dimension of candour is also prominent in Alan Saunders' interesting discussion, 'The state as highwayman; from candour to rights' in Knud Haakonssen, *Enlightenment and religion: Rational Dissent in eighteenth century Britain* (Cambridge, 1996). While the view that candour is essentially a doctrine of toleration is appealing, Saunders draws too hard a line between candour and sincerity (p.264) (as the case of Godwin suggests), and perhaps too little of a line between candour and the manners of polite society (pp. 255-56 and 261).

[3] Thomas, *The honest mind*, 99.

essential social and political virtue spread still more widely in literary circles.[4]

The growing belief in the virtues of democracy had many sources, but for many, the commitment, like that to candour, had theological underpinnings:

> The controlling idea in the transformation of Whig into democratic theory is that man is the servant of God .... Price argues that political responsibility and discharging it effectively is part of the moral dignity of man. It is not just a matter of being free or of being adult, but also of being able to discharge what gives meaning and significance to life, the acceptance of the responsibility which God has placed upon men.[5]

Price is certainly not alone. Paine appeals to the fact that all men come equally from the hand of God, and a sense of the centrality of equality and liberty to individual well-being increasingly motivates a commitment in a wide range of writers to democratic participation.

While writers united their concern with candour with their demand for democratic rights in the last two decades of the eighteenth century, the optimism with which they were combined evaporated in the period immediately after the French Revolution. In the first volume of *Democracy in America,* Tocqueville suggests that democracy, understood in the broadest sense as 'equalization of condition', would lead to the tyranny of the majority in which the majority extinguishes the voice of minorities and destroys the conditions for freedom of thought. America is identified as the country in which democracy is most advanced, and yet:

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[4] Epitomised in Thomas Holcroft's wearingly candid novel *Anna St Ives* (1974, repr. Oxford, 1970): e.g., 'Truth partially told becomes falsehood: and it was a kind of blind consciousness of this which first induced men to countenance dissimulation. They felt their inability to do justice to truth, and therefore concluded hypocrisy was a virtue, and, strange to tell, truth itself sometimes a vice. It was a lamentable mistake.' (p.157). See the parody of sincerity and Godwin's philosophy more generally in George Watson, *The vagabond* (London, 1799).

[5] D O Thomas, *The honest mind*, 119. See also D O's 'Neither Democrat nor Republican', *The Price-Priestley Newsletter*, 1 (1977), 49-60.

> I know of no country in which there is so little independence of mind and real freedom of discussion as in America...there can be no literary genius without freedom of opinion, and freedom of opinion does not exist in America.[6]

Rather than linking democracy and candour, Tocqueville's account provides persuasive grounds for thinking that the socio-economic and cultural conditions which accompany democracy may be such as to destroy the basis for the independence of mind which those advocating the virtue of candour regard as an absolute precondition for moral rectitude and freedom. Like Price, Godwin and others, Tocqueville put a high premium on individual independence, freedom of thought, and freedom of expression. Unlike them, but like Mill subsequently, he saw the spread of social equality as risking an intellectual levelling in which these virtues would be obliterated.

There are, however, at least three analytically distinct types of threat to the independence of mind to which Tocqueville and advocates of candour may have been pointing. He may simply have been concerned that distinctive and minority opinions would no longer publicly be expressed. He may have believed that people would be led actively to misrepresent their beliefs to others. Or he may have believed that people would come to change their beliefs in conformity to majority opinion. These differences may be captured in analytic terms by distinguishing between self-censorship, preference falsification, and adaptive preference change.[7] Self-censorship involves failing to express certain of one's views or preferences in public. Preference falsification involves misrepresenting one's actual wants or beliefs under perceived social pressures. In Timur Kuran's analysis, preference falsification is a type of lying, which is distinguished by what we falsify and by the intent behind the falsification. We falsify our preferences when we try to make others believe that we feel or believe something other than we do, whereas lying is the more general

[6] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. and ed. by Reeve and Bowen (New York, 1945), vol. 1 (originally published 1835), Bk. 2, ch. 7, 273 and 275.

[7] Timur Kuran, *Private truths, public lies: the social consequences of preference falsification* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995), esp. ch. 1.

misrepresentation of certain facts. In addition, the motive for falsification is to protect oneself against a predicted social reaction. Preference falsification is also thereby distinct from flattery and associated forms of insincerity, insofar as these are done without concern for the protection of one's own reputation. One symptom of these differences is that falsification is accompanied by guilt, anger or resentment. For example, when we say that we have had a good time when we leave a party, when we have been dying to get away for hours but have not wanted to incur social opprobrium by being seen to leave early, we are protecting ourselves and incurring costs which we would rather not incur. Insofar as we find it demeaning to incur those costs we will feel resentment.[8]

Adaptive preference change occurs when I modify my preferences because of constraints on their being satisfied.[9] The standard example is the fable of the Fox and the grapes, where the Fox's preferences change when *and because* he is unable to reach the grapes. That is, they are causally changed, rather than intentionally revised. Adaptive preference change adds an additional concern to those levelled at preference falsification by suggesting that in certain cases people's preferences and beliefs change because the unrealisable character of the preference induces cognitive dissonance which can be resolved only by a revision of the preference.

While analytically distinct, the three processes are often connected in practice.[10] Self-censorship involves the suppression of one's preferences. But the doubt or anxiety which leads us to suppress our preferences is also likely to lead us to falsify our expressed preference when we are unable to maintain silence. Moreover the more we find it difficult to express a preference to others, the more difficult we will find it to sustain that preference, and the more likely it is that adaptive preference change will occur. For example: as a woman in a pre-feminist world, I might identify the following options:

[8] Consider, for example, Jim Dixon's attitude to Professor Welch's hospitality in Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim*.

[9] Jon Elster, *Sour grapes* (Cambridge, 1983), Pt. III, 109-140.

[10] Cf., Kuran, *Private truths, public lies*, 175.

a. to work[11] and be married,
b. to work and remain single
c. to be married and not work
d. not to be married and not work.
I prefer a>b>c>d; b. is my current status. Because of prevailing social conditions, a. is commonly seen as a deviant preference, and most people rank c. above b. To avoid opprobrium, I remain silent about a., and, when asked, I represent my position as 'Of course I want to get married.' Doing so encourages courtship, which leads to further questioning about my feelings and intent both at home and in work (and from those courting). Having met someone whom I would marry if I could work, but having found it impossible to express that preference, and feeling pressured to decide whether to marry or not, marriage becomes increasingly difficult to resist (I may even harbour the hope that work might still be possible). But, once married and no longer able to work, I may find myself reconciled to my position by believing that my initial preference was unrealistic. Moreover, since I have sold the pass on b. I may resolve the cognitive dissonance by thinking that my preference for b. over c. was mistaken. Although preference change clearly can take place through a process of rational revision, it is possible for such changes to arise causally from the cognitive dissonance which develops as my preferences and the way my life is actually going part company.

This example focusses largely on the individual level, but the group level is still more striking. In so far as a given preference or belief is rarely expressed in a social or political context, it becomes harder for an individual to express it. That few give it voice leads those with the preference to view it as idiosyncratic, which encourages them to falsify their preferences in public. This reduces still further the expression of that preference and ensures that current opinion gains such a solidity that I see the preference as deviant, leading to adaptive change to minimize cognitive dissonance. The little said becomes the unsaid; the unsaid becomes the

[11] Where, for these purposes, 'work' is defined as employment outside the home. Women teachers in the first half of the century, for example, were expected to give up work on marriage.

unsayable; the unsayable can become the unthinkable; and the unthinkable can become the unthought.[12] Most dangerously, those who come to see themselves as having risked heresy in the past may become the most enthusiastic prosecutors of it – purging themselves by purging others.

Tocqueville's anxieties about the inability of individuals to stand up to the pressures imposed by the uniformity of opinion characteristic of democratic societies were fears about the loss of independence of mind. Conformity is seen as a kind of mental servitude – 'one must give up one's rights as a citizen and almost abjure one's qualities as a man if one intends to stray from the track which it (the majority) prescribes.' The cost is high. In America one finds 'very few men who display that manly candour and masculine independence of opinion which frequently distinguished the Americans in former times, and which constitutes the leading feature in distinguished characters wherever they may be found.'[13]

[12] Kuran, *Private truths, public lies*, ch. 11, 176-95. Kuran sees his position as strongly opposed to that of James Scott, *Domination and the arts of resistance* (New Haven, 1990). However, the two positions can be seen to disagree over how far preference falsification jeopardises a continuing sense of one's interests – Scott certainly does not claim that falsification is without cost. Interestingly neither subscribes to the more agnostic position towards the costs of conformity to be found in Erving Goffman's masterly analysis of the rituals of social interaction, *The presentation of self in everyday life* (New York, 1959).

[13] Tocqueville, vol. 1, 277. The difference in terminology between Tocqueville's 'opinion' and 'mind' and the modern 'preferences' is instructive. Economists prefer talking in terms of preferences because they use expressed preferences as the prime measure of utility or welfare, and while there is some work in economics which looks at processes of preference change, the greater part of the literature takes preferences as exogenous and fixed, and thus as the given data of the science. Beliefs which do not issue in expressed preferences have been of little interest to economists because (by definition) they do not affect the actor's behaviour. The recognition of self-censorship, adaptive preference change and preference falsification creates substantial difficulties for economics since it challenges the assumption that expressed preferences provide sufficient data to assess utility, (an assumption which assumes an inductive relationship between expressed preference and belief). In so far

There is an essentially similar concern in Godwin, albeit without democracy being identified as the cause. For example, Godwin's advocacy of sincerity, which 'annihilates the bastard prudence, which would instruct me to give language to no sentiment that may be prejudicial to my interests,'[14] can be seen to be directed less at lying to promote one's interests (something he certainly regards with abhorrence), and more at the dissimulation which accompanies much social intercourse and which threatens to bend our tongues to those falsehoods which become an integral part of our social lives. In Chapter IV of Book IV, 'Of the cultivation of truth', with its several appendices, Godwin attacks hypocrisy, that is, systems of social conventions which command our obedience because we do not wish to be seen to flout them by saying what we really think.[15] For Godwin, the two central costs of this behaviour are that such conformity becomes habitual and undermines the independence of private judgment, and that the social world more widely comes to

as beliefs do not issue in expressed preferences because of a variety of social pressures, the rationality of a distribution based on preferences is thrown into question. To counter this we might stipulate that economic modelling assumes conditions in which people are not coerced, but once one recognises that the phenomena of self-censorship, adaptive preference change and preference falsification are features, not just of violently coercive regimes but of democratisation and the social processes which accompany the emergence of market-based economies and the eradication of aristocratic and feudal hierarchies and structures, it is difficult to see how to identify a definition of coercion which could leave intact the inductive chain between expressed preferences and beliefs. More broadly, these ways in which people fall short of candour, raise a broader concern. For many, the real cost of conformity is paid in the coin of human freedom and rationality. To be subject to coercion, or to the pressure of convention, or to processes which have a causally impact on our beliefs and preferences, is to be less free, less autonomous, less fully human.

[14] William Godwin, *An enquiry concerning political justice* (1st. edn. 1793, p.239), in *Political and philosophical writings of William Godwin*, ed. Mark Philp (London, 1993), vol. 3, 136.

[15] See, in particular, app. 2, 'Of the mode of excluding visitors', and app. III, 'Subject of sincerity resumed' (1793, p.274), 152: 'Sincerity is laudable, on account of the firmness and energy of character it never fails to produce.' See also Bk. II, ch. VI, and Bk. III, ch. IV and VI.

rest on a patina of fraud and falsehood which sustains the imposition of the ruling order. Sincerity or candour is seen as the only alternative to fawning servility.[16]

Tocqueville's work can be contrasted with the optimism of the late eighteenth century, in the doubts he raises about the compatibility of democratic conditions and true independence of mind and its associated virtue, candour. Where Godwin and others inveigh against the society of manners which marks the aristocratic cultures of eighteenth century Europe, Tocqueville has come to fear that the very thing which Godwin, Price and others most value, true independence of mind, is most at risk in modern democratic societies. It is perhaps one of the ironies associated with candour that its celebration as a tool against the imposture of the established order at the end of the eighteenth century was in fact a swan-song for something which, within forty years, came to be seen by Tocqueville as a cardinal virtue of aristocratic society.

II

The rejection of self-censorship and preference falsification and the advocacy of candour assumes that it is always preferable for people to be able to express their convictions freely and openly, and it assumes that dissimulation and hypocrisy must be avoided lest they undermine the independence and moral standing of the individual. The strongest support for candour and sincerity, historically, comes from theological arguments against conformity, but this does not mean that there cannot be strong secular versions of the case. Kuran, for example, says that the intuition behind the anti-conformist view happens to be correct.[17] Kuran, however, is concerned with preference falsification, not with candour or sincerity as such. In contrast, for Price, Godwin and others who were brought up resisting subscription and the tests, the anti-conformist principle is elevated to something close to a

[16] See also Bk. V, Ch. VI (1793, p.430), 233: 'He that cannot speak to the proudest despot with a consciousness that he is a man speaking to a man, and a determination to yield him no superiority to which his inherent qualifications do not entitle him, is incapable of sublime virtue.'

[17] Kuran, *Private truths, public lies*, 7.

deontological principle. It is this strong reading of candour which I want to address, and which I shall argue we should qualify.

The problem is as follows. If the anti-conformist view is right, then 'dissimulation may give way to genuine conversion, it carries the risk of annihilation.'[18] Not to say what one thinks risks changing what one thinks, and the harm in this is that such changes involve a determination of one's beliefs and preferences by the broader causal context. Clearly, a life spent adjusting one's expressed preferences to what one takes to be the norm is not to live life from the inside. But, we might object, minor instances of conformity or dissimulation should not be confused with sacrificing everything of value – in the way that Godwin and Price really seem to imply. Their position, however, can be buttressed by either one of two arguments. The first takes as its starting point the view that there are certain aspects of one's beliefs that are absolutely central to our sense of ourselves, such that to deny or repudiate those beliefs is deeply to compromise our sense of self. Not to be true to who I really am, is in some ways to be less than I really am, and is to invite guilt and self-recrimination or, worse, leads to the abandonment of that fundamental sense of self. I take it that certain forms of religious or ideological beliefs are of this order.[19] The next step in this account is to deny that there can ever be a clear line separating the essential from the inessential in a properly lived life. That is, it denies that we can distinguish those things that are central to us from a group of non-essential actions (one's where dissimulation might be practised without damage to the core). On such a view, dissimulation at the margins feeds back into dissimulation at the core.

The second line of argument is independent, but may be used in conjunction. It focuses on the social dimension to the slippery slope from periphery to core. On this view, putting up with self-censorship and preference falsification leads to an escalating

[18] Ibid.

[19] Hume's distinction between parties of interest and parties of principle suggests a distinction between two types of commitment or preference – one of which is negotiable, the other of which might well be seen as non-negotiable and as affecting all aspects of one's life. *Essays moral, political and literary*, Essay VIII, 'Of Parties in General'.

process whereby public opinion becomes increasingly distorted and narrowed. Those who have documented the compromises involved in everyday life in authoritarian regimes show clearly how dramatically the standards and norms of conduct can change when people no longer feel able to voice their feelings and beliefs. Indeed, as Tocqueville foresaw, even liberal democratic regimes can become subject to such tyrannies, as under McCarthyism. Clearly, if the two processes are combined we have a slippery slope of a rakish angle.

The extreme view, which insists on candour or sincerity, can find support. But can it really be exceptionless? Price constrains the demand for candour by something like the harm principle, while Godwin does so by rooting it in private judgment and establishing the right of private judgment as a basic constraint on the interference of others. In both cases, however, we need to take a reasonably hard-headed account of harm and interference with private judgment to make sense of the constraints. If either upsetting people's feelings or giving offence is counted as harm then the principle of candour seems to be sacrificed for something which both would regard as a lesser value.

Against the extreme view I want to advance two types of case in which candour seems to be trumped by considerations other than harm. These are not just cases in which we limit candour by some more sophisticated version of the harm principle. Rather, in both cases, we are called to act in ways that seem to involve dissimulation and self-censorship, not just to avoid causing harm but because doing so is enjoined by something like a principle of respect for others. The two cases help us to appreciate some of the shortcomings in the assumptions made about democracy and modern society by eighteenth century reformers. This is not so much a ground for recrimination against them as an opportunity to appreciate some of the complexities of the modern democratic orders which they helped inaugurate. The two cases concern, on the one hand, instances where we demonstrate tact in our dealings with others, and, on the other, cases where we engage in self-censorship as part of the democratic process.

III

I first addressed the problem of tact in a paper to a seminar in D O's house some twelve years ago. I am not sure how much progress I have made since then. What first drew my attention to tact was the difficulty which arguments for candour would have in admitting tact as something that could be a virtue. Consciously to suppress one's own beliefs and preferences in addressing another looks like a straightforward dereliction of candour. However, tact is a little more complex than this.

The *OED* defines tact as:

> a delicate sense of what is fitting and proper in dealing with others, so as to avoid giving others offence, or win good will; skill or judgement in dealing with men or negotiating difficult or delicate situations; the faculty of saying or doing the right thing at the right time.

In the last clause there is a suggestion that tact involves the use of communication as an instrument, rather than as a medium for the transparent communication of beliefs or sentiments. It is this implication, that the communicative function of speech can be overridden or subverted by instrumental concerns, which raises suspicions about tact betraying the standard of candour and involving preference falsification. If we treat tact simply as a skill, then it can be put to any purpose – as in the sensitive handling of a widow's grief in order to gain her trust which is then exploited for personal gain. However, I suggest that we do want to distinguish someone who acts tactfully, from someone who is adept at wheedling themselves into the confidence of others, and that when we talk of tact we refer to both a type of skill in communication and to a type of concern which motivates the exercise of that skill.[20] Moreover, that concern is partly what is communicated: saying the right and fitting thing is, in part, saying the thing that communicates

[20] This leaves open the question of whether one might just be naturally tactful – having a natural endowment of both the sensitivity to others and a concern for them – or whether it is something which can be learnt. That is, tact could be recognised as a virtue on either the classical or the modern account of the character of virtue.

the right kind of concern and respect – which means that although one may learn how to be tactful, simulated tact is not tact. Without both the skill and the concern it is not tact.

Does tact really involve a dereliction from candour? Although it does not always do so, it may. Certainly, tact gives no priority to candour – it shifts the focus from the question of the authenticity of self-expression to that of a concern for others. But tact clearly may involve preference falsification. For example, I may feel an obligation not to offend the parents of my intended by being honest about the extent of our intimacy. As a result I may both suppress certain information, and may fashion the expression of my beliefs to conform to those which I believe they hold. In this case, I lack candour. We may also meet Kuran's criterion for preference falsification in that we may feel the burden of our falsehood and may resent being in a situation in which we are unable to be open about our commitments. Moreover, in this case, I believe Godwin, and probably Price, would want to insist that candour is demanded: one should be willing to live one's life on the basis of one's convictions and we cannot do this if we are unable to avow our convictions when they clash with those of others. The complication in this case emerges if, despite the fact that I resent not being able to be open, I regard that cost as outweighed by the consequences which would follow for others as a result of my candour. It is important that those consequences are neither ones that I fear for myself, nor ones which involve harm (in a strong sense) to others. Tact is not about serving my interests nor is it strictly about avoiding harm to others. Rather, it involves an appreciation that another person's feelings are especially vulnerable to the way that others interact with her in respect of certain matters, coupled with a desire to avoid hurting those feelings. I might believe that she should not feel this way, but in appreciating that she does, I act tactfully in so far as I act to protect her feelings and discount both my own preferences and my sense that I would prefer a world in which such dissimulation was unnecessary.

How should a young widow feel and act after the death of her abusive husband? We may have strong views about this, but we may also engage in preference falsification when we act in support of a norm or convention which we believe exists but which we

personally reject, and where we comply to avoid social disapproval. But we may also act tactfully, setting aside our own beliefs about the social conventions and standards and acting in a way which attempts to help the individual reach her own judgment about what she feels and what is appropriate. Of course, how she acts may affect our view of what sort of person she is, but one shows tact in trying to ensure that she feels supported in the decisions she makes. More strongly, tact in this case may be, in part, a way of trying to ensure that she does not feel forced into some form of preference falsification. To be tactless, on the other hand, is (roughly) to presume that there is a single right way of behaving and to fail to recognise that the person in question may have mixed or confused feelings with respect to her deceased husband. One thing this example suggests is that tact needs certain conditions to be present. If there are precise norms and rules governing mourning, then there might not be any 'space' for tact: we would not be concerned with what we believe other people will think ought to be done, since we all know what ought to be done. For tact, there needs to be some uncertainty about what is required – some room for doubt as to what one should do and how one should interpret the event, where tact precisely gives permission to the other person to make the running in the interpretation of her situation. There is no clear convention governing the loss of a pet – so one acts tactfully by letting the person to determine their own reactions and feelings. In fact, even where ritual defines the process of mourning, it may still be the case that the emotional response is under-determined by conventions. An example of this is Godwin's attempt to woo Maria Reveley shortly after the death of her husband, to whom she had been unhappily married.[21] Godwin was candid, and tactless. He both interpreted the conventions regarding mourning rather forcefully in his favour and failed to allow her to make the running in reacting emotionally to the situation. As a result, his conduct hurt her feelings and offended her. He thought he had done so because she was clinging to convention of propriety for which he had little

[21] See, Don Locke, *A fantasy of reason: the life and thought of William Godwin* (London, 1980),152-3; Peter Marshall, *William Godwin* (New Haven, 1984), 198; and William St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys* (London, 1989), 200.

time. But the real cause of his offence is more likely to have been that he seemed to be trying to impose his view of the meaning and significance of the event on her, rather than allowing her the space to reach her own emotional response. In allowing her this space he would have conveyed a general concern for her emotional well-being and a respect for her feelings and judgment – in spite of his own disagreements with those judgments. To be tactful about someone's home 'improvements' is to show restraint in expressing our opinions, not to avoid the disapproval of others, nor because we disagree with the aesthetic standards which that décor violates, but because we recognise that the individual has an emotional attachment to the decisions she/he has made and we are motivated by an other-directed concern not to cause pain by the way we react to those decisions. Thus, tact needs to seen as constraining the exercise of candour, rather than being a way of characterising what candour requires.

Tact, then, is not identical with preference falsification – but not is it the same as candour. Where it is truly tact, it is a virtue not a vice because it involves an other-directed concern which over-rides considerations of one's own preferences. Tact might be seen as a particular component of a type of moral concern that excludes certain first order preferences or reasons for action. As such, it can be considered to operate at the same level as other second-order moral principles, of which candour might be one. On such an account, the demands of candour should not be over-ridden by the strength of one's first order preferences, but they might need to be weighed against, or worked in combination with other second order moral principles – such as the other-directed concern of tact.

IV

The second case which raises questions about the weight to be ascribed to candour concerns the expression of preferences within democratic procedures. On the face of it, it would seem that democratic processes must rely on candour. Even if we shared Tocqueville's pessimism about the effects of equalisation of condition on the freedom of opinion, we might still believe, with him, that what makes a democracy a democracy is that it involves rule by the people and that the people can only rule if they are free

to express their preferences. Taking this view would lead democratic theorists to look for ways to shore up the independence of opinion and to guarantee freedom of expression in practice as well as in principle.

There is, however, an alternative perspective which sees the suppression of certain preferences as essential to the success of a democratic society. This suppression must be one in which those involved in the democratic process freely engage; it cannot be brought about coercively by the state, since doing so creates incentives which reinforce the very opinions which we are seeking to silence. That is, it must be self-censorship, and self-censorship actively invokes a dereliction from the standard of perfect candour.

Consider the case advanced recently in the work of writers such as Rawls, Nagel and Dworkin who have argued that the liberal state must demonstrate neutrality in the justification of its actions and policies.[22] A neutralist justification does not appeal to any particular conception of the good. Those who enter the political sphere, then, can be seen as having a responsibility to conduct themselves within the public sphere in a way which does not appeal to the values they happen to hold as particular individuals or as members of a particular community. This is to invoke both legislative and constitutional neutrality. That is, not only should the constitutional arrangements of a political system that provide citizens with certain rights and duties and govern the functioning of political institutions sustain neutrality between different values and ways of life, it is also the case that participants in the democratic process should be guided by the principle of neutrality. For someone endorsing both constitutional and legislative neutrality (someone whom we can, following Clayton, describe as a liberal neutralist), the value which the individual attaches to his or her particular conception of the good cannot justify the state endorsing that policy; this, in turn, entails that those in the political process

[22] John Rawls, *Political liberalism* (New York, 1993), see Lecture IV and VI, and *Collected Papers* ed., Samuel Freeman (Cambridge, Mass., 1999) esp. chapters 20, 22, and 26; Thomas Nagel 'Moral conflict and political legitimacy', in Joseph Raz ed., *Authority* (Oxford, 1990), 300-24; Ronald Dworkin, 'Foundations of Liberal Equality,' in G. Peterson ed., *The Tanner Lectures on human values*, XI (Salt Lake City, Utah, 1990).

must be self-censoring in the arguments they propound and the policies they propose.[23]

That said, neutralists do not have to be neutral with respect to all ideals. Neutrality itself, the protection of certain basic liberties and rights, the provision of fair distributions of health, education, employment opportunity, and wealth and income, the priority of civil and political concerns over socio-economic ideals, and so on, are all ideals which the liberal neutralist can endorse as providing a basic framework for a viable political community. But, within that framework, neutrality is to be enjoined with respect to issues of personal virtue and the meaning of life, what world views or determinate final ends are worthy of pursuit, and what sexual or personal relationships are appropriately pursued.[24]

The attraction of a doctrine of liberal neutrality is precisely that it invokes self-censorship on the part of individuals with respect to their fundamental principles or creeds. It precludes others from seeking to impose on me their view of appropriate sexual preferences or conduct, religious beliefs or practices, or a particular *Weltanschauung*, and it imposes a similar duty upon me towards them. In practice, however, is this view really substantially different from Price's view of toleration? That one should tolerate people's beliefs and their associated practices, limited only by something like the harm principle, is a claim which can be found in pretty fully-fledged form in Price's work, or indeed in Godwin's. But the doctrine of liberal neutrality enjoins something stronger than this doctrine. It does not defend the individual's right to say or advocate what they will in the public forum. Rather, it demands from those who come to politics, a willingness to subordinate their fundamental beliefs and principles to self-censorship – not because they are not permitted to hold them, but because they are not permitted to use them as the basis for the policies they advocate within the polity. It is a doctrine of *liberal* neutrality because, with Voltaire, it defends to the death people's right to think what they

[23] Matthew Clayton, *Educating liberals: an argument about political neutrality, equality of opportunity, and parental autonomy* (Oxford D.Phil thesis, 1997), 30.

[24] Again, I owe the formulation and the distinctions to Clayton's extremely lucid account.

want – but, against him, it does not defend their right to bring those doctrines to the public forum as the basis for policy. This may not seem much of a difference, but it suggests a deeper shift in the doctrine of toleration since the eighteenth century. A shift, that is, from the view that the public expression of one's personal beliefs and commitments is essential – and the associated view that we should respect the candour with which those beliefs are expressed – to a situation in which, in the political sphere at least, it is acknowledged that where there are fundamentally different but equally reasonable beliefs, political stability and tolerance demand constitutional and legislative neutrality. While the sanctity of private beliefs is still respected, there is a recognition that their free expression and pursuit within politics can fundamentally destabilize the state. Candour, in other words, must be tempered by the harm principle *and* by an obligation to show self-restraint as a condition for ensuring equal respect towards our fellow citizens.

Does this restraint amount to preference falsification? On the face of it, it seems plausible to think of this simply as self-censorship – that is, as the ruling out of certain statements when acting in the public domain. However, it is clear that, in Rawls' hands at least, the expectation is that people who begin with self-censorship will come to endorse those public standards as a basis for consensus and may subsequently come to value them for their own sake, thereby modifying their beliefs. This looks substantially more like preference falsification, save that Rawls sees our motives for conditioning our public preferences and changing our commitments as essentially rational and intentional in form, rather than as merely prudential or adaptive. In this move Rawls comes close to an account of candour in which the discursive components come to be cut off from the more basis component requiring the unrestrained communication of belief.

There are parallels between this position and the account we gave of tact. In relation to candour, both forms of self-censorship involve trumping one's own expression of belief or advocacy of a policy by a second order constraint. And in both cases there is a substantial element of concern for others in that second order constraint. Also, both cases can be described, not as first versus second order preferences, but as conflicts between second order principles.

Candour and honesty have force, but so too does respect for others. At the very least this means that, while we might want to accord substantial weight to candour, it cannot be of over-riding weight when faced with competing moral claims.

V

Eighteenth century advocates of candour frequently drew on the anti-conformist position inherited from traditions of dissent. Their commitment to candour derived from a belief in the sanctity of individual conscience and from the view that conformity corrupts that sanctity. The emphasis on the sanctity of conscience derived in turn from seeing the individual's relationship to God as the point of ultimate truth and value in human life. There was also a tendency to believe that there would be convergence on true belief, and in thinking that candour and democracy could co-exist (or, indeed, that they were mutually entailing), the tendency was to see the democratic process as one of rational convergence where participants were guided by truth and sincerity. On such a view, democracy is simply a process of deliberation directed to a rational consensus. Similarly, in their relations with friends and associates, candour was seen as a positive and rational force in a society which had become thoroughly imbued with a culture of manners in which fraud and duplicity was a basic requirement. Against the culture of the court and aristocracy in which appearance trumped substance and men and women became slaves to the opinions of others, middle class reformers sought to establish truth and honesty as central virtues for the free-born Englishman. In both cases, the emphasis was on the pure expression of mind or conscience, and the overall social consequences were seen as positive (and where there were doubts about this, these arose solely because of the parlous existing state of affairs which results from a lack of candour).

In the two cases I have discussed, however, a rather different set of assumptions is at work: namely, that there are forms of self-censorship and preference falsification which do not compromise the self, which the heterogenous and fractured character of modern society call for, and which are motivated by moral principles which appropriately compete with the principle of candour. The

suggestion that these forms of self-censorship do not compromise the self is related to their underlying motives. Falsification is condemned in large part because it occurs when we are driven by prudence, fear and anxiety, rather than being able to endorse the preferences we present to the world as our own. But, when we act with tact, and when we engage in the kinds of self-censorship called for by liberal neutrality, we are motivated not by fear and anxiety, but by considerations of concern for others and the principles of tolerance and reasonableness. Those principles are ones which we can endorse, and our endorsement involves, in part, an ordering of our own preferences which is not prudentially driven but arises from our judgments about what it is reasonable to ask of others and for others to ask of us. In consequence, although the demands of these principles may be burdensome, the burden that we assume is self-imposed, and the self-restraint is one which we reflectively endorse (even where we may suffer moments of akrasia and say something we ought not).

It is, of course, an empirical question as to whether this kind of motivation is more often than not drowned out in democratic orders by the kinds of majority tyranny and the associated falsification described by Tocqueville. It is also an empirical question as to how common a feature tact is in the heterogenous and fragmented societies which make up many modern democratic states. I have not sought to argue that preference falsification is harmless, so much as to suggest that between candour and preference falsification lie at least two fields of action in which something significantly different is going on – something which writers in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century did not always acknowledge. Some writers seem to have come closer than others to doing so: Hume and Smith, for example, have a much more positive appreciation of the conventions of the social world they inhabit than do Price or Godwin. But, even if something like tact was recognised, we are harder put to find writers who recognised the importance of self-censorship in the public domain – except among those who sought to support the conventions of the status quo (while eluding the issue of their truth value) on the grounds

that they were essential if a civil order was to be sustained at all.[25] One reason for this, of course, is that people did not recognise the need for it because they did not live in modern democratic societies. They lived in rather small, communal societies, with a gradated social scale, and a relatively homogenous culture – which meant that concern and respect for one's fellow citizens (qua citizens and qua equals), and a recognition of the diversity of personal and private beliefs did not loom large.[26] Moreover, although few were as studiously tactless as Godwin, tact might also not have loomed large for most people – simply because contexts in which ambiguity and uncertainty over the meaning of events and how to react to them were fewer, and because more hierarchical and formal relations militate against tact. They do so because the concern expressed must somehow overcome the formal distances, conventions and rules which mark relations in which authority and subordination are inscribed. It is in this period that this more structured world begins to change and in which an expanding middling order begins to test the conventional bounds of its social and political position. As such there is a good deal of experimentation, especially literary, with the true nature of consideration and respect among people whose social positions are different. But it remains hard to pick out tact, as distinct from sympathy, or a more refined sense of social responsibility.[27] In

[25] An account which might fairly be ascribed to Burke's *Reflections*, see note 24.

[26] Again, Saunders', 'The state as highwayman: from candour to rights', with its emphasis on candour as mode of public behaviour which 'is needed not in the village but in the city, not in the organic community but in the public square and the market place'(255-6), overstates the anonymity of the public realm which the Dissenters faced, and fails to recognise the extent to which the advocates of polite society and the market substantially distanced themselves from the tradition of dissenting candour, which Burke successfully branded enthusiasm – see J G A Pocock, 'Edmund Burke and the redefinition of enthusiasm,' in François Furet and Mona Ozouf, eds., *The French Revolution and the creation of modern political culture*: volume III: *The transformation of political culture* (Oxford, 1989), 19-43.

[27] Austen would be a prime candidate, but many cases in which we might think of tact (and tactlessness) she clearly sees as adequate (and

modern societies, however, with their vastly more fragmented character, the possibilities for hurting the feelings of others through a failure to appreciate sensitivities and anxieties are legion. We are, in many ways, more emotionally exposed in a highly pluralist order, in which we are not bound to act in any particular way, but where we can still make costly and painful mistakes, even if we are in many other respects freer. Because this is so, we need the concern and respect of others – and we need their sensitivity to our feelings if we are to realize our freedom. That is, we need the concern of others and their forbearance if we are to be both relatively unfettered and able to make choices and pursue preferences which we endorse as our own, rather than simply conforming to the expectations of others.

Tocqueville was surely right to think that we risk being smothered by a blanket conformity against which we cannot speak out, and he is also right that the antidote to this is not to be found in laws but in moeurs. Concern and respect for one's fellow citizens, and a tolerance of their variety and their choices, requires more than a legal framework. It demands a culture in which we are prepared to impose constraints on ourselves so as to make our social and political world as tolerable for as many others as we can. Both Price and Godwin were right to believe that certain values and virtues demand a more democratic order and, by implication, that democracy calls for distinctive virtues. I have tried to suggest that the realities of democratic cultures two hundred years later suggests that we need to extend the list of virtues and to think through their relationship.

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inadequate) performance of distinctive social roles and responsibilities. For example, Mr Knightly's upbraiding of Emma for her treatment of Miss Bates.

RICHARD PRICE, JOSIAH TUCKER, JOHN LOCKE AND D O THOMAS

W Bernard Peach

In *Richard Price and the ethical foundations of the American Revolution*,[1] page 113n, there is a passage that reads, 'One of the most violent enemies of the colonies has pronounced them "All Mr. Locke's disciples" Glorious Title! How shameful is it to make war against them for that reason.'[2] Some readers may have been disappointed to find that this passage is not annotated. The 'violent enemy' is Josiah Tucker (1712-99). He held BA, MA and DD degrees from St. John's College, Oxford, was curate of St. Stephen's church in Bristol and later rector of All Saint's church there. For a time he was domestic chaplain to Bishop Butler who may have planted a thought that occurs in some of Tucker's writings by his suggestion that nations, like men, could go mad. Tucker became chancellor to the rectory of St. Stephen's in 1749 and Dean of Gloucester in 1758.

At Bristol he developed an interest in trade and acquired enough reputation in the field that he was requested to write a treatise on commerce specifically for the instruction of the future king. A tract against going to war for the sake of trade was translated into French by Turgot who thought highly of his work.

Among other places an early instance of his pronouncement occurs on page eleven in *A letter to Edmund Burke*: 'In the Process of Time, the Notion that Dominion was founded in Grace, grew out of fashion. But the Colonies continued to be Republicans still, only Republicans of another Complection. They are now Mr. Locke's Disciples; who has laid down such Maxims in his Treatise on

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[1] Ed. with intro. by W Bernard Peach (Durham, North Carolina, 1979). Cited as *EF*.

[2] This passage occurs in the first thirteen editions of *Observations on the nature of civil liberty*, section IV, 'Of the honour of the nation as affected by the war with America'. Price deleted it, however, from the edition identified as the eighth when he published it in combination with *A general introduction* and *Additional observations on the nature of civil liberty* as *two tracts on civil liberty* (2nd edn., London, 1788).

Government, that if they were executed according to the Letter, and in the Manner the Americans pretend to understand them, they would necessarily unhinge and destroy every Government upon Earth.'[3]

He uses the phrase in other places as well; for example, in *Cui Bono* where he refers to 'the language of Locke, and all his disciples, especially the Americans who have made these very maxims the ground of the present war'.[4] It occurs frequently in Tucker's major political writing, *A treatise concerning civil government*,[5] especially in Part I, 'The Notions of Mr. Locke and his followers concerning the origin, extent and end of civil government examined and confuted'.[6]

There and elsewhere Tucker proceeds to criticize Locke 'and his followers' on a number of points. He mentions Price, Priestley and Molyneux specifically, 'and others' unspecified. The criticisms are too numerous and complex for full discussion; in fact, a full discussion in light of the extensive literature on Locke and the growing literature on Price would require a large book, perhaps several volumes.[7] I shall instead, and appropriately I believe, in

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3 2nd edn., London, 1775.

4 *Cui bono? or, an inquiry, what benefits can arise either to the English or the Americans, the French, Spaniards, or Dutch, from the greatest victories, or successes, in the present war, being a series of letters, addressed to Monsieur Necker* (1781, 3rd edn. London, 1782), 21.

5 *A treatise concerning civil government, in three parts. Part I. The notions of Mr. Locke ... examined and confuted. Part II. The true basis of civil government set forth ... Part III. England's former gothic constitution censured and exposed; ... By Josiah Tucker, D.D. Dean of Glocester* (London, 1781). Cited as *TCCG.*

6 *TCCG*, i-v, 1-115.

7 In his letter to Burke, Tucker says he has put aside his criticisms of Locke to reply to the 'abuse and scurrility of Burke'. He proceeds, however, to identify the offending doctrines in Locke, mainly from Chapter 8 of the *Second treatise.* I paraphrase: that all men are free by nature, equal, independent, and cannot be put out of their estate without their consent; that dominion does not proceed from generation to generation; that dominion requires explicit consent; that no one can be taxed without explicit consent. In *The correspondence of Richard Price* as a note to a letter from Price to William Adams, 28 December 1778,

view of the orientation of this issue of *Enlightenment and Dissent*, approach a selection of theses criticisms through the work of D O Thomas. First a group comparing and contrasting Locke and Price directed toward a modification of Tucker's radical revolutionary interpretation of Locke and the equating of his views with those of Price, then corrections of three mistakes, concluding with Thomas's insightful treatment of Price on the subject of liberty.

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Thomas provides an excellent response to Tucker's claim that Locke sets out a radical revolutionary position in his discussion of a similar in Richard Ashcraft's book, *Revolutionary politics and Locke's Two treatise of government* (1986).[8] Thomas points out in his conclusion that when Locke dealt with issues other than his main attack against the Stuart's claim to absolute power he was highly conservative. Throughout both *Treatises* 'Locke presents himself,' Thomas urges, 'as a restorer and not as a destroyer, and celebrates the advent of William III, as that of "our Great Restorer"'.[9]

Price certainly followed Locke in his admiration but also goes beyond in his interpretation. He agrees with Locke that the Glorious Revolution re-affirmed the basic principles on which a stable and just government should be founded: the right to liberty conscience in religion, the right to resist power when he abused and the right of the people to choose their governors, to cashier them

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Thomas gives another list of doctrines Tucker believes are derived by Price and other disciples from Locke. Paraphrasing again: that all men have equal political rights; that individual judgment is indefeasible; that government can only be found in unanimity; that delegation is impossible; that taxes are free gifts; that the people have the right to change their governors and forms of; that all political rights are founded in personality; that the dissolution of government restores men to the state nature. W Bernard Peach and D O Thomas eds., *The correspondence of Richard Price* (3 vols, Durham, North Carolina and Cardiff, 1983-1994, cited as *CoRP*) vol. II*: March 1778 - February 1786*, ed. D O Thomas (1991), 31-2, n.3.

8 *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 14 (1995), 128-154. Cited as *E&D*.

9 Ibid., 152-53.

for misconduct, and to form a government for themselves. He goes further, however, in considering it incomplete. It needs, according to Price, further development to achieve freedom of worship for all citizens and the correction of the faults of the British constitution. He also saw its continuation and development in the American and French revolutions.[10] Some interpreters, including Thomas, have found implications that extend to political, economic and moral changes beyond Europe and America, and even to adumbrations of a world order.[11]

Tucker's (and Ashcraft's) revolutionary interpretation of Locke is blunted by Thomas's attention to property and representation. He points out that, having found a moral justification for inequalities in real and personal property, Locke went on to take 'a massive step, none the less massive because it is taken quietly' of assuming that 'all existing property holdings are justified'.[12] This, in turn, reflected his unwillingness to alter representation of the people.[13] Price, in comparison, has very little to say about real or personal property. He did not, for example, include in his efforts at reform, as summarized by Christopher Wyvil, the removal of property qualifications for voting or representation.[14] He did, however, work tirelessly for 'real' representation in which all parts of the country would be adequate and fairly represented, the abolition of rotten boroughs, the redistribution of seats, the extension of the franchise, more frequent elections and the instruction of members.[15]

In general, then, with regard to real and personal property, both Locke and Price are, despite Tucker's accusations, in favour of the status quo. On the one hand, with regard to the connection between property and voting it is possible to say Price is perhaps even more conservative than Locke. In a letter to Lieutenant-Colonel Sharman in which Price considers what can be accomplished in practice, he writes, 'In England [where he was a founder member of the Society

[10] *The honest mind. The thought and work of Richard Price* (Oxford, 1977), 300-302. Cited as *HM*.
[11] *HM*, 210.
[12] *E&D*, 14 (1995), 150.
[13] Ibid., 153.
[14] *HM*, 286.
[15] Ibid.

for Constitutional Information] I have wished that the friends of reformation had confined their views at present to the extension of the right of voting to Copyholders and Leaseholders....'[16] On the other hand, Price's theoretical ideal is that 'every independent agent in a state (that is, every one who can be supposed to have a will and a judgement of his own) should have a vote...' regardless of property.[17] In this respect Price is more radical than Locke whether Locke is interpreted to hold one or other of two alternatives: (1) All sane and rational men participate in the foundation of civil society and then delegate political responsibility to those who have considerable property, or (2) Those who have considerable property participate in the institution of civil society.[18]

With regard to aspects of representation and voting other than economic Thomas makes clear that Price is considerably more specific. Like Locke, Price wanted representation to be 'fair and equal' which Thomas interprets to mean that all the different parts of the country should be adequately represented in the Commons.[19] He went further in specifying that representatives must be freely chosen without bribes or penalties and must themselves be free from ministerial influence. They should serve short terms and be responsible to the people in their constituencies.[20]

When Thomas asks, 'Who are the people?' however, he finds both Locke and Price vague. He concludes that Locke means what most of his readers would mean, namely, as previously indicated, those who possessed substantial property.[21] On the basis of a contrast between Locke and Price on political responsibility, however, he concludes, with apologies for the use of the term, that Price is more 'democratic' with regard to the social contract than Locke. As Thomas interprets Locke, once the civil institutions and their officers have been established they embody the will of the community until or unless that trust is betrayed. Price, on the other had, according to Thomas, holds that the political responsibility of

[16] *CoRP*, II, 13 Aug. 1783, 188-91 at 189; *HM*, 203.
[17] *CoRP*, II, 189; *HM*, 151-2, 203-4.
[18] *HM*, 194-95.
[19] *HM*, 286.
[20] *HM*, 205.
[21] *E&D*, 14 (1995), 154.

the people is continuous, is a necessary condition of a person's natural rightful dignity, leads to greater responsibility in general, and, furthermore, meets part of every sane rational person's theological obligation. These views also indicate, according to Thomas, that Price's conception of 'the people' is, although vague, considerably more extensive than Locke's.[22]

This brief survey of some of Thomas's comparisons and contrasts of Locke and Price shows quite clearly, I believe, that Tucker's sledgehammer blows identifying without qualification Price as a disciple of Locke and Locke as a radical revolutionary are misleading and stand in need of considerable modification. It is appropriate at this point also to recall, however, a cautionary measure from Thomas: published views of an author may, for a variety reasons, differ from those held in private, shared with intimates, communicated only verbally or in private letters, or the like.[23] It may well be that Locke was more radical than in his thought than expressed in the *Two treatises* and that Price was more conservative than expressed in *Observations on the nature of civil of liberty*, as in his letter to Sharman. Also, as Thomas points out, some people may be more or less radical than others in some respects and less or more radical in others. He attempts to show in his discussion of Ashcraft that Locke was this kind of radical. I think he has also shown it of Price. More generally, although more specifically directed to Tucker's criticism of Price and others as disciples of Locke, Thomas finds that Tucker considers Locke to be more radical than he is because he often reads Locke through the eyes of those who *were* more radical.[24]

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Next I want to consider three cases, on destruction, republicanism and defeasibility, where Tucker makes mistakes in his criticism of Price. Appropriate responses can be found, again, in Thomas.

Tucker complains of Price and other followers of Locke that they are concerned to tear down government but not build it up. It is true

[22] *HM*, 194-95, 337-8.

[23] *E&D*, 130-31.

[24] *CoRP*, II, 32.

that Locke held, in general, that the best government is the one that governs least and that Price was opposed to any governmental policy that would reduce a person's ability or motivation to accept the responsibility of self-improvement. It is hardly true, however, that they were concerned only to tear down. Thomas's well justified portrayal of Locke as a conservator and restorer is a general correction to the charge. In the case of Price, it neglects his lifetime devotion to improving representation, to improving knowledge of reversionary payments and the appropriate regulation and improvement of the societies dealing with them. Even more particularly, as Thomas points out, he supported and extended the work of Maseres and Acland in their attempts to help the poor, recommended that Parliament should take steps to reverse the trend toward depopulation by supporting agriculture, discouraging celibacy and enclosure of land, and by taking steps to reduce child mortality.[25]

Throughout his writings relevant to our topic Tucker refers to Locke and his disciples as 'republicans'. Again we may turn to Thomas for an appropriate response on behalf of Price. Putting it briefly, Thomas notes that the term 'republican' in the eighteenth century meant, basically, 'opposed to monarchy'. Price makes clear, however, that he is in favour of a balanced constitution and a mixed form of government with three estates, King, Lords and Commons. His praise of the Americans for developing a form of government that avoided monarchy, aristocracy and clergymen with political authority was not intended, as he emphasized, to be a general approval of republican form of government. In particular, he specified, it was not suitable for Britain.

Tucker does not refer to Price, or to Locke and his disciples as democrats although if he had, Thomas's answer to the charge of republicanism would also provide a satisfactory response. In the eighteenth century, as Thomas indicates, it was understood that democracy was a form of government in which the people, as a whole body, had political control. Again, Price's preference for a mixed and balanced form of government means that he is not a

[25] *HM*, 117.

democrat either.[26] This explains in part why Thomas is apologetic when he says, above, that Price is more 'democratic' than Locke with regard to the interpretation of the 'people' and their role in contract theory.[27]

In Chapter II of his *Treatise concerning civil government* Tucker criticizes Locke, Price and other Lockeians for transferring the indefeasibility of the rights of kings to the indefeasibility of the rights of the people.[28] Leaving aside such thorny questions as to whether the rights of kings were, or have been, or ought to be, indefeasible, we find relevant discussion in Thomas when he is concerned with Price and the rights of conscience.[29] After a careful analysis of difficulties, including incoherence, Thomas concludes that Price recognizes that conscience can err. In the face of cases where erroneous conscience leads to activities that invade the liberty of others or subvert the public good. Price recommends that such activities be restrained. It follows of course that Price does not hold that the right of individual conscience is indefeasible.

The concepts of defeasibility and indefeasibility are useful in dealing with other criticisms. Price himself makes use of them, although not explicitly, in a letter to William Adams.[30] He says that Tucker 'mistakes exceedingly the sense of the maxim *That in a free state every man is his own governor.*' And refers to his explanation in *Additional observations.* There he is pleased to find that Montesquieu and Blacksone say the same thing: that it is basic to the British constitution and adds that the meaning of it is plain: 'Ever independent agent in a free state ought to have a share in the government of it, either by himself personally, or by a body of representatives, in choosing whom he has a free vote, and therefore all the concern and weight which are possible and consistent with the equal rights of every other member of the state'.[31] He adds that this meaning of the maxim is plain and obvious yet has been

[26] 'Neither republican nor democrat', *The Price-Priestley Newsletter*, no.1, 49-60.

[27] *HM*, 194-95.

[28] *TCCG*, 50-88.

[29] *HM*, 122-24.

[30] *CoRP*, II, 31-32.

[31] *EF*, 139-40

opposed, pointing not at Tucker, but indirectly at Adam Ferguson, who queried the sort of laws thieves and pickpockets would be likely to make against theft. Price says this meaning is so plain and obvious he does not need to respond to Ferguson, or, we may add, to Tucker.[32]

Price's reading of his maxim may be plain and obvious to him but not to his contemporaries and not to a current reader. Among other difficulties, as I have indicated elsewhere, he moves from a statement purporting to describe what is the case to an interpretation setting what ought to be the case. It also involves a distinction between circumstances that obtain in fact, occurrently, and those that are possible, dispositionally. Price would not consider it logically impossible for some one in a free state to fail, on a given occasion, to be his own legislator, he would not consider the maxim a generalization based upon empirical evidence. He would not mean that in a free state every person probably is his own legislator or that a certain number are, or even that they legislate for themselves on a certain percentage of their opportunities.

Apparently Price considered this maxim to be sufficiently evident that it is 'in the nature of things' for a sane, rational, virtuous person in a free state to have the right to legislate for himself, and to do so, unless there are circumstances to prevent him, on some particular occasion, such as a despotic executive who abuses his powers, a legislature that does not truly represent the people, or a government that is not mixed in just proportion. The necessity lies in the nature of sane, rational, virtuous people in a free state as morally free agents, to legislate properly, correctly, for themselves. That they would not appropriately be considered to be members of the population of a free state without such a disposition is a possible interpretation of Price's claim that the truth of the doctrine is 'undeniable'. Yet surely Tucker (and Ferguson) could point out that there are a variety of circumstances under which a person does not act rationally, or does not act virtuously, or is not morally free. Thieves and pickpockets are examples. The maxim that every one is (that is, has the right to be, ought to be) his own legislator may be

[32] Ibid.

defeated on particular occasions although it remains undeniably true, on this interpretation of Price, in its dispositional form.[33]

Here, as elsewhere, we find exemplification and confirmation of Thomas's reminder that in many cases Price argues on grounds that are philosophical rather than historical, legal or factual. He quotes, 'The question with all liberal enquirers ought to be, not what jurisdiction over them *Precedents, Statutes*, and *Charters* give, but what reason and equity, and the rights of humanity give.'[34] It would not be outrageous to say of Price that many of his arguments proceed on the basis of the meta-principle, 'It's not a question of what is the case but what ought to be the case'. In these terms we can respond for Price to Tucker, following this line of interpretation made evident by Thomas, 'I have not transferred the indefeasibility of the rights of monarchs to the indefeasibility of the rights of the people because neither one has such occurrent indefeasible rights. Instead, I argue for the dispositionally indefeasible rights of monarch *and* people under a mixed and balanced form of government characterized by liberty, equality and justice'.

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Commenting on Price's treatment of liberty and his distinction of four kinds, physical, moral, religious and civil, Tucker grumbles, laconically, 'He needs either more or less.'[35] When Tucker is not being sarcastic, abusive or petulant he can be a perceptive critic; so it is regrettable that he did not develop his criticism. Fortunately, however, we can turn again to Thomas and read him as someone who took Tucker seriously and pursues a course of interpretation, analysis, criticism and development of the 'more' needed by Price. The process takes him through three chapters.

He also finds that in addition to the four kinds of liberty Price uses several other senses, with various modifications and specifications: absence of restraint, with subclasses, absence of restraint opposed to the will of the agent, or absence of restraint determining the agent to a course of action; the power, capacity, or

[33] *EF*, intro. 19.
[34] *HM*, 151.
[35] *TCCG*, 26.

ability to do something; possession of legal rights to do something; being rational in understanding; and acting in accordance with the moral law.[36]

Thomas offers four examples of the application of these distinctions that lead to generally negative criticisms. He finds Price sometimes confuses or conflates two or more of these senses, or sometimes moves back and forth between one and another. For example, he finds it difficult to tell whether Price holds a form of self-determinism because in his discussion of physical liberty he vacillates between thinking of liberty as the absence of forces opposed to the will of the agent and as the absence of forces determining the agent to a course of action.

He also finds that Price frequently identifies liberty conceived as not being subject to an alien force or will with liberty as being able to do something. Thus, with regard to religious liberty, Price apparently assumes that if there are no legal penalties against unorthodox views then everyone will be able to worship, as he wants, neglecting other possible interfering factors.

In the field of moral liberty Price apparently assumes, as Thomas interprets him, that a rational being never wants to break the moral law or to act contrary to the welfare of the whole community. As a result, Price identifies liberty in the sense of not being subject to restraints other than required by natural law and the pursuit of the common good with liberty in the sense of the ability or capacity to do what one wants.

With regard to civil liberty, Thomas finds Price apparently assuming that political rights are a necessary condition for civil rights and that participation in government provides assurance that natural rights will be secure. Consequently he conflates civil liberty as the secure enjoyment of natural rights with political liberty as the possession of political rights. Thomas considers this identification unfortunate because it puts Price in a position of implying that people cannot enjoy civil liberties unless they have representative government and that majorities cannot oppress minorities.[37]

[36] *HM*, 170-3.
[37] Ibid.

It takes Thomas two and half more chapters to pursue the implications of this analysis of Price on liberty and of these examples. In the end he is able to reach more positive conclusions that are justified by further examples, careful analysis, interpretations, consideration of alternatives, negative and positive criticisms. Brief summaries cannot do justice to Thomas but may serve sufficiently as a kind of closure on my indirect approach to issues in Tucker, Locke and Price through his work.

With regard to Price on physical liberty Thomas says he cannot find an interpretation that is coherent, mainly because Price is unclear about the distinction between what is impossible and what is extremely or 'practically' unlikely. On balance, however, he believes it is correct to conclude that Price is a non-determinist.[38]

With regard to moral liberty Thomas finds Price unclear on at least two points. First, whether by 'not being controlled' Price means absence of some factor alien to the agent's will or the absence of any causal determination whatsoever in making a decision. Second, he finds that Price sometimes identifies acting in accordance with reason, acting in accordance with conscience, and doing what one wants to do. This confusion, Thomas says, is further compounded by Price's tendency to identify the self with the principles of reason and right. Consequently freedom to do what one wants to do is identified with freely acting in accordance with reason and right. It follows, according to Thomas, as an undesirable consequence, that it is logically impossible to want to do what duty forbids and logically impossible not to want to do what duty commands. These conclusions are contrary to one of Price's fundamental doctrines; namely, that moral praise and blame depend upon the free resolution of the will when tempted between alternatives. Despite these difficulties and in accordance with the general thrust of Price's discussion Thomas nevertheless concludes, with qualifications, 'that Price thinks of moral liberty as not being prevented by contrary passions from doing what one wants to do within the limits of the moral law.'[39]

[38] *HM*, 162.
[39] *HM*, 173.

In his expansion on religious liberty from a historical viewpoint Thomas emphasizes Price's efforts for legal recognition of the right to worship according to one's conscience, calls attention to Price's more rigorous discussion than Locke's, recounts failed attempts to amend the Toleration Act and to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts, and his acceptance of religious freedom of all sects, including Catholics and Mohammedans. From a philosophical point of view, he explains why Price would admit that actions based on religious view that interfere with the liberty of others might have to be restrained by the state but never opinions or beliefs. In general or, perhaps, saying the same thing in another way, rights of conscience in action are defeasible if they interfere with the rights of others; but rights of conscience in thought, belief, or opinion can never interfere with the rights of others to think and believe in accordance with their conscience. On epistemological grounds he would support this distinction by noting that an officer of the State can tell, with reasonable clarity, when the rights of citizens are being violated by actions, but cannot tell, with reasonable clarity, whether beliefs are true or false. On practical grounds, he holds that the best way to deal with false beliefs is by free and open discussion. Against this background in Price, Thomas concludes with a reinforced affirmation of his earlier example of a conflation that neglects other possible restraints. 'It is no accident that leads Price to equate freedom understood as the absence of restraints [by the state] with freedom understood as the possession of a power [to worship God in accordance with one's conscience].'[40]

We have covered various aspects of Price on civil liberty in the earlier comparison and contrast with Locke, such as his view of the Glorious Revolution as a beginning, the continuous responsibility of the people in the process of government, his positive contributions to financial responsibility, his support of the liberty of conscience in religion, the right to resist power when abused, the right of people to choose their governors and to dismiss them for misconduct, and to form a government for themselves; suggestions of a world order; his efforts to improve representation; to extend

[40] *HM*, 186

the right to vote under the aegis of a balanced constitution and a mixed form of government, and the fundamental role of consent.

In later editions of *Observations on the nature of civil liberty* Price amends his definition of civil liberty to take account of the need for representative institutions that enable the people to direct their government and in *Additional observations* he draws some further distinctions, possibly partly prompted by Tucker as his letter to William Adams may suggest, between the liberty of a citizen ('when the power of commanding his own conduct ... life, person, property and good name are *secured* to him by being his own legislator'); a good government ('when constituted ... to give this *security*'); and a community or nation ('the same among nations, that the freedom of a citizen is among his fellow citizens.')[41]

Thomas finds an equivocation between civil liberty as the right of all men to self-government and a right that is restricted to those capable of independent judgment. He offers a reconciliation of this conflation by suggestion that the first formulation is for Price an ideal of what ought to be and the second a more practical basis for reform at a particular time.[42] We may take the conflict between Great Britain and her colonies in America as an example of such a particular time. After an analysis of Price's views on various alternatives as possible reformations of the relationship between Great Britain and her colonies he finds that Price needs more. Unlike Tucker, however, he provides an outline of the need: more attention to factual complications of territory, language, culture, religion, topography, size, and extent when discussing what constitutes a community; and more care about distinguishing between internal and external matters as well as avoidance of a conflation of that distinction between matters that are private and those that are common. Thomas finds he can, nevertheless applaud Price for the application of his views on moral liberty (not being prevented by contrary passions from doing what one wants to within the limits of the moral law)) to the political realm where the concept of self government enables him at a very general level to

[41] *HM*, 187-8.

[42] *HM*, 204.

unite arguments for representative government and national autonomy.[43]

* * * * *

This concludes my discussion of the D O Thomas who fills out the details of a quasi-Pricean response to Tucker's complaint that Price needs more liberty. I want to conclude, however, by complimenting D O Thomas the historian of philosophy, for the excellent example he provides of studying the history of philosophy as justifiable interpretation. First, he proceeds with a careful analysis of meaning. It reveals among strong, clear, acceptable doctrines, ambiguities, confusions, conflation, even incoherence. From such an analysis of strength and weakness he can, however, justify interpretations that are consistent with basic doctrines and the main thrust of Price's arguments and conclusions. Thus, for example, on the basis of his analysis of Price on moral liberty, revealing both weakness and strength, he is able, on the basis of a justified recommendation of interpretation to enhance the understanding of Price's political philosophy. The significance of the procedure in fact extends well beyond the enhancement of our understanding of Price's political philosophy to his philosophy in general; and beyond that to a broader and deeper understanding of political, religious and moral issues themselves. In short, D O Thomas provides us with an impressive model of how to gain maximum value from the history of philosophy.

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[43] *HM*, 173, 213.

PERSPECTIVES ON PRIESTLEY'S SCIENCE

J G McEvoy *

The fourth joint meeting of the British and North American history of science was held in St. Louis, Missouri August 2000. The theme of the meeting was: 'What is to be done? History of Science in the New Millennium'.[1] The meeting focused on critical historiographical issues in the history of science, including its methods of inquiry, disciplinary identity and development, relations to other disciplines, and place and function in the wider culture. These issues reflect a heightened concern with the practices, rather than the objects, of historical inquiry among contemporary historians of science. Reinforced, no doubt, by the *fin de siècle* navel gazing, millennialist anxieties, and a pervasive cultural narcissism, these reflexive sensibilities are not entirely new to the history of science. Since its inception in the Enlightenment, the discipline of the history of science has occupied a contested intellectual terrain, shaped by philosophical and ideological forces associated with the internal development and cultural engagements of science itself. More recently, it has been buffeted by the explanatory ambitions of other disciplines, such as philosophy, sociology, and anthropology.[2] The turbulent history and methodo-logical variability of the discipline of the history of science is reflected in the title of a paper by I B Cohen: 'The Many Faces of the History of Science - A Font of Examples for Philosophers, a Scientific type of History, an Archeology of Discovery, a Branch of Sociology - *Or What?*'[3]

The construction of a historical identity for the discipline of the history of science is an integral part of the trend towards self-

* This paper was written with support from the Taft Committee of the University of Cincinnati.

1 See e.g., *History of Science Newsletter*, 28 (1999), 2.

2 See John G McEvoy, 'The Chemical Revolution in Context', *The Eighteenth Century. Theory and Interpretation*, 33 (1992), 198-216; idem, 'In Search of the Chemical Revolution: Interpretive Strategies in the History of Science', *Foundations of Chemistry* (forthcoming).

3 In C F Drezell ed., *The future of history. Essays in the Vanderbilt centennial symposium* (Nashville, Tn., 1977), 3-42.

scrutiny among its current practitioners, many of whom are interested in 'the history of science as history'.[4] Hermeneutics supports this reflexive interest by suggesting that the difference between the history of science and the history of science as history is more a matter of style, or focus, than of substance. According to hermeneutics, historical statements understood as 'narrative statements', reconstruct historical events 'within the frame of reference of a story'. Since a story has a plot, with a beginning and an end, it follows that historical events 'cannot be represented without being related to other events that follow them in time'.[5] All interpretations occur after the fact; history is a matter of hindsight. Instead of being privileged, the traditional participant's meaning of an event is incomplete and open to modification by subsequent commentators coming from richer, more complete points of view, or perspectives. The variety of possible perspectives does not imply that historical events have no objective reality. Rather, polysemy and interpretive flexibility indicate the importance of an historical event. As Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent has argued, a foundational event, such as the Chemical Revolution, involves not 'a mythical gesture creating something out of nothing and predetermining the future' but 'a set of events and circumstances' that is open to a variety of 'interpretations and revisions'.[6] Since future generations will continue to judge and re-judge the past, the complete history of a completed event can never be told. Given this epistemological situation, the historian of science should abandon the traditional, but unrealizable, goal of objective knowledge of the 'actual past' and, instead, 'undertake the reconstruction of historical realities by displaying the wide variety of their potential meanings'.[7] As R G Collingwood noted, history and 'the history of history' are inextricably intertwined.[8]

4 Robert S Westman and David C Lindberg eds., *Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge, 1990), 'Introduction', xxiv.

5 Jurgen Habermas, *On the logic of the social sciences*, trans Shierry Weber Nicholson and Jerry A Stark (Cambridge, MA, 1989), 155-56.

6 Bernadette Benaude-Vincent, 'Between History and Meaning. Centennial and Bicentennial Images of Lavoisier', *Isis*, 87 (1996), 499.

7 Ibid.

8 R G Collingwood, *An autobiography* (Oxford, 1939), 132.

From the hermeneutic perspective, the significance of Joseph Priestley as a historical figure lies in the great variety of interpretations of his life and thought generated by his contemporaries and subsequent scholars. In recognition of D O Thomas's retirement as co-editor of the journal, I would like to reconstruct the scientific personality of Joseph Priestley by displaying the various interpretations of it generated by historians of science during the lifetime of *Enlightenment and Dissent* and its embryonic predecessor, *The Price-Priestley Newsletter*. This has been a singularly fertile period for Priestley scholarship, the fruits of which have yet to be fully appreciated.

At the time of the first publication of *The Price-Priestley Newsletter*, in 1977, the discipline of the history of science was triangulated by three historiographical styles, or interpretive constellations: one on the wane, one in the ascendancy, and one on the rise. While the positivist-Whig view of science as a teleologically structured corpus of experimental knowledge was giving way to the post-positivist view of the history of science as the autonomous exfoliation of theoretical doctrines, the postmodernist view of science as a sociological activity was taking hold. The impact of these shifting historical sensibilities on the evolution of our understanding of Priestley's science will be explored below, where the contours of an alternative historiography will be sketched out.

1

The view of Priestley's science that dominated scholarship in the nineteenth and early twentieth century was a direct consequence of the positivist-Whig interpretation of the Chemical Revolution. A blend of English Whiggism and French positivism, the positivist-Whig historiography has been subjected to considerable scholarly scrutiny in recent years, and its application to the Chemical Revolution has been extensively examined elsewhere.[9] In the

[9] See e.g. John McEvoy, 'Positivism, Whiggism, and the Chemical Revolution: a Study in the Historiography of Chemistry', *History of Science*, 22 (1984), 1-33. See also Simon Schaffer, 'Priestley's

following analysis, I will focus on the features of this historiography that shaped our understanding of Priestley's science.

Compelled by the essentialist view of knowledge as inscribed in the nature of things and the historicist notion of a logic, or *telos*, of history, positivist-Whig historians of science developed a retrospective view of the progressive unfolding of past science towards present science; they linked this progressive movement to the intentional activity to the 'children of light' who used the one true empirical method to overcome the intrusion into science of inherently non-scientific, metaphysical and religious, modes of thought that emanated from the 'children of darkness'. These Manichean sensibilities linked the doctrines of 'instant rationality' and 'crucial experiment' to an ontology of purposive agents and their eureka-moments of discovery. In this manner, positivist-Whig historians sought to formulate, as the significant lessons of history, 'simple and absolute judgments' about the historical origins of science and the cognitive and moral efficacy of scientists.[10]

Positivist-Whig historians, such as F W Gibbs, P Hartog, D McKie, J Passmore, and J R Partington, deployed a range of interpretive strategies to uphold this Manichean and moralistic view of Priestley's role in the Chemical Revolution.[11] The historiography of progress and the associated interest in origins, authorship, and priority informed the judgment of many positivist-Whig historians that, despite his many contributions to the development of experimental techniques and the chemistry of gases, Priestley's claims to be 'one of the fathers of modern chemistry' was obviated by his failure to maintain a strict distinction between his scientific interests and his non-scientific concerns. Whereas they praised Lavoisier for adhering to the positivist's sense of the cognitive autonomy of science, these historians criticized Priestley for the way in which he linked chemical theory to political and religious issues. According to this

Questions: An Historiographic Study', *History of Science*, 22 (1984), 151-83.

[10] For a fuller analysis of the positivist-Whig historiography, see McEvoy, 'Positivism', 8-12.

[11] The works of F W Gibbs, P Hartog, J R Partington, and J Passmore and other scholars are discussed in McEvoy, 'Positivism', 20-21.

interpretation of the Chemical Revolution, Priestley's failure to appreciate the progressive significance of Lavoisier's thought was rooted in a pathological deviation from reason inherent in the unwarranted intrusion of metaphysical, theological, and political forces into the domain of scientific discourse and debate. Charles C Gillespie summed up the positivist-Whig interpretation of the dialectic between Priestley and Lavoisier when he compared the 'want of judgment and elegance' that characterized Priestley's 'scientific style' with the 'critical' mind of Lavoisier and 'its imperative toward order and unity of doctrine'.[12]

Extending this interpretive net to cover the rest of Priestley's scientific career, positivist-Whig historians presented him as an amateur in science, bereft of a formal university education and ignorant of contemporary chemical discourse. On this view, Priestley stumbled into chemistry by accident, drifted through it without purpose, and made discoveries he did not understand. On the contrary, he doggedly believed in the 'false' theory of phlogiston, and he failed to grasp the significance of the 'true' theoretical consequences that Lavoisier was drawing from his experimental discoveries. Science was only a pastime for Priestley; his real interest was in religion, which led him into the social and political arena. Whereas he was a social and religious reformer always in advance of his time, as a scientist he was a conservative, isolated by ignorance and prejudice from his more knowledgeable and progressive contemporaries. As John Brooke recently noted, historians were 'confronted by a set of paradoxes' in Priestley's belief system which few of them were 'able to resist'.[13] In their Manichean presupposition of the unity of science and its demarcation from nonscience, positivist-Whig historians allowed the appearance of Priestley's wayward and somewhat disorganized methodology, inherent in his Baconian approach to science, to

[12] Charles C Gillespie, *The edge of objectivity. An essay on the history of scientific ideas* (Princeton, N.J. 1960), 209-11.

[13] J H Brooke, '"A Sower Went Forth"; Joseph Priestley and the Ministry of Reform', in A Truman Schwartz and John G McEvoy eds. *Motion toward perfection: the achievement of Joseph Priestley* (Boston, 1990), 23.

blind them to the integral role of science in the totality of his thought.

II

R E Schofield challenged the positivist-Whig interpretation of Priestley's science by showing that Priestley received a good scientific education in the Dissenting Academy at Daventry and maintained throughout his life close contact with the scientific literature and issues of the day.[14] Schofield sought the key to Priestley's scientific personality not in his experimental methodology or training but in his commitment to the theoretical principles of Newtonian dynamic corpuscularity. Schofield thus shifted the focus of interpretation of Priestley's science away from the domain of empirical foundations and experimental methodology and towards the realm of theoretical doctrines and research traditions. This interpretive shift was assisted by the emergence of postpositivist philosophical sensibilities associated with such philosophers of science as Karl Popper, Thomas Kuhn, Louis Althusser, and Larry Laudan.[15]

Postpositivist philosphers of science replaced the positivist ideal of empirical certainty, which grounded thought in experience, with a fallibilistic view of theoretical knowledge, which emphasized the autonomy of reason and the constitutive role of concepts in the formation of scientific knowledge. Rejecting the empiricist demarcation between meaningful science and meaningless metaphysics, postpositivists upheld the cognitive unity of science and metaphysics, recognizing the metaphysical dimensions of

[14] See e.g. Robert E Schofield, 'The Scientific Background of Joseph Priestley', *Annals of Science*, 13 (1957), 148-63; idem, 'Electrical Researches of Joseph Priestley', *Archives Internationales d'Histoire des Sciences*, 64 (1963), 277-86; idem, *A scientific autobiography of Joseph Priestley, 1733-1804: selected scientific correspondence with commentary* (Cambridge, Ma., 1966).

[15] See e.g., Karl R Popper, *The logic of scientific discovery* (London, 1959); Thomas S Kuhn, *The structure of scientific revolutions* (2nd edn. enl., Chicago, 1970); Louis S Althusser, *Reading capital*, trans. B Brewster (London, 1968); Larry Laudan, *Progress and its problems. Towards a theory of scientific growth* (Berkeley, Ca., 1977).

science and the scientific implications of metaphysics. The identification of knowledge with theory facilitated the decontextualization of knowledge inherent in the view that it was global entities, such as paradigms, programmes, and traditions, rather than local theories, that were *'the primary tool for understanding and appraising scientific progress'*.[16] Postpositivist historians, such as Alexander Koyré, Henry Guerlac, and A Rupert Hall, used this idealist thesis to challenge Marxist historiographies of the 1930s, which treated science as a practical activity, rooted in the 'arts and crafts' of man's material circumstances.[17] In this vein, postpositivist historians of chemistry upheld Hélène Metzger's view that the history of chemisty consisted not in the cognitive achievements of great chemists but in the emergence and development of 'bodies of doctrine', scientific and philosophical.[18]

These interpretive principles exerted a profound and productive influence on the historiography of the Chemical Revolution. Historians of chemistry now claimed that 'the phlogistic controversy, and the disagreement between Priestley and Lavoisier, was not a matter of 'observation', but of the *interpretation* of 'chemical processes'.[19] Within this historiographical framework, Toulmin used the criteria of 'clarity' and 'simplicity' to distinguish

[16] Laudan, *Progress and its problems*, 72. See also Imre Lakatos, 'History of Science and its Rational Reconstruction', in C Howson, ed., *Method and appraisal in the physical sciences. The critical background to modern science, 1800-1905* (Cambridge, 1981), 1-39; Popper, *Logic, 106-52;* Althusser, *Reading*, 121.

[17] See Alexander Koyré, 'Commentary', in A C Crombie ed, *Scientific change* (New York, 1963), 846-57; idem, *Metaphysics and measurement. Essays in scientific revolution* (Cambridge, Ma., 1968); Henry Guerlac, 'Some Historical Assumptions of the History of Science', and 'Discussion', in Crombie ed., *Scientific change*, 797-812, 875-76.; A R Ruper Hall, 'Merton revisited: Or Science and Society in the Seventeenth Century', *History of Science*, 2 (1963), 1-16.

[18] See Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent 'Hélène Metzger's *La Chimie*: A Popular Treatise', *History of Science*, 25 (1987), 71-84.

[19] F Verbruggen, 'How to Explain Priestley's Defense of Phlogiston', *Janus*, 54 (1972), 67. For a further discussion of the postpositivist historiography of the Chemical Revolution see McEvoy, 'Positivism', 22-24; idem, 'Chemical Revolution', 199-201.

Lavoisier's theorizing from Priestley's; Kuhn viewed the 'revolutionary' move from phlogiston theory to the oxygen theory as a 'paradigm shift'; and Musgrave interpreted the Chemical Revolution in terms of Imre Lakatos's methodology of competing 'research programmes'.[20] More significantly for the development of Priestley scholarship, Robert Schofield related the Chemical Revolution to Lavoisier's rejection of Newtonian physicalism in favour of a Stahlian search for the 'permutation and combination' of relatively indestructible 'elements with property bearing characteristics related to the realm of laboratory experience'. According to Schofield, Priestley rejected the shallow triumph of Lavoisier's materialism and returned to the 'mechanistic' programme of Newtonian dynamic corpuscularity, which denied any permanent identity to the chemical elements and emphasized 'the fundamental significance of determining the ultimate constituents of matter in its mechanistic modes of operations.'[21] Schofield related the Newtonian search for microscopic forces to Priestley's adherence to Boscovich's view of matter as consisting of 'unextended point atoms surrounded by alternating spheres of forces of attraction and repulsion'.[22]

Unfortunately, postpositivist historians failed to relinquish some of the retrospective devaluations of Priestley's science that characterized the positivist-Whig historiography. Thus, Toulmin insisted that his reappraisal of the Chemical Revolution was

[20] See S E Toulmin, 'Crucial Experiments: Priestley and Lavoisier', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 18 (1957), 205-22; Kuhn, *Structure*, 69-70; Alan Musgrave, 'Why Did Oxygen Supplant Phlogiston? Research Programmes in the Chemical Revolution', in Howson ed., *Method*, 181-209.

[21] Robert E Schofield, *Mechanism and materialism: British natural philosophy in an age of reason* (Princeton, N.J., 1970), 230-62 and 272-73. See also Arnold Thackray, *Atoms and powers: an essay in Newtonian matter theory and the development of chemistry* (Cambridge, Ma., 1970), 175-76.

[22] See e.g., Robert E Schofield, 'Joseph Priestley, Natural Philosopher', *Ambix*, 14 (1967), 1-15; idem, 'Boscovich and Priestley's Theory of Matter', in Lancelot L Whyte ed, *Roger Joseph Boscovich, S.J., F.R.S., 1711-1787* (New York, 1961), 168-77.

designed not to 'reinstate Priestley's theories' but 'to make it rather clearer why we rightly prefer Lavoisier's.'[23] Kuhn claimed that a person, such as Priestley, 'who continues to resist after his whole generation has been converted has *ipso facto* ceased to be a scientist.' According to Kuhn, Priestley's opposition to the phlogiston theory was not so much 'illogical or unscientific' as irrelevant and unprofessional.[24] Similarly Musgrave virtually eliminated Priestley from the historical record in a 'rational reconstruction' which brought the Chemical Revolution to an effective end with Lavoisier's discovery of the composition of water, about four years before Priestley engaged his adversaries in earnest debate.[25] Finally, Schofield explicitly ignored 'injunctions not to read back into history the obviousness of modern paradigms'; he offered his 'physicalist' interpretation of Priestley's science as an explanation for his failure to appreciate the 'easy interpretation' that his experimental results received 'within the frame of the oxygen theory'.[26] Postpositivist accounts of the Chemical Revolution transformed the positivist-Whig demarcation between the metaphysical phlogiston theory and the scientific oxygen theory into the incommensurability of competing theories, paradigms, or traditions.

My own interpretation of Priestley's science was shaped by the historiographical tensions as outlined above. While I shared Schofield's sense of the gross inadequacies of the positivist-Whig account of Priestley's science, I was unconvinced by his attempt to assimilate Priestley's thought to the Newtonian tradition. I believed that, besides being at odds with the textual evidence, the imposition of a Newtonian framework on Priestley's thought constituted a distortion of his philosophical sensibilities, which were decidedly anti-Newtonian.[27] In contrast to the dualism and voluntarism of the Newtonian doctrine of passive matter, Priestley used the rationalist principles of his monistic metaphysics to argue for the intrinsic

[23] Toulmin, 'Crucial', 220.
[24] Kuhn, *Structure*, 151 and 159.
[25] Musgrave, 'Oxygen', 201-03.
[26] Schofield, *Autobiography*, 21-74.
[27] See John G McEvoy, 'Joseph Priestley, Natural Philosopher: Some Comments on Professor Schofield's Views', *Ambix*, 15 (1968), 115-33.

activity and sentience of matter. This anti-Newtonian stance was further reinforced by Priestley's empiricist sensibilities, which excluded from science any reference to imperceptible, microscopic forces and particles. It seemed clear to me that a just sense of Priestley's science required a just sense of its place in the totality of his thought.

Galvanized by the postpositivist view of the cognitive unity of science, as well as Laudan's arguments for the crucial role of nonempirical, or conceptual, issues in the development and evaluation, I sought to interpret Priestley's science in relation to his synoptic vision of reality, which was generated by the subtle interplay of the doctrines of necessity, materialism, Socinianism, and associationism.[28] I used this interpretive framework to render intelligible Priestley's work in electricity and pneumatic chemistry, and to throw some light on his role in the Chemical Revolution.[29] In order to counter the view, shared by the different interpretive schools, that the Chemical Revolution involved a radical discontinuity with the past, I explored the continuities, as well as the discontinuities, that existed between Priestley's natural philosophy and Lavoisier's science on a variety of cognitive levels. This analysis encompassed the empirical, theoretical, methodological, epistemological, ontological, and axiological dimensions of the Chemical Revolution, as well as its relation to

[28] See J G McEvoy and J E McGuire, 'God and Nature: Priestley's way of Rational Dissent', in Russell McCormmach ed., *Historical studies in the physical sciences* (Princeton, N.J., 1975), vol. 6, 325-404; Laudan, *Progress and its problems*, ch. 2, 45-69.
[29] See John G McEvoy, 'Electricity, Knowledge, and the Nature of Progress in Priestley's Thought', *British Journal for the History of Science*, 12 (1979), 1-30; idem, 'Joseph Priestley, "Aerial Philosopher": Metaphysics and Methodology in Priestley's Chemical Thought, 1772-1781, Part 1', *Ambix*, 25 (1978), 1-55; 'Part 2', ibid., 93-117; 'Part 3', ibid, 153-175; 'Part 4', ibid., 26 (1979), 16-38; idem, 'Enlightenment and Dissent in Science: Joseph Priestley and the Limits of Theoretical Reasoning', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 2 (1983), 47-67; idem, 'Causes and Laws, Powers and Principles: The Metaphysical Foundations of Priestley's Concept of Phlogiston', in R G W Anderson and Christopher Lawrence eds., *Science, medicine and dissent: Joseph Priestley (1733-1804)* (London, 1987), 55-71.

the broader philosophical and cultural themes associated with the English and French Enlightenment.[30] This exercise in the history of ides was soon challenged by the rise of the sociology of knowledge, which enjoined historians of science to turn away from the cognitive content and toward the practices and social determination of science.

III

My interpretation of Priestley's science was faulted by some scholars for paying insufficient attention to Priestley's chemical practice.[31] In a similar vein, Jan Golinski, John Money, and Simon Schaffer eschewed attempts 'to encompass Priestley's work within a synoptic conceptual or meatphysical structure' in favour of analyzing Priestley's work in relation to the communities in which he practiced and the audiences to which he addressed his writings'.[32] These responses to postpositivist accounts of Priestley's

[30] See John G McEvoy, 'Continuity and Discontinuity in the Chemical Revolution', in *Osiris, Volume 4*: *The Chemical Revolution*: *essays in reinterpretation*, ed. Arthur Donovan (Philadelphia, 1988), 195-213; idem, 'The Enlightenment and the Chemical Revolution', in Roger Woodhouse ed., *Metaphysics and philosophy of science in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Essays in honour of Gerd Buchdahl* (Dordrecht, 1988), 307-25; idem., 'Priestley Responds to Lavoisiser's nomenclature: Language, Liberty, and Chemistry in the English Enlightenment', in Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent and Ferdinando Abbri, *Lavoisier in European context. Negotiating a new language for chemistry* (Canton, Ma., 1995), 123-42.

[31] Geoffrey Cantor, review of Anderson and Lawrence eds., *Science, medicine and dissent*, in *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 8 (1989), 126; Maurice Crossland, 'Priestley Memorial Lecture: a Practical Perspective on Joseph Priestley as a Pneumatic Chemist', *British Journal for the History of Science*, 16 (1983), 223-238.

[32] Jan Golinski, *Science as public culture. Chemistry and Enlightenment in Britain, 1760-1820* (Cambridge, 1992), 65. See John Money, 'Joseph Priestley in Cultural Context: Philosophy and Public Spectacle, Popular Belief, and Popular Politics in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 7 (1988), 57-81; 8 (1989), 69-89; Simon Schaffer, 'Natural Philosophy and Public Spectacle in the Eighteenth Century ', *History of Science*, 21 (1983), 1-43; idem, 'Priestley's Questions'; idem, 'Priestley

science were shaped by the emergence of the sociology of knowledge, which opposed the idealism of postpositivism with a nominalist account of the production of specific knowledge-claims by the practices and discourses of individual agents acting in local contexts.

Contrary to the 'Arrationality Assumption', and the associated distinction between 'internal', rational, beliefs and 'external', socially caused, beliefs, which was the cornerstone of postpositivism, the 'strong programme' in the sociology of knowledge sought to explain all beliefs in terms of social causes.[33] Historiographical substance was given to this metasociological strategy by a range of interpretive devices associated with the nominalist and deconstuctionist tendencies of postmodernsim. Whereas the Interest Model, associated with the Edinburgh School, explained the beliefs of specific agents in local contexts in terms of prior social interest, the Action Model, promulgated by Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, related the experimental, rhetorical, and discursive practices of specific agents in local contexts to the construction of scientific networks and alliances.[34]

Steve Shapin and Simon Schaffer used these interpretive strategies in their classic study of Robert Boyle's experimental life: *Leviathan and the air pump.*[35] Opposed to the idealism of postpositivism, Shapin argued that 'natural philosophy ... was a

and the Politics of Spirit', in Anderson and Lawrence eds., *Science, medicine and dissent*, 39-53; idem, 'Measuring Virtue: Eudiometry, Enlightenment and Pneumatic Medicine', in Andrew Cunningham and Roger French, *The medical Enlightenment of the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1990), 281-318.

[33] See David Bloor, *Knowledge and social imagery* (London, 1976), 1-19; Laudan, *Progress and its problems*, chs. 5 and 6, 155-195.

[34] See Barry Barnes, *Scientific knowledge and sociological theory* London, 1976); Bloor, *Knowledge*; Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory life. The social construction of scientific facts* (London, 1979); Bruno Latour, *Science in action. How to follow scientists and engineers through society* (Cambridge, Ma., 1987). For a fuller discussion of the historiographical implications of the sociology of knowledge, see McEvoy, 'Chemical Revolution', 201-04.

[35] *Leviathan and the air-pump*: *Hobbes, Boyle, and the experimental life* (Princeton, N.J., 1985)

kind of work', in which global theoretical and formal methodological pronouncements were 'rhetorical tools for positioning practices in the culture and for specifying how these practices were to be valued'.[36] Treating experimental and rhetorical practices as sites of the simultaneous formation of science and society, Schaffer insisted that Robert Boyle's mechanical philosophy was not so much about nature as 'part of a set of claims about the proper audience for natural philosophy and the proper behaviour of experimentalists'.[37] These interpretive strategies had a significant impact on the development of Priestley scholarship in the 1980s and '90s.

The nominalist tendencies of postmodernism encouraged Roy Porter and Jan Golinski to emphasize the 'many different forms' Enlightenment science took in 'vastly different social and political environments'.[38] Within this nominalist framework, Simon Schaffer dismissed the 'tradition seeking method' as 'profoundly unhistorical' and related the 'specificity' of eighteenth-century natural philosophy to a mode of discursive and experimental practices distinct from science and philosophy.[39] Schaffer argued that the 'political and cultural contexts' of Priestley's 'interventions in natural philosophy' were 'crucial for the interpretation of Priestley's work'.[40] According to Schaffer, Priestley disrupted a tradition of enquiry and instruction in which lecturers in natural philosophy amused, amazed, and exhorted their audience by displaying natural powers, such as electricity, as the separate and immediate interventions of the power of God'.[41] In contrast, Priestley used natural philosophy not to display God's immediate

[36] Steven Shapin, *The scientific revolution* (Chicago, 1996), 95.

[37] Simon Schaffer, 'Making Certain', *Social Studies of Science*, 14 (1984), 137-152.

[38] Roy Porter, 'Preface', to Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich eds., *The Enlightenment in national context* (Cambridge, 1981), vii; Jan V Golinski, 'Science *in* the Enlightenment', *History of Science*, 24 (1986), 411-24.

[39] Simon Schaffer, 'Natural Philosophy', in G S Rousseau and Roy Porter eds., *The ferment of knowledge. Studies in the historiography of eighteenth-century science* (Cambridge, 1980), 55-56.

[40] Schaffer, 'Politics of Spirit', 59.

[41] See Schaffer, 'Public Spectacle'; idem., 'Politics of Spirit'.

power in nature, but to reveal the rationality of his creation. By emphasizing the systematic connections between the powers of nature, Priestley put 'Whig natural philosophy to radical, and ultimately Jacobin ends', in which systems of policing society and the environment were anchored in systems of nature.[42] Schaffer presented Priestley's eudiometer not only as a means of measuring the purity of the environment, but also as a focus of mediation between Priestley's science and the improving culture of the emergent English bourgeoisie. He further insisted that 'Priestley's war against French chemistry was ... launched as a consequence of this technology which adequately embodied his phlogistic cosmology.' On this view, 'Lavoisier needed to learn and undermine this technology to build a new theory of air, respiration, and life'.[43] In this manner, Schaffer replaced the 'essentially conceptual analysis' of the Chemical Revolution by postpositivism with 'a story which picks out the problems of experimental replication and public polemics'.[44]

John Money used Schaffer's analysis of Priestley's 'interventions in natural philosophy' to throw new light on the cultural context of Priestley's tumultous years in Birmingham.[45] In contrast to Money and Schaffer, Christie and Golinski downplayed the influence on eighteenth-century chemistry of 'speculative natural philosophy'.[46] In place of the postpositivist distinction between the internal, cognitive dimensions of science and its 'external', social causes, Christie and Golinski developed a historiography based on the distinction between the 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' features of chemistry. They argued that the nature and identity of 'chemical practice' varied with its 'intrinsic', intellectual *and* social features, which were distinct from the 'extrinsic', intellectual *and* social factors that have influenced its development. Influenced by Owen Hannaway's investigation of the 'origins of chemistry, as a didactic

[42] Schaffer, 'Politics of Spirit', 50.

[43] Schaffer, 'Measuring Virtue', 289-90.

[44] Schaffer, 'Priestley's Questions', 163.

[45] See Money, 'Priestley in Cultural Context'.

[46] See J R R and J V Golinski, 'The Spreading of the Word: New Directions in the Historiography of Chemistry', *History of Science*, 20 (1982), 235-66.

tradition, at the beginning of the seventeenth century', Christie and Golinski claimed that eighteenth-century chemistry was best understood by 'stressing the intrinsic features of a developing tradition seen to inhere in a community of texts devoted to didactic discourse.'[47] Since extrinsic factors, such as natural philosophy and matter theory, could influence but not constitute 'a disciplinary practice with its own identity', the primary task for the historian of eighteenth-century chemistry 'was to place authors' intentional use of a didactic tradition in their individual contexts'.[48] Accepting Crosland's claim that it was his identity as 'a writer' that held together Priestley's 'science and theology', Golinski showed how Priestley's methods of publishing his experimental work on gases embodied the democratic values of the Enlightenment.[49] Golinski used his analysis of Priestley's science to support the postmodernist view that the essentially private and local knowledge of laboratory phenomena becomes public science to the extent that scientists succeeded in constructing networks of individuals, or 'audiences', held together by the circulation of specific texts, instruments, and operational skills.

IV

Larry Holmes criticized existing accounts of the Chemical Revolution for failing to appreciate the 'complexity of the event'.[50] Instead of focusing on 'one or another group of subproblems' – such as the discovery of oxygen or the use of the balance – as 'the central defining thread of the revolution', Holmes sought 'to show how the various thematic strands that historians have isolated as critical factors' were interwoven in the dynamic unfolding of Lavoisier's career.[51] In a similar vein, I criticized current accounts of

[47] Ibid., 237 and 2
54. See also Owen Hannaway, *The chemists and the word: the didactic origins of chemistry* (Baltimore, Md., 1975).

[48] Ibid., 243.

[49] See Crosland, 'Practical Perspective', 237; Golinski, *Science*, chs. 3 and 4.

[50] Frederick Lawrence Holmes, *Eighteenth-Century chemistry as an investigative enterprise* (Berkeley, Ca., 1989), 114.

[51] Ibid., 114-15.

Priestley's science for focusing too narrowly on one or another aspect of his science – such as his belief in phlogiston, (mis)use of the balance, matter theory, eudiometric techniques, or discursive practices – and for failing to appreciate the 'synoptic unity' of his diverse activities and interests.[52] However, postmodernist historians, such as Christie and Golinski, refused to place 'Priestley's work within a synoptic conceptual or metaphysical structure', claiming that to do so would involve reference to an 'underlying and pre-existent mental set' which excluded 'temporalized' accounts of Priestley's science. More generally, they criticized structuralist and post-positivist historiographies for replacing the diachronic movement of history with the synchronic 'immobilism' of static structures and fixed frameworks.[53] But the postmodernist preference for specific studies of fragmented episodes in Priestley's science is equally incapable of grasping the temporal development of his life and thought. Indeed, the nominalizing tendencies of postmodernism threaten any notion, static or otherwise, of Priestley as a coherent historical actor with personal identity. This is evident in Crosland's claim that 'it is tempting to conclude that there are many Priestley's according to whether one focuses on the early Priestley (say, of the Leeds period) or the later Priestley'.[54] If postpositivists sought refuge from the dynamic mutability of history in a Platonic heaven of trans-historical structures, frameworks, and traditions, post-modernists lost sight of its direction, or developmental unity, in a bewildering array of partial and fragmented perspectives. Either way, the historical Priestley was denied.

The 'synoptic' interpretation of Priesley science was not entirely insensitive to the 'temporality' of his thought. On this interpretation, Priestley's 'synoptic' activity was contrasted with the

[52] See e.g. McEvoy, 'Priestley, Part 1', 1-7; idem, 'Continuity'; idem, 'Search',

[53] Golinski, *Science*, 65; Christie and Golinski, 'Word', 255-57; Schaffer, 'Priestley's Questions', 157. For a brilliant polemic against structuralist historiographies see E P Thompson, *The poverty of theory and other essays* (New York and London, 1978).

[54] Maurice Crosland, review of Anderson and Lawrence eds., *Science, medicine and dissent*, in *Isis* 80 (1989), 706.

systematic science of Lavoisier, which unfolded according to the logical and heuristic dictates of a preconceived research programme.[55] Although Priestley was intent on the articulation and application of a clearly defined set of interpretive principles, he never tried to organize his experimental results into a coherent theoretical system; he was more concerned with the comprehension of new experiences when and where they arose. Still, as Christie and Golinski noted, the 'synoptic' interpretation did not recognize any interaction between Priestley's chemistry and philosophy: 'the actual messing about with matter did not, on this argument, reciprocally induce any change or prompt any novelty in the unaltering structure of Priestley's conceptual framework'.[56] This point is well taken, but I now think that it does not go far enough. A genuinely historical account must not only allow 'Priestley's mind a chronology'; it must also recognize the fundamentally dynamic tenor and orientation of his life and thought.

The dynamic 'tensions' in Priestley's life and thought were numerous, and some are well known. Priestley was a pious Christian who doubted the divinity of Christ; a theologian who emphasized God's inscrutable will while striving to understand the Divine attributes and creative act; a Scriptural exegete who used the reality of Biblical miracles to argue that miracles do not occur; an apologist who sought to improve what he regarded as the best of all possible worlds; a philosophical determinist who insisted on individual responsibility; an advocate of toleration for Roman Catholics who regarded their religion as a 'system of abomination'; a materialist who denied the solidity, or materiality of matter; a radical in politics and religion who opposed the new chemistry with the fervour of a reactionary; a civil libertarian who appealed to natural rights and utilitarian principles; an ontologist who upheld both the unity and the multiplicity of nature; an epistemologist who used Hume's language to describe nature's necessity; a methodologist who ascribed to Baconian inductivism as keenly as he embraced the hypothetico-deductivism of Hartley; and a chemist who sought to identify 'generic principles' with 'simple substances'.

[55] See McEvoy, 'Joseph Priestley', 6-7.

[56] Christie and Golinski, 'Word', 256.

John Brooke is the latest in a long line of Priestley scholars who have been struck by the paradoxical nature of Priestley's thought.[57] Many of these scholars have taken Priestley's 'inconsistencies' as evidence of the weakness of his ample, eclectic mind; others, including myself, have sought to resolve and transcend these paradoxes by viewing them as local, superficial effects of a more comprehensive and consistent system of thought.[58]

A third way is advocated here. Instead of treating the tensions in Priestley's thought as formal inadequacies, or 'inconsistencies', they should be approached as 'dialectical' manifestations of the change and development that constituted Priestley's life and thought, and the world that shaped and sustained it. As a millenarian Christian and an Enlightenment reformer, Priestley viewed society, nature, and history as a nexus of improvement, designed by God to generate good out of evil. As a convert from the gloomy faith of Calvinism to the optimism of his mature Unitarianism, he sensed that his own life and thought were caught up in a divinely sustained programme of cosmic improvement. Priestley was a reformer and a pilgrim; he moved through life, transforming and improving what the world – natural and social, intellectual and material – presented to him. An adequate interpretation of Priestley's science must relate it to the dynamic unfolding of a life that his fellow Unitarian, William Enfield, described as the manifestation of a 'motion toward perfection'.[59]

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[57] Brooke, 'Sower', 23-24.

[58] See e.g. McEvoy, 'Joseph Priestley', 1-7.

[59] See Schwartz and McEvoy, 'Introduction: a Brief Biography and Overview of the Anthology', in Schwartz and McEvoy eds., *Motion toward perfection* , xvii.

MONISM, UNITARIANISM, AND PHLOGISTON IN JOSEPH PRIESTLEY'S NATURAL PHILOSOPHY

Robert E Schofield

It was during the decade of the 1790s, while he was still enamoured of liberalism, Unitarianism, and Joseph Priestley, that Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote to John Prior Estlin (Unitarian minister of Bristol): 'I regard every experiment that Priestley made in chemistry, as giving *wings* to his more sublime theological works.'[1] Now this may mean no more than Priestley's oft repeated claim that he prized his scientific reputation for the authority it lent his theological speculations. But Coleridge was a person of considerable philosophical sensitivity, despite his later idiosyncratic wrong-headness. It seems more than just possible that he was *then* aware of something that Priestley scholars have only *recently* acknowledged. Far from contradicting a random empiricism and conservatism in science with his radicalism in theology, Priestley combined his natural and religious philosophies in a mutually supportive world-view of considerable sophistication, though it may have lacked complete coherence.

Unfortunately Coleridge was not explicit in his perception of the connection between Priestley's chemistry and his theology. It is, therefore, left to us to follow the clues in Priestley's writings, without the aid of that perceptive critic and commentator. Happily, once one is freed from positivist preconceptions, those clues are not hard to find in the metaphysical / theological works Priestley wrote and published during the *same* years in which his major chemical publications appeared.[2] Elements for the formulation of his

[1] Leslie Griggs ed., *Collected letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (2 vols., Oxford, 1971), vol. 1, 372; letter of 16 January, 1798. For more on Coleridge and his attitude toward Priestley, see Robert E Schofield, 'Joseph Priestley, eighteenth-century British Neoplatonism, and S.T. Coleridge', in Everett Mendelsohn ed., *Transformation and tradition in the sciences: essays in honour of I. Bernard Cohen* (Cambridge, 1984), 237-54.

[2] The six volumes of *Experiments and observations*, which contained his most sustained 'chemical' research appeared during the years 1774 to

philosophical position can be found from the early days of his education while later defences of religion in *Letter to a philosophical unbeliever* (1780, 87, 95) and similar works develop further some of the arguments of that natural philosophy. However, the publications of the decade of the 1770s contain the most elaborately drawn statement of Priestley's beliefs and they provide the focus for this paper.

The major work of the period, the book that his friend Theophilus Lindsey called Priestley's 'great metaphysical work', was the *Disquisitions relating to matter and spirit. To which is added the history of the philosophical doctrine concerning the origin of the soul, and the nature of matter, with its influence on Christianity especially with respect to the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ.*[3] Like any good 18th century book title, that one tells a great deal. It does not, however, reveal that the way in which Priestley links his arguments on the nature of matter, spirit, the soul, and the pre-existence of Christ is through a monism developed by an exhaustive attack on dualism in religion and material pluralism in science.

Priestley declared that modern philosophical dualism began with Descartes, who so rigorously separated matter from spirit that it was logically impossible for the one to affect the other.

1786. These volumes [hereafter *Experiments and observations*] comprised three volumes of *Experiments and observations on different kinds of air* and three volumes of *Experiments and observations relating to various branches of natural philosophy with a continuation of the observations on air*. A composite and abridged edition of them all was first published in 1790. In the same period (1774-86), Priestley published his *An examination of Dr. Reid's 'Inquiry into the human mind on the principles of common sense', Dr. Beattie's 'Essay on the nature and immutability of truth' and Dr. Oswald's 'Appeal to common sense on behalf of religion'* (1774) his edition of Hartley's *Theory of the human mind* (1775), his *Disquisitions relating to matter and spirit* (1777), the *Doctrine of philosophical necessity illustrated* (1777), and the *Free discussion of the doctrines of materialism* (1778).

[3] J T Rutt ed., *Theological and miscellaneous works of Joseph Priestley* (25 vols, 1818-30, repr. New York, 1972), vol.1, 294n.; Theophilus Lindsey to William Turner, 12 Nov. 1776; Joseph Priestley, *Disquisitions relating to matter and spirit* (London, 1777).

Nonetheless, the concept was accepted because it had the support of 'that pagan corruption of christianity, the pre-existence of souls.'[4] Jews and early Jewish Christians had escaped the seductions of philosophy, but philosophically minded gentiles, offended by the notion of a crucified Savior, had introduced the concept of His *in*humanity, i.e. His existence prior to taking on human form. Arguing on the basis of Platonism and, especially, neo-Platonism, these philosophical Christians declared that matter was imperfect and the embodiment of a soul was its punishment for sin. The flood of Platonism, gnosticism, and hermeticism appeared in post-Apostolic writings of such early church fathers as Clemens Alexandrinus, Origen, and even Augustine. 'And by this easy channel, the corruption of pre-existence of souls, Arianism, trinitarianism, worship of saints, etc., flow into the Christian system.'[5] For Priestley a major advantage of his monism – which he was always to call materialism – was that it left no possible support for a doctrine of pre-existence.

The important element in this theological argument was uniformity of composition. The precise nature of that composition was not significant so long as it could be argued that it was capable of feeling and thought. Priestley declared that the only reason matter had been supposed incompatible with the principle of sensation had been that it was conceived as inert, solid and impenetrable. But electrical experiments, optical researches, temperature phenomena had all shown that material bodies were neither solid nor impenetrable while the 'more subtle and important laws of matter' exhibited in chemistry have shown 'mere' matter not to be inert, but infinitely more complex than had been imagined.[6] Once accepted as a possibility, simple perception in matter can be analysed and its consequences developed on the precepts of Newton, David Hartley, and John Locke.

External objects excite sensations, suggested Newton, by causing nerve endings to vibrate. These vibrations are carried by the nerves

4 *Disquisitions*, 60

5 *Disquistions*, 229.

6 *Disquisitions*, 12-15; *Hartley's theory of the human mind, on the principle of the association of ideas, with essays relating to the subject of it* (London, 1775), xvii.

to the brain, where they cause the simple (Lockean) ideas of sensation of sight, sound, taste, etc. Such vibrations may differ in magnitude, frequency, place and direction of entry into the substance of the brain. Because solid substances can retain forms impressed upon them, one may suppose, with Hartley, that the brain becomes predisposed to vibrate in modes and combinations of modes depending upon its history. Thus, by immediate vibrations and by associations of vibrations, are simple and complex ideas produced.[7]

Hartley, lest he be accused of materialism, had, in his *Observations on man* (1749), supposed the existence of some infinitesimal elementary substance, neither matter nor spirit, to link operations of the brain with those of the mind. Great as was Priestley's admiration of Dr. Hartley, he was far from accepting everything in the *Observations*. 'I own I see no reason why his [Hartley's] scheme should be burdened with such an incumbrance as this [substance].'[8] If the properties of sensation, perception, and thought are not logically impossible to matter, then 'the universally received rules of philosophizing, such as are laid down by Sir Isaac Newton,' require that the *brain* be accepted as the medium and source of thought. These properties are never found except in conjunction with *that* organized system of matter; the faculty of thought and the state of the brain accompany and correspond to one another. Admitting no more causes of things than are sufficient to explain appearances and assigning the same causes to the same effects, certain consequences seem to follow:

> I am rather inclined to think that ... man does not consist of two principles, so essentially different from one another as *matter* and *spirit* ... described as having not one common property.... I rather think that the whole of man is of some *uniform composition* and that the property of perception ... is the result of such an organical structure as that of the brain.[9]

Priestley claimed, in the preface to the *Disquisitions*, that his

7 Priestley, *Hartley*, Essay I, 'A General View of the doctrine of Vibrations.'

8 Priestley, *Hartley*, xix.

9 Priestley, *Hartley*, xv.

monistic doubts of the immateriality of the soul were a recent consequence of his work on the *Examination* of the Scottish Common-Sense philosophers and his edition of *Hartley*. A cursory survey of his reading and thinking suggests, however, that the doubts had merely surfaced as an organized articulation of arguments collected over many years. His studies of Philip Doddridge's *Lectures on pneumatology* (published 1763), while a student at Daventry Academy, would, it is true have confirmed the distinction between spirit and matter ('solid extension cannot think'), but added a caution that man knows too little about his nature to be dogmatic about it. Nathaniel Lardner's *Letter on the Logos* (1759), which Priestley had certainly read by the 1770s, supposed that the concept of a pre-existing inferior deity (Arianism) had been introduced into Christianity by learned converts from heathenism and argued that the word body was not understood, by the Scriptures, as separate from the soul. Priestley's *Free address on church discipline* (1770) notes the debasing of the 'true system of christianity' by Oriental Philosophy, and in the following year he traces Arianism to Gnostics and insists that nature, as a gift of God, could not possibly be malign.

His critics claimed that Priestley had revived an argument that had long ago been settled and there is some small justice to their claims. Certainly Priestley was aware of the work of Thomas Hobbes, John Toland, and Anthony Collins. But he had added to their, and similar, arguments on materialism, a new physiological psychology – that of David Hartley – and, of equal importance, he had combined this with a new theory of matter.[10]

Now it is true that he had declared, in his *Free discussion of the doctrines of materialism...* with Richard Price, that his monistic assumption was independent of any consideration of the internal structure of matter, 'concerning which we know ... very little; having few data to argue from.'[11] But Priestley, himself, could not

[10] For a fuller discussion of materialist arguments during this period, see John W Yolton, *Thinking matter: materialism in eighteenth-century Britain* (Minneapolis, 1983).

[11] Joseph Priestley, *A free discussion of the doctrines of materialism, and philosophical necessity, in a correspondence between Dr. Price, and Dr. Priestley. To which are added, by Dr. Priestley, An introduction,*

rest content with his proof by economy-of-design: 'independent of other considerations, it [the hypothesis of monism] wears the face of that simplicity in causes, and variety in effects, which we discover in every other part of nature.'[12] Not only did his opponents demand more, but Priestley envisioned 'one comprehensive law ... found to govern both the material and intellectual world.'[13] Such a law would entail an inclusive theory of matter and so, despite his reluctance, he feigned an hypothesis.

Suppose all matter to be essentially the same, consisting of very small corpuscles surrounded by alternate spheres of repulsive and attractive forces. Such corpuscles could combine in a great variety of stable configurations and act upon one another as suggested in the *Theoria philosophiae naturalis* (1763) of the Abbé Roger Joseph Boscovich. This theory of matter was no more wholly original than was the monism of Priestley's theology; neither was it entirely new to Priestley as he wrote his *Disquisitions*. Isaac Watts had declared that chemists regard all matter as the same, diversified only by its various shapes, quantities, motions, and situations. Newton's work in astronomy and optics had, however, demonstrated the inadequacy of inert matter-in-motion concepts. His addition of powers of attraction and repulsion, in successive action at different distances, was taken up, and elaborated on, by such natural philosophers as John Rowning, Stephen Hales, John Michell, and Boscovich. Newtonian physico-theologians had argued that these powers were the immediate agency of the Deity, supra-added to inert matter by continual action of God. Priestley thought that all effects, constantly present, of any substance were better explained by powers properly belonging to that substance. 'I believe it is possible ... that God may endue substances with powers, which ... produce effects in a manner different from his immediate agency.'[14]

explaining the nature of the controversy, and letters to several writers who have animadverted on his Disquisitions relating to matter and spirit, or his Treatise on necessity (London, 1778), 243.

[12] Priestley, *Hartley*, xxiv.

[13] Priestley, *Hartley*, xxv.

[14] Priestley, *Disquisitions*, 9; *Free discussion* , 233.

Priestley had read all these people – Watts, Newton, Rowning, Michell, Boscovich, and Hales, the physico-theologians – before he began significant investigations in chemistry. Most of them he had read prior to his doing any independent work in science. Indeed, by the time he commenced scientific investigations, these ideas were obsolete for most of his scientist contempories. The failure of force hypotheses adequately to explain newly discovered phenomena had caused scientists to regress to a system of explanations closely resembling Aristotle's substantialized qualities. Instead of computing force equations, they engaged in definitions of an increasing number of unique substances: fluids of heat, electricity, magnetism, even of vitality. But Priestley was reluctant to accept this radical materialist pluralism in contradiction to his theological and philosophical monism.

And it is here, I believe, that one finds one ultimate source of Priestley's persistent denial of Antoine Lavoisier's 'revolution in chemistry.' Of all the pluralist matter theories of the late eighteenth century, Lavoisier's was the worst. Instead of Isaac Watts's chemist, for whom all matter was ultimately the same, Lavoisier's chemist was to maintain a system of different elements, each uniquely characterized by a particular chemical quality. There were thirty-three of these with Lavoisier, and increasingly many with Lavoisian chemists as the years went by. Now by 'elements', Lavoisier meant 'the last point which analysis is capable of reaching ... all the substances into which we are capable, by any means, to reduce bodies by decomposition.'[15]

This definition of element was not a new one, but to Lavoisier goes the clear distinction of devising an operational method by which the 'last point' of analysis could be determined – i.e. by use of the parameter of weight. This gave Lavoisier and the chemists who followed him an assured notion of chemical compound (which Priestley lacked) and of element. It also transformed chemistry into a form of that favourite science of the eighteenth century, taxonomy, with species, genus, class, and order all neatly determined by the different properties of the elements and their

[15] Antoine Lavoisier, *Elements of chemistry*, trans. R Kerr (New York, reprint of 1790 Edinburgh edn., 1965), xxiv.

combinations.[16] But it left out any discussion of the causes of these different properties, of the different combinations, or, more generally, of 'the constituent and elementary parts of matter.'

Such discussions were, for Lavoisier (and for his followers), 'entirely of a metaphysical nature.... if, by the term *elements*, we mean to express those simple and indivisible atoms of which matter is composed, it is extremely probably we know nothing at all about them.'[17] But it was precisely in this ultimate nature of matter that Priestley was most interested. This had been true from his earliest work in science, when he wrote:

> Hitherto philosophy has been chiefly conversant about the more sensible properties of bodies; electricity, together with chymistry, and the doctrine of light and colours, seems to be giving us an inlet into their internal structure, on which all their sensible properties depend.[18]

In those prefaces to his books of *Experiments and observations* which so often contained metaphysical references as well as theology and politics, there are comments which demonstrate his intention to obtain that data for arguing to the internal structure of matter whose lack he was to regret in his *Free discussion* with Price. The preface to volume two of *Experiments and observations* (1776), written while he was writing the *Disquisitions*, declares: 'this is not now a business of air only, as it was at first. But appears to be of much greater magnitude and extent, so as to diffuse light upon the most *general principles* of natural knowledge, and especially those about which *chymistry* is particularly conversant.'

The preface to volume three (1777) reveals the reason for his zeal: 'by exhibiting substances in the *form of air*, we have an opportunity of examining them in a less compounded state, and are

[16] See Lavoisier, *Elements*, xxv-xxx, where there is an elaborate discussion of the new nomenclature for the new chemistry, following the dictates of Condillac's logic, based upon the notion of class, order, genus, etc. Note, however, that Lavoisier's youthful introduction to the sciences had been through botany and mineralogy, in each of which taxonomy was an essential aspect.

[17] Lavoisier, *Elements of chemistry*, xxiv.

[18] Joseph Priestley, *The History and present state of electricity* (London, 1767), xiii.

advanced one step nearer to their primitive elements.'[19]

Though this difference in ultimate intent may well be a major cause of the difference between Lavoisier and Priestley, there is no explicit evidence of it in Priestley's *formal* science writing. In that, he maintained a Baconian facade; he would recount facts, avoiding any commitment to theory. But it is notoriously difficult to describe a 'fact' independent of an ordering theory. Sometimes in his correspondence, occasionally even in scientific publications, it is possible to discern a continued fondness for monistic explanations in science. Writing to a friend about his electrical researches, he expressed doubts of the existence of a fluid of electricity as early as 1767.[20] Periodically he would insist that heat was not a fluid, but a mode of vibration of the particles of hot bodies.[21] Twice he described the design of an experiment in terms of spheres of attraction and repulsion and he persisted in a belief that he could transform substances by mechanical manipulations – compression, expansion, agitation in water, application of heat or cold – changing the mode of combination of the constituent principle of airs.[22]

Priestley's Baconian facade was firmly in place throughout his dispute with Lavoisier and the Lavoisians. If there was a partially hidden agenda in Priestley's pneumatic studies, he avoided any reference to it, as he avoided reference to the assumptions in Lavoisier's revolution in chemistry. Yet that 'revolution' was based upon unproved assumptions and left unanswered basic issues in chemistry. This despite Lavoisier's claim that he had resolved 'never to advance but from what is known to what is unknown; never to form any conclusion which is not an immediate consequence necessarily flowing from observation and

[19] *Experiments and observations*, II, vii-viii; III, ix.

[20] Robert E Schofield ed., *A scientific autobiography of Joseph Priestley. Selected scientific correspondence* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), 56-58, letter no. 16, Priestley to John Canton, 12 Nov. 1767.

[21] See, for example, Joseph Priestley, *Experiments and observations* (2nd. edn ., London, 1775), 286.

[22] *Experiments and observations*, IV (1779), 408; *Scientific autobiography*, 215, letter no. 100, Priestley to Josiah Wedgwood, 8 Dec. 1782; *Experiments and observations*, I, 261.

experiment'.[23] Why, for example, was it an 'incontestable axiom that ... an equal quantity of matter exists both before and after experiments, the quality and quantity of the elements remain[ing] precisely the same....'?[24] And, assuming the conservation of substance, why was that to be uniquely determined by weight? 'the usefulness and accuracy of chemistry depends *entirely* upon the determination of the weights of the ingredients and products both before and after experiments....'[25] This last question is particularly important, for though Lavoisier condemned phlogiston for its lack of weight, he himself employed a weightless substance, calorique, as his *deus ex machina* in attempting to evade considering the cause of chemical and structural changes: the doctrine of affinities being attended by 'obscurities and difficulties' and the causes of change of state being otherwise unexplained in his new chemistry.[26]

Although Priestley avoided attacking Lavoisier on these ontological issues, there remained a number of areas in which an experimental attack might be launched, for the 'new chemistry' was, in the form that Lavoisier left it, badly flawed in experiment as well as in concept. It maintained, for example, that combustion was possible only in the presence of oxygen, and that any combination with oxygen produced acid. Priestley's contemporaries were to demonstrate combustion in sulphur and in chlorine, while Priestley himself insisted that marine acid [HCl] contained no oxygen. Even in the two major instances of Priestley's 'errors' in his experimental attacks on Lavoisian chemistry, the composition of water and the production of 'inflammable air' from 'finery cinder' [iron oxide], contemporary logic though not truth was with Priestley. An electric spark in the mixture of dephlogisticated and inflammable airs [oxygen and hydrogen] did produce an acid, not water. Priestley responded to the arguments of Henry Cavendish and Lavoisier that the acid was a result of contamination by mephitic air [nitrogen], by deliberately adding mephitic air to his

[23] Lavoisier, *Elements,* xviii.

[24] Lavoisier, *Elements*, 130-131.

[25] Lavoisier, *Elements*, 297, italics added.

[26] Lavoisier, *Elements*, xxi.

mixture. The result was less acid, not more. What contemporary could, or did, argue the critical importance of the temperature of the reaction for the production of nitric acid? Repeatedly heating 'finery cinder' did produce 'inflammable air' in the absence of water. Only by adding a new inflammable gas, carbon monoxide, to the class of compound gases – a retreat from a position maintained for years against attack – were the Lavoisians able to sustain the 'new chemistry.'

What he could never do was to mount a successful attack on the epistemological consequences of the ontological assumptions about substance and weight. As it was precisely this emphasis upon balanced weight that distinguished Lavoisier's 'revolution' and, in the end, transformed chemistry into the taxanomic science that it became for the next half century. Failure to address it ultimately meant failure in every part of Priestley's argument. To address the question of weight on any ground other than experimental was excluded by contemporary rules of scientific discourse. To address the question experimentally was excluded by Priestley's quantitative insensitivity. He could make shrewd qualitative observations, such as in his implied criticism of essentialist chemistry: 'All particular substances need not have the same modes of attraction and repulsion, nor need the properties of a compound be possessed by its parts, as examples from the chemistry of alkalies and acid demonstrate.'[27] But his attempts at quantitative observations were inadequate.

The only quantitative observations Priestley consistently made – on changes of volume of reacting gases – were perhaps intended to supply data on forces of attraction or repulsion. If so, he did not know what to do with the results he obtained. What he could not do was reason from his experiments to a theory of matter which involved a mathematical form. Now no one else, at that time, could give mathematical form to a theory of matter comprehending its internal structure. And surely it is not without relevance to suggest that no one else was able, purely from experimental data, to reason to a theory of matter. That had not stopped other speculators and it was not to stop Priestley. So long as the model he had earlier

[27] Priestley, *Free discussion*, 18, 364.

derived from Newtonian predecessors and elaborated on metaphysical / theological / physiological grounds was not disproved by his experiments, he would continue to defend it. 'Suppose,' he said:

> ... that the Divine Being, when he created matter, only fixed certain centers of various attractions and repulsions, extending indefinitely in all directions, ... these centers approaching to, or receding from each other, and ... carrying their peculiar spheres of attraction and repulsion along with them ... These spheres may be diversified infinitely so as to correspond to all the kinds of bodies that we are acquainted with .... A compages of these centers placed within the sphere of each others attraction will constitute a body that we term compact and two will constitute a body that we term compact and two of these bodies will, on their approach meet with a repulsion, or resistance, sufficient to ... appear perfectly hard .... matter is, by this means, resolved into nothing but the divine agency, exerted according to certain rules.[28]

But if effects, constantly present, of any substance were better explained by powers properly belonging to that substance, then the substance may well have been phlogiston, a *machina ex deus* by which the power of that 'divine agency' could be discerned.[29]

Most of Priestley's contemporaries failed to understand or appreciate what he was attempting to do. Many of these, incensed by his persistent use of the word 'matter' to describe his monistic invention, denounced Priestley as an atheist who disbelieved in the soul. Others, more perceptive but still unappreciative, asked how geometrical points could have properties; what was it that possessed powers? Coleridge was one of very few not fooled:

> For since impenetrability is intelligible only as a mode of resistance; its admission places the essence of *matter* in a mode of power which it possesses in common with spirit; and body and spirit are therefore no longer absolutely heterogeneous, but may without any absurdity be supposed

[28] Priestley, *Free discussion* , 247-248, 250.

[29] See *supra*, footnote 14.

> to be different modes, or degrees of perfection, of a common substratum .... But as soon as materialism becomes intelligible, it ceases to be materialism. In order to explain *thinking*, as a material phenomenon, it is necessary to refine matter into a mere modification of intelligence ... Even so did Priestley ... He stript matter of all its material properties; substituted spiritual powers.[30]

And thus, as Priestley was so often to say, is GOD ALL IN ALL, and thus is Priestley's Unitarian theology linked to his natural philosophy through a monism which commands and is commanded by both.

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[30] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia literaria*, ed. J Shawcross (London, 1907), vol. 1, 88, 91. Note that Immanuel Kant also interpreted the obvious sensible properties of matter as consequences of attractive and repulsive forces.

ANDREW FULLER AND THE SOCINIANS

*Alan P F Sell**

Near the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Puritan divine, Matthew Henry (1662-1714), remarked, 'It was a pleasure to Socinus, that arch-heretick, that he had no master: we wish it had been his fate to have had no scholars.'[1] Henry would, no doubt, have been dismayed by the number of Socinus's 'scholars' who were vigorously propagating their 'heresy' in the last quarter of the same century. Theophilus Lindsey, Thomas Belsham and, above all, Joseph Priestley, were all found advocating what their opponents branded 'Socinianism', and what they preferred to designate 'Unitarianism'. Among their sturdiest opponents was the evangelical Calvinist Baptist, Andrew Fuller (1754-1815).[2]

Best known for his advocacy of mission, and for his leadership of the Baptist Missionary Society (1792), Fuller was, albeit self-taught, the leading Baptist theologian of his generation, and a formidable polemicist to boot.[3] He took on deists,[4] universalists,

* I count it an honour to have been invited to contribute to this *festschrift* for my good friend, Dr. D O Thomas. My subject brings together the two traditions, Baptist and Unitarian, with which he has been most closely associated.

[1] J B Williams, *Memoirs of the life, character, and writings of the Rev. Matthew Henry* (1828, repr. Edinburgh, 1974), 181.

[2] For Fuller see *The Dictionary of National Biography* (hereinafter *DNB*); Donald M Lewis, ed., *The Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography 1730-1860* (Oxford, 1995); Phil Roberts, 'Andrew Fuller,' in Timothy George and David S Dockery eds., *Baptist theologians* (Nashville, TN, 1990), ch. 6.

[3] Fuller's polemical works do not appear to have received much attention of late. Phil Roberts declines to discuss them on the ground that they are not theological treatises, op.cit., 138; but Fuller's polemics are intensely theological, as we shall see. Fuller is not mentioned by J. C. D. Clark, *The language of liberty 1660-1832. political discourse and social dynamics in the Anglo-American world* (Cambridge, 1994). Rachel Eckersley has reported Clark as saying that 'Socinian and Deist were equally synonymous with Unitarian...' I cannot find that Clark says this, and since (p.15) he distinguishes the parties by the Socinians' recourse to

Sandemanians and Socinians, and it is with these last that we are here concerned. In his diary for 1791 Fuller wrote, 'I have lately been reading several Socinian writers; viz. *Lindsey, Priestley, Belsham, &c.,* and have employed myself in penning down thoughts on the moral tendency of their system. I felt an increasing aversion to their views of things, and feel the ground on which my hopes are built more solid than heretofore.'[5] It would thus seem that Fuller, at least, benefited from his own polemics. But what was it about Socinianism that prompted his pamphleteering on the issue? We may for convenience take our bearings from some remarks of Priestley.

Priestley develops his position in the light of his study of what he understands as the progressive corruption of Christianity. Whereas the Christianity of the apostles consisted of 'few doctrines, and those perfectly rational and intelligible, and of few rites, and those as simple as can well be imagined,' a dramatic change subsequently occurred, which grossly perverted teachings and rites alike. Indeed, 'This departure from simplicity and truth will ever be one of the most memorable things in the history of the human mind.'[6] Among the misfortunes is the replacement of the one God of the apostles by the three supreme deities of Athanasius. Thus

> we see how a just and merciful God, freely pardoning all sins that are repented of and forsaken, who expresses the most earnest desire that all would repent and live, came to be regarded as the most unreasonable of tyrants; not only requiring an infinite satisfaction for the slightest offences, but dooming the greater part of his creatures to everlasting

revelation, and in view of the importance of revelation to the Unitarians, he hardly could. See R. Eckersley, 'John Cartwright: radical reformer and Unitarian?' *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society,* XXII no. 1 (April 1999), 39.

4 See Alan P F Sell, ' "The Gospel its own Witness": deism, Thomas Paine and Andrew Fuller,' in a *festschrift* for Allison A Trites, forthcoming, Macon, GA: Mercer University Press.

5 Andrew Gunton Fuller's *Memoir* of Fuller in *The complete works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (5 vols., London, 1831-32), I, lxxxvii.

6 J T Rutt ed., *The theological and miscellaneous works of Joseph Priestley* (25 vols., London, 1817-31), X, 532.

> torments; a catastrophe foreseen, and intended by him before they were born.[7]

If this change is extraordinary, 'The recovery of genuine Christianity from this deplorably corrupted state to the rational views we now entertain of it, is no less extraordinary; and the contemplation of it cannot but impress the thoughtful and pious mind with sentiments of wonder and gratitude.'[8] In this recovery, John Biddle, 'a man of great piety, who, without having read any of the writings of the Unitarians, but from the study of the Scriptures, embraced their sentiments,' played a significant part.[9]

When Priestley takes pains to mention that Biddle had not read the Unitarians but simply studied the Bible, he is implicitly objecting to the bestowal upon himself and his co-religionists of the label, 'Socinian', and upholding the principle of the sufficiency of Scripture. He is convinced that the early Christians believed in one God only – indeed, Jesus himself prayed to the Father as 'the only true God' (John 17: 3); Paul agrees (I Tim. 2: 5); and there is one Mediator between humanity and God, 'the man Christ Jesus.'[10] On the basis of such texts, Priestley is able to rule out, to his own satisfaction, that Arianism in which , from his point of view, some of his fellow divines – not least his friend Richard Price – unfortunately lingered: 'the *Arian* hypothesis, which makes Christ to have been a great pre-existent spirit, the maker of the world, and the giver of the law of Moses, was ... unknown to the learned and to the unlearned, till the age of *Arius* himself.'[11] In a letter to the biblical critic Alexander Geddes, Priestley repudiates the 'inferior' God of the Platonizing early theologians – a god whom contemporary Arians seemed bent on restoring. For his own part he will not call Jesus God: 'I believe Christ to be *a prophet mighty in word and deed*, a man whom God sent, by whom God spake, whom God raised from the dead, and who will come again in the glory and power of God his Father, to raise the dead, to judge the world,

7 Ibid., 533.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., VIII, 360.

10 Ibid., XVIII, 553.

11 Ibid., VI, 473.

and to give to every man according to his works.'[12] As for the Trinity, Priestley thinks the doctrine as absurd as, and more mischevious than, that of transubstantiation.[13]

Especially in Priestley's recourse to revelation, and his convictions concerning the after-life, we see the distance between him and his fellow Unitarians and the deists – a gap which Fuller and others were concerned to narrow. But Priestley insists that it is a slander to equate deism and Unitarianism: 'where freedom of thinking is joined to real piety, and a sense of the value of revelation, as that alone which can give us any assurance of a future state, the difference between *Socinianism* and *Deism* (which is now seen to be intimately connected with *Atheism*) will appear to be infinitely greater, and of a much more serious nature, than any of the differences of opinions preceding it ...'[14]

Priestley is particularly concerned to deny that commitment to Unitarianism leads to a loosening grip upon morality. Thus he challenges the Reverend Edward Burn of Birmingham to show him which of the Ten Commandments the Unitarians habitually violate, and contends that a person 'who is persuaded that our very hearts are constantly open to the Divine inspection ... will not be a bad man, or a dangerous member of society.'[15] But it was with particular reference to the moral tendency of Unitarianism that Andrew Fuller entered the lists, and to him we now turn.

I

In 1793 Fuller published his substantial tract, *The Calvinist and Socinian systems examined and compared, as to their moral tendency.* A second edition appeared in 1802, in the Preface to which Fuller declares that the fact that Dissenters of varying doctrinal hues had recently combined to press for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts does not imply that doctrinal differences

[12] Ibid., XVIII, 443. For Geddes (1737-1802) see *DNB*; Nigel M de S Cameron *et al.*, *Dictionary of Scottish church history and theology* (Edinburgh, 1993).

[13] Ibid., 550-51.

[14] Ibid., XVII, 99; cf. XVIII, 553-55.

[15] Ibid., XIX, 340.

are of no importance; the cause was a civil one, and the united front was to achieve a civil objective. He also corrects the impression, conveyed in part by the multitude of Socinian writings, that the bulk of Dissent has embraced Socinianism. Next, he explains why he speaks of Socinians rather than of Unitarians. He grants that the latter term is preferred by his opponents, but deems such usage unfair. For no Christians worship a multiplicity of gods, and trinitarians no less than Unitarians profess belief in one God. Finally, he points out that his anti-Socinian letters were written prior to the Birmingham riots of 1791, and he regrets the suffering meted out to Priestley and others by those who were not true trinitarians, but quite unprincipled people. At the same time, the detestable riots do not 'render the religious principles of Dr. Priestley less erroneous, or less pernicious; or an opposition to them, upon fair ground of argument, less necessary.'[16]

Fuller recognizes that much has been written on Socinianism, but a detailed comparison of the influence of Calvinism and Socinianism on the heart and life has not appeared; and this is the gap he proposes to fill. He welcomes the fact that Calvinists and Socinians agree that 'the value or importance of religious principles is to be estimated by their influence on the morals of men.'[17] Neither adversion to a few good individuals on either side, nor zeal in defence of principles will suffice to make the case. The question at issue is the general tendency of each system. To estimate such a tendency we can both compare a system's principles with the nature of holiness, and, by referring to plain and acknowledged facts, judge the nature of causes by their effects. As compared with Socinians, Calvinists take a more serious view of sin and the need of repentance, and of faith as trust in Jesus Christ for salvation. Not surprisingly, therefore, Socinian congregations do not abound in conversions from profanity to holiness and devotion to God, while such conversions are a regular feature of Calvinistic religious life in Britain and North America. Even Priestley has accepted that Methodists have 'civilized and Christianized a great part of the

[16] A Fuller, *The Calvinistic and Socinian systems compared,* in *Works*, I, 153-54.

[17] Ibid., 157.

uncivilized and unchristianized part of this country,'[18] though he avers that since Socinians have generally been brought up in virtuous habits of life, conversion is not so necessary for them. Fuller is at a loss to account for the fact that, on Priestley's own admission, the Methodists have had such a beneficial effect, whilst proclaiming doctrines – including salvation by Christ's atonement – which are, according to Priestley, erroneous. As for the conversion of unbelievers as a result of Christian mission – can Socinians show that their system produces like effects? Fuller does not deny that Socinianism is gaining ground among 'speculating *individuals*', but many of their congregations are in decline. Insofar as such individuals are virtuous, this has little to do with their religious principles, for Priestley himself has said concerning the simple humanity of Christ that 'the connexion between this simple truth and regular Christian life is very slight.'[19]

While all agree that we are to love God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves, the Socinians pay much more heed to the social virtues than to love of God. When Priestley says that we shall at the last be judged by our good works, not by our opinions, he overlooks the fact that what makes a work good is that it originates in a good principle. To Priestley's objection that on Calvinistic principles people have no incentive to attend to moral conduct because the unregenerate are necessarily sinful and believers are entirely passive in regeneration, Fuller retorts that, where vice predominates (that is, where regeneration is needed), a person cannot but be passive 'in the first change of his mind in favour of virtue.'[20] As for election, 'Dr. Priestley cannot consistently maintain his scheme of necessity without admitting it.'[21] For on Priestley's view virtue, like everything else, is necessary; but whence this necessity? It is not self-originated or accidental, and hence, it is ordained by God. Thus, Priestley's necessarian principles lead to Calvinism, and if he denies this he is self-contradictory.

[18] Ibid., 169.
[19] Ibid., 188.
[20] Ibid., 201.
[21] Ibid., 202.

As for the moral effects of Socinianism and Calvinism, Priestley cannot prove that 'a loose, dissipated, and abandoned life is a more general thing among the Calvinists than among their opponents'.[22] Indeed, the evidence points the other way. Fuller quotes Priestley himself as saying that 'a *great number* of the Unitarians of the present age are only men of good sense, and without much practical religion.'[23] By contrast, lands where Calvinism prevails have been noted not for immorality, but for the reverse. As for the Dissenters, were not the Puritans and Nonconformists of the last two centuries exemplars of holiness, piety and devotion?

To the charge that Calvinists believe in a vindictive God, whereas the God of the Socinians is a father, Fuller replies that God does not punish for the sake of it, but his wrath against sin is a function of his righteousness. It is exercised not as personal vengeance, but by one who is the universal moral governor. Priestley is equally mistaken in thinking that God's first concern, his own glory, militates against the objective of the general happiness of all his creatures – excepting those who are finally impenitent. Finally, when the Socinians accuse the Calvinists of detracting from the worship of the one God by their worship of Christ, Fuller replies that the first Christians worshipped Christ, and that Christ is worshipped 'not on account of that wherein he differs from the Father, but on account of those perfections which we believe him to possess in common with him.'[24] The upshot is that Calvinists, who have been forgiven much, have a more compelling motive for love of God than Socinians.

Fuller next considers Priestley's charge that the Calvinistic system is inconsistent with 'perfect candour and benevolence to man.' He points out that much of what is called candour and benevolence is nothing more than indifference to all religious principle, and that good will towards people does not entail approval of their opinions or practices. Candour towards adversaries is a matter of fair treatment: it has nothing to do with indifference to religious principle. If Socinians advert to Calvin's persecution of

22 Ibid., 206.
23 Ibid., 207.
24 Ibid., 223.

Servetus, Fuller will invoke Lindsey's acknowledgment of Faustus Socinus's hostility towards Francis David of Transylvania. As for humility, here again Calvinism scores over Socinianism – the Unitarian Joshua Toulmin's remark to the effect that those who maintain the two-nature doctrine of the person of Christ are to be pitied 'as being under a debility of mind in this respect,' being cited in evidence.[25] As for the complaint that Calvinists lack charity and are bigots, Fuller protests that 'If the proper deity of Christ be a divine truth, it is a great and a fundamental truth in Christianity,'[26] and it is not bigotry to proclaim and defend it. Similarly, 'If the doctrine of atonement by the cross of Christ be a divine truth, it constitutes the very substance of the gospel; and, consequently, it essential to it.'[27] His point is that these, in the way in which Calvinists construe them, are indeed divine truths, and that Socinians are guilty of reductionism in regarding the Cross merely as evidencing the fact that Christ truly died. Fuller does not deny that Calvinists may be bigots, but he contends that there is no more bigotry in denying that Socinians are Christians than there is on their part when they accuse Calvinists of idolatry for their worship of Christ. Further, Socinians are bigots in denying the name of Unitarian to Calvinists, who believe in the divine unity as much as they do. He concludes this part of his case by quoting Priestley as allowing all he himself pleads for: 'The man whose sole spring of action is *a concern for lost souls*, and a care to preserve the purity of that gospel which alone teaches the most effectual method of their recovery from *the power of sin and Satan unto God*, will feel an ardour of mind that will prompt him strenuously to oppose all those whom he considers as obstructing his benevolent designs.'[28]

Fuller proceeds to show to his own satisfaction that Calvinism scores over Socinianism in promoting love of Christ, whereas the Socinian system has little use for him. Christ is the animating soul and centre of the Calvinist system:

> Take away Christ; nay, take away the deity and atonement of Christ; and the whole ceremonial of the Old Testament

[25] Ibid., 237.
[26] Ibid., 251.
[27] Ibid., 252.
[28] Ibid., 261.

> appears to us little more than a dead mass of uninteresting matter: prophecy loses all that is interesting and endearing: the gospel is annihilated, or ceases to be that *good news* to lost sinners which it professes to be; practical religion is divested of its most powerful motives; the evangelical dispensation of its peculiar glory; and heaven itself of its most transporting joys.[29]

With their views on human depravity the Calvinists have much more to be grateful to Christ than the Socinians. As for the Bible, Calvinists venerate it much more than Socinians, the latter construing its inspiration in terms of stimulation rather than as yielding the rule of faith and practice. As for the charge that Calvinism is gloomy and tending to misery and melancholy: it is true that levity is no part of Calvinism; but from a true recognition of our state and trust in God's gracious provision there flows a happiness which is much deeper than the Socinian's 'calmness of mind'. The root of the Socinian's problem is that 'The Socinian scheme, by rejecting the deity and atonement of Christ, rejects the very essence of that which both supports and transports a Christian's heart.'[30] From this root, neglected by Socinians, arise those motives of gratitude, obedience and heavenly-mindedness which Calvinism typifies.

Fuller next seeks to demonstrate his claim that Socinianism leads to infidelity. The infidelity he has principally in mind here is deism – the very phenomenon from which Priestley and other Unitarians were most anxious to distance themselves. Like the deists, says Fuller, Socinians elevate the principle of the sufficiency of human reason. He grants that Socinians do appeal to revelation, but the conclusions they reach are governed by a reason deemed sufficient. They do not reject as much as the deists, but this is only a difference of degree, not of principle. Again, like the deists the Socinians hold to '*the non-importance of principle ... in order to the enjoyment of the divine favour*.'[31] In this connection Fuller associates Priestley and other Unitarians with the view expressed

[29] Ibid., 266.
[30] Ibid., 293.
[31] Ibid., 310.

by the deist Thomas Paine, that 'it matters not what religion we are of, if we be but sincere in it.'[32] Socinians share with deists the prejudices that the religion of the vulgar is superstitious and false; that they themselves are wiser than the rest of humanity; and that it is appropriate to sneer at Christ the carpenter's son. Both Socinianism and deism appeal to those of a speculative turn of mind, and these are prominent in denying the plenary inspiration of the Bible, in reading the Scriptures selectively, and in holding degrading notions of the person of Christ. Fuller cites a number of alleged instances of Socinians who have proceeded to infidelity, and then concludes that that system which is friendly to the deity and atonement of Christ is representative of the saving Gospel, whereas that which denies those doctrines is shown by its fruit to be inadequate.

Having now summarized Fuller's argument, we must turn to his Unitarian respondents.

II

Joshua Toulmin (1740-1815) was educated at Hoxton Dissenting academy (1701-85), an institution supported by the Congregational Fund Board and, from 1738, by the Coward Trust – two Calvinistic bodies, with whose doctrine Toulmin, to the distress of his parents, disagreed even whilst a student. He became minister of the Presbyterian church at Colyton, Devonshire, but on embracing baptist views he removed to the Taunton pastorate, where he supplemented his income by running a school. In 1803 he was called to the New Meeting, Birmingham, and became John Kentish's colleague there in 1804. With the bulk of his many writings, which include historical works of continuing interest, we are not here concerned. It is as a defender of Socinianism against Fuller's charges that he appears before us.[33]

[32] Ibid., 311.

[33] For Toulmin see *DNB*. Toulmin's tutors at Hoxton were David Jennings and his relative, Samuel Morton Savage, for both of whom see *DNB*. Among his Taunton pupils was J T Rutt, the editor of Priestley's *Works*.

It would seem that other Unitarian respondents held back from replying immediately to Fuller in the hope that Priestley himself would enter the lists. To Toulmin's regret he did not; hence Toulmin's offering.[34] He first sets down the fundamental principles of those whom Fuller calls Socinians: 'there is but one God, the sole former, supporter, and governor of the universe, the only proper object of religious worship; and that there is but one mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus, who was commissioned by God to instruct men in their duty, and to reveal the doctrine of a future life.'[35] With an implicit appeal to the principle of the sufficiency of Scripture, Toulmin continues, 'We think it, Sir, a just ground of boast over our fellow-christians who hold different tenets from us, that we can express our fundamental opinions in the *words* of scripture.'[36]

Toulmin proceeds through the Acts of the Apostles with a view to demonstrating his claim that the apostles preached Unitarian doctrine. For example, he notes that at Pentecost Peter did not preach depravity, the deity and atonement of Christ, justification by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, and, unlike the Moravian missionaries to Greenland, he did not mention Christ's dying for our sins. Paul is presented as following in Peter's line on his missionary journeys.

But Toulmin realizes that he must not simply list doctrinal lacunae; he must demonstrate the efficacy and sufficiency of Unitarian doctrine. He therefore appeals to John Flavel, Richard Baxter and John Howe, all of whom wrote large portions of their works without reference to the docrtines deemed essential by Fuller; so did John Smith the Cambridge Platonist, John Rogers and Samuel Bolde. Yet all of these were apprised of the necessity of vital religion. Hence, 'the Calvinistic system is not essential for devotion.'[37] Toulmin then presents a roll-call of non-Calvinists who

[34] J Toulmin, *The practical efficacy of the Unitarian doctrine considered, in a series of letters to the Rev. Andrew Fuller: occasioned by his publication entitled 'The Calvinist and Socinian systems examined and compared, as to their moral tendency*...(1796) (London, 1801), 2 n.

[35] Ibid., 4..

[36] Ibid., 5. He cites I Corinthians 8: 6 and I Timothy 2: 3.

[37] Ibid., 71.

were people of eminent piety: Faustus Socinus, the Polish Brethren, Biddle, Emlyn, Hopkins, Lardner, Jebb and Price. Thus, if modern Unitarians are less pious than they ought to be, it is not, *contra* Fuller, because of deficient principles, for those principles are identical with those of the early Church. It is indeed for this reason that Toulmin resents the reproachful designation 'Socinian'. Modern Unitarians do not derive their views from Socinus – in fact most of them are unacquainted with his works – but from primitive truth.

As for Fuller's attempt to equate Unitarianism with deism, this 'implies that to *receive* the divine mission of Jesus has a resemblance to considering him as a deceiver: that to take him as my master, the resurrection and the life has a tendency to the rejection of him: that to learn of him is to deny him: that to profess to obey him resembles disobedience: and that to hope for the mercy of God in him will lead me to cast off this hope.'[38] When Fuller chided Socinians for boasting of their increase in followers, Toulmin retorts that Calvinists are equally prone to such boasting, and Fuller is guilty of it with his reference to hundreds of ministers and congregations whose existence, he declares, proves the efficacy of Calvinism.

In a Postscript to his first edition, Toulmin commends Kentish's reply to Fuller as being more complete and more detailed than his own.

III

John Kentish (1768-1853) was educated at Daventry Dissenting academy under Thomas Belsham. He left that academy in 1788 following the Coward Trustees' prohibition of read prayers, and completed his studies at Hackney College (1786-96), Hoxton's successor, under Abraham Rees, Thomas Belsham and Andrew Kippis. In 1790 Kentish became minister of the new Unitarian cause at Plymouth Dock; he proceeded to Treville Street, Plymouth in 1794, and to London in the following year. In 1803 he accepted

[38] Ibid., 87.

the call to the New Meeting, Birmingham. He resigned his charge in 1832, but continued to preach regularly there until 1844.[39]

On 6 July 1796 Kentish addressed the West of England Society of Unitarian Christians at Bow Meeting-house, Exeter, on *The moral tendency of the genuine Christian doctrine.* This is his direct reply to Fuller. Like Toulmin, Kentish begins by stating the Unitarian positions, namely, that God is strictly one being, and that Jesus of Nazareth was 'simply of the human race, though greatly exalted above every former prophet.'[40] His claim will be that reliance upon these doctrines makes for godliness, that is they inculcate the duties we owe to God and to general virtue. While recognizing that if it is difficult to judge the conduct even of individuals, it is so much more difficult to judge that of whole denominations of Christians, he will nevertheless inquire into the moral tendency of Unitarian doctrine.

First, Kentish contends that the virtues which we are under an obligation to cherish and express towards God are of primary importance in Christian morals and, indeed, 'in every rational system of ethics.'[41] In his view, 'Love to God is no enthusiastic fervour, no offspring of a licentious imagination.'[42] It flows from a lively appreciation of the divine mercies. God's justice, truth and holiness are all construed in terms of his love, and he is glorified as happiness, the object of his works, is diffused. Indeed,

> By the goodness of the Almighty exhibited in the works of nature, in the dispensations of providence, and in our temporal comfort, we are as much impressed, I presume, as any class of Christians. And if we neither think nor speak exactly like some of them, concerning the divine love manifested in the gift of Jesus Christ, it must not hence be

[39] For Kentish see *DNB*.

[40] J Kentish, *The moral tendency of the genuine Christian doctrine. A discourse, written with refrence to Mr. A. Fuller's examination of the Calvinistic and Socinian Systems, and delivered at Exeter, July 6th, 1796. Before the Society of Unitarian Christians, established in the West of England for promoting Christian Knowledge and the practice of Virtue by the distribution of Books* (2nd edn., London 1798), 6.

[41] Ibid., 9.

[42] Ibid., 10.

> inferred, that we are less attentive to its magnitude and extent.[43]

The love that Unitarians feel for God is 'a powerful motive to the most willing obedience.'[44] Such a depth of love can be expressed only towards one person, not to a plurality of deities, as is advanced by the trinitarian scheme. This is not to deny that Jesus's 'love to the human race, a love which even death could not destroy, calls for every tribute of affection, which is consistent with the supreme thankfulness and love we owe to "his Father, and our Father, to his God, and our God."'[45] Like Toulmin, Kentish produces a catalogue of Unitarians who have lead pious lives.

It is not true, Kentish continues, that belief in the simple humanity of Jesus detracts from 'the respect and obedience we render to him as a moral instructor.'[46] Unitarians of integrity know that they rely upon divine mercy alone for the forgiveness of their sins, and they know that 'repentance and amendment of life are essential to a participation in the divine favour.'[47] Further, since Unitarian doctrines are scriptural, they are able to supply 'all the aid and comfort to the rational and virtuous mind, which frail humanity requires.'[48] It is wrong to charge Unitarians with impotence where the conversion of profligates and unbelievers is concerned, for many Unitarians have 'found the plain, simple, yet the despised Gospel of Christ "the power of God unto salvation."'[49] Looking ahead, we may be confident that 'that representation of Christianity which has Scripture and antiquity for its basis' will 'everywhere prevail.'[50] Finally, Kentish takes strong exception to Fuller's equating Unitarians with deists, for the teaching of the former is consonant with that of the earliest Christians.

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43 Ibid., 12.
44 Ibid., 13.
45 Ibid., 18. The reference is to John 20: 17.
46 Ibid., 27.
47 Ibid., 28.
48 Ibid., 35.
49 Ibid., 36.
50 Ibid., 37.

IV

The efforts of Toulmin and Kentish failed to silence Fuller. In 1797 he published an answer to them: *Socinianism indefensible on the ground of its moral tendency*. He first replies to Toulmin, making it clear that in his earlier work he focused upon the moral tendency of the two systems under review partly because the doctrinal questions had been much debated, and partly because there was no point in reasoning on the basis of biblical texts with those who disallowed Scripture's meaning. He also observes that to judge a tree by its fruit is to employ a biblical principle.

Fuller complains that Toulmin has not so much as looked his arguments in the face. Instead, he turns to other matters:

> I attempted to prove that the apostolic and Calvinistic doctrines are nearly similar, from the similarity of their effects; and that the apostolic and Socinian doctrines are dissimilar, from the dissimilarity of their effects. To have answered this reasoning, Dr. Toulmin should have proved, either that the effects of the Calvinistic doctrine are *not* similar to those which attended the doctrine of the apostles, and that the effect of the Socinian doctrine *are* so; or else that a similarity of effects in not a proper ground from which to infer a similarity in the nature of the doctrines. His attempting to prove the practical efficacy of the Unitarian doctrine by assuming that the apostles were Unitarians, in his sense of the term, is nothing better than *begging the question*; and his endeavouring to screen himself from this reproach, by labouring to prove the point in dispute from a review of the Acts of the Apostles, let his reasonings be ever so just, is foreign to the purpose: it is *shifting the ground of the argument*: it is declining to meet the inquiry on the ground of moral tendency, and substituting, in its place, *observations on the meaning of Scripture testimony*, which, to all intents and purposes, is relinquishing the practical efficacy of modern Unitarianism as indefensible.[51]

Fuller proceeds to point out that while Unitarians and Calvinists appeal to the same passages of Scripture, the latter's problem with

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51 A Fuller, *Works*, I, 341-2.

the former is that the Unitarians put their own unwarrantable glosses upon the words of the Bible. This is exemplified by their question-begging choice of the title 'Unitarian'. Fuller's concern is that

> We must either admit every pretender into communion with us, and so acknowledge him as a fellow-christian, or we shall be accused of judging the hearts of men. The rule by which we admit to fellowship is a *credible profession of Christianity.* There are two things which render a profession credible: First: That the thing professed be Christianity: Secondly: That the profession be accompanied with a practice correspondent to it.[52]

To acknowledge those as fellow-Christians whose doctrines are defective would be to act hypocritically. In an appendix, Fuller queries Toulmin's interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles, arguing that for the apostles, 'the deity and atonement of Christ were comprehended in the great doctrines of his Sonship and Messiahship.'[53]

In Fuller's opinion, Kentish is the only respondent to have attempted to meet his argument. Nevertheless, he accuses him of begging the question in his title, *The moral tendency of the genuine Christian doctrine.* In the course of addressing Kentish's preliminary points, Fuller agrees that it is difficult to judge the tenor of whole denominations of people, but nevertheless maintains that 'It is not impossible to discover who in general are serious, conscientious, and pious men, and who they are that indulge in dissipation and folly.'[54]

Turning to the heart of Kentish's case, Fuller notes that in extolling God's love, Kentish entirely overlooks the doctrine of the atonement. Further, genuine love of God is 'shed abroad in the heart *by the Holy Spirit*,' but Kentish has no need of the Spirit: to him it is natural to love God. Again, Kentish's claim that to elevate Christ is to diminish God is untenable, for, on divine authority, Calvinists believe that Christ and the Father are one. Further

[52] Ibid., 357.
[53] Ibid., 364.
[54] Ibid., 370.

Kentish is silent on the idea of trusting in Christ; and as for his catalogue of pious Unitarians: to single people out in this way is invidious, and beside the point, for Fuller's concern was not with individuals, but with the general moral tendency of the Socinian system.

Fuller next finds Unitarianism deficient in respect of assistance, support and consolation in the time of temptation, affliction and death, and in respect of the conversion of profligates and unbelievers. He repudiates Kentish's claim that Unitarians venerate the Scriptures, because they do not pay heed to the profession of the sacred writers. For his part, Fuller declares, 'it is with sacred satisfaction I anticipate the time when all that exalteth itself against Christ, let it affect whose systems it may, shall utterly fall, and nothing shall be left standing but the simple unadulterated doctrine of the cross.'[55]

Toulmin returned to the fray in the 1801 edition of his tract on *The practical efficacy of the Unitarian doctrine.* In a lengthy footnote he charges Fuller with sectarianism. Fuller, he notes, wishes to exclude from fellowship those who do not agree with his interpretation of doctrine:

> But on the principles of protestants, of dissenters, among whom Mr. Fuller classes himself, and of christianity, no individual christian, no body of christians hath a right of so modelling the christian profession and worship, as to make it inconsistent with any sincere christian to join in it, or to bring themselcves under a sense of obligation to exclude such … [On Fuller's approach] Each community excludes only those, whose sentiments they consider as subversive of the gospel. Each community, in these cases, sets up a standard of christianity, of its own framing. If this be not to become lawgivers and masters in the church of Christ, I know not what can answer the character … It is surprising, that men can thus deceive themselves with an affectation of disclaiming, with a *verbal* renunciation of infallibility, when their *conduct* can be justified on no other principle than really possessing it. It gives one concern to have occasion to

[55] Ibid., 397.

> remonstrate, on this subject, with a gentleman, who is *Dissenting* and a *Baptist* Minister.[56]

In a new appendix to his tract Toulmin denies that he has side-stepped Fuller's argument, and cites others who have found him very much to the point. More substantively, he refers to the decline in some Calvinistic churches, and says that Fuller would no doubt find causes for this. For example, the parable of the sower shows that the divine seed is not always productive of fruit. But if such reasoning applies to Calvinist causes, why not to those where Unitarians are defective in piety or virtue – especially when under Unitarian principles a thousand were born in one day [presumably a further disputed reference to Pentecost, though with the number of converts reduced by two thousand]?

Fuller wrongly supposes that he is employing a mode of argument used by Unitarians against Calvinists, for 'The falsehood of Calvinistic doctrines has been inferred, not from the *lives* of Calvinists, but from the nature of the tenets themselves.'[57] Toulmin follows up with a catalogue of Calvinism's falsehoods:

> Calvinism is the system, which represents the Divine Being as placing the eternal interests of the whole human race upon the hazard of the first man's obedience to a single injunction. It clothes the Deity with power and justice, but it allows not the display of mercy, till an infinite satisfaction has answered the demands of justice ... Here virtuous desires, holy efforts, are enervated by an apprehension, that the fall of Adam has introduced into our frame a total impotence, and inability to do what is good.[58]

As for Fuller's attempt to liken Unitarianism to deism: if the Unitarians are like the deists, so were the apostles, and 'The Socinian may reflect with pleasure on the affinity.'[59] Furthermore, the comparison regarding a like attraction to men of a speculative turn of mind will not hold. For the truth and excellence of Unitarian or other sentiments is not estimated by their adherents, but by 'their

[56] Ibid., 98, 101.
[57] J Toulmin, *The practical efficacy of the Unitarian doctrine,* 155.
58 Ibid., 163.
[59] Ibid., 165.

conformity to good sense and scripture.'[60] Toulmin concludes in the confidence that truth, whether it be with Fuller, or with himself, or with neither of them, will finally prevail.

In 1798 Kentish published some *Strictures upon the reply of Mr. A. Fuller to Mr. Kentish's discourse, entitled "The Moral Tendency of the Genuine Christian Doctrine"*. On this occasion his tone seems rather more impatient, as if he is tiring of what he regards as a dialogue with the deaf. He repeats many of his arguments, but now explains that his neglect of the atonement was owing to the fact that that doctrine had no place among the principles the moral tendency of which he was attempting to illustrate. Fuller, in turn, has been less than forthcoming too: 'Upon the question, whether it be reconcileable with our conceptions of an infinitely powerful, wise and good Being to suppose, that from all eternity, and for no actual crime, he has doomed the larger part of mankind to eternal misery, Mr. Fuller has been profoundly and discreetly silent.'[61] Kentish persists in being unable to understand how a godhead comprising three distinct and infinite minds can be other than a plurality of deities; neither has Fuller shown how we can love more than one such mind with all our heart and soul.

Kentish concludes by saying that in his previous tract he granted that the truth of Unitarian claims was to be determined by evidence other than that of the morality of Unitarians, but, standing on Fuller's ground, he addressed the question of the moral tendency of Socinianism over against that of Calvinism. But now he has had to respond to misrepresentations concerning doctrine.

It remains only to add that in a twelve-page Postscript which Fuller appended to the 1802 edition of his examination of the Calvinistic and Socinian systems, he declines to say anything further to Kentish; accuses Toulmin of further irrelevancies; and does nothing more than reiterate his by now familiar positions. Not

[60] Ibid., 167. Note the order here.
[61] J Kentish, *Strictures upon the reply of Mr. A. Fuller, to Mr. Kentish's discourse, entitled, "The Moral Tendency of the Genuine Christian Doctrine"* (London, 1798), 12.

surprisingly, nothing said by Fuller dissuaded Toulmin and Kentish from zealously propagating Unitarianism to their dying days.[62]

As a footnote to the pamphlet skirmish we have been reviewing, we should be reminded that the Socinian/Calvinist debate, like other theological tussles in the eighteenth century, was by no means simply an arm-chair affair. The issues affected people's lives, not least their church allegiance. This emerges in the contretemps at Soham, Cambridgeshire, which involved Fuller and the prominent Unitarian Robert Aspland (1782-1845), editor of the *Monthly Repository*.[63] Local connections played a part: Aspland came from Wicken, near Soham, where Fuller was born and held his first pastorate. During that ministry, Fuller had drawn up a doctrinal statement to which every church member was required to assent. The refusal to comply of Fuller's former assistant and successor, John Gisburne, the Wesleyan - turned - Baptist - turned - Unitarian, coupled with Gisburne's statement of the Nonconformist principle in unduly blunt terms (since the Church of England has two Heads, King Jesus and King George, it is a monster), prompted a dispute concerning doctrine and the ownership of the chapel property. Both Fuller and Aspland intervened. Fuller published a *Narrative of facts* concerning the case, and Aspland replied in his pamphlet of

[62] See, for example, J Toulmin,*The injustice of classing Unitarians with Deists and Infidels. A discourse written with reference to some reflections from the pens of Bishops Newton, Hurd, and Horsley, Doctors White, Knox, and Fuller, Mrs. Piozzi, and others: and delivered at Tiverton, July 5, 1797, before the Society of Unitarian Christians, established in the West of England, for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and the Practice of Virtue, by the Distribution of Books,* London: J. Johnson, 1797; idem, *The Unitarian doctrines stated, and the objections to it obviated, on the ground of Christ's declaration: a sermon, preached before the Devon and Cornwall Association, at Plymouth, on the 6th of July, 1814; and on the 13th, before the Western Unitarian Society, at Yeovil, Somersetshire* (Birmingham, 1814); J Kentish, *A review of Christian doctrine: a sermon preached at St. Thomas's, Southwark, December 26th, 1802, and at the Gravel-Pit, Hackney, January 2d, 1803, on resigning the office of a minister in those societies* (London, 1803); idem, *Christian truth stated, vindicated, and recommended* (Birmingham, 1807).

[63] For Aspland see *DNB*.

1811, *Bigotry and intolerance defeated* [64] Into the details we need not probe, but what is relevant to our theme are some remarks of Aspland concerning Fuller himself. He is pleased that in the *Narrative* Fuller no longer calls his opponents Socinians – 'judging, no doubt, that it is unjust to class people under a leader whom they do not follow, and whom they have renounced; and that to force a name upon them which in reason does not belong to them, and which they are known to disapprove, is reproach, and, as far as language goes, persecution.'[65] He hopes that Fuller's brethren will follow his lead, 'and the epithet *Socinian* will then be speedily banished to the same oblivion to which the good sense and liberality of the religious world have long doomed the not more incorrect and reproachful term, *Anabaptist*.'[66]

V

How shall we evaluate this debate upon which the dust of two hundred years has now settled? Leaving on one side such 'tit-for-tatting' name-calling as 'You are bigots/No, you are', it must first be granted that Fuller's chosen ground of argument is shaky indeed. His opponents clearly point out that to seek to judge the moral tendency of an entire denomination is a hazardous epistemological undertaking; and in the event neither they nor Fuller himself can avoid the temptation of citing virtuous *individuals* from their respective parties. It transpires that much of Fuller's case consists not in his finding Unitarians to be immoral, but in his failure to find exactly the kind of pious experiences and practices, or religious language, that he seeks. The alleged experiential and language

[64] See the Memoir in Fuller's *Works*, I, cxxxv-cxxxvi, though the *Narrative* is not to be found in the five volumes; R Brook Aspland, *Memoir of the life, works and correspondence of the Rev. Robert Aspland, of Hackney* (London, 1850), 207-15, 221-2.

[65] R Aspland, *Bigotry and intolerance defeated: or, an account of the late persecution of Mr. John Gisburne, Unitarian minister of Soham, Cambridgeshire: with an exposure and correction of the defects and mistakes of Mr. Andrew Fuller's narrative of that affair: in letters to John Christie, Esq. Treasurer of the Unitarian Fund* (Harlow, 1811), 3.

[66] Ibid.

deficiencies thus become parallels to the alleged doctrinal deficiencies, to which we shall shortly refer.

While it is no doubt ideally the case that virtue follows the sincere commitment to worthy principles, Fuller wisely does not attempt to establish that, empirically, virtue always flows from adherence to correct religious principles. On the contrary, both he and his opponents admit that there are rotten apples in every theological-ecclesiastical barrel. Moreover, when Fuller charges Toulmin with changing the ground of argument, it must be admitted that in view of Fuller's talk of doctrinal principles, Toulmin was sorely tempted.

Fuller's attempt to tar the Unitarians with the deist brush is loaded and unfair. The Unitarians' appeal to Jesus Christ, their recourse to special revelation, and their insistence upon the reality and importance of the after-life distinguish them from those commonly labelled 'deist' (however different from one another they were). However, Fuller's justifiable rejection of Paine's view that 'it matters not what religion we are of, if we be but sincere in it,' clamantly raises the question of truth.

Fuller rightly points out to Toulmin that while Unitarians and Calvinists can quote the same texts of Scripture, their interpretations of the words differ significantly. Moreover, it does seem that Toulmin is selective in the verses he chooses to employ, and from our present vantage-point both he and Fuller seem to have, if one may speak anachronistically, a 'fundamentalist', proof-texting approach to the words of the Bible which, in the light of modern biblical criticism, would be repudiated by scholars of many theological complexions.

There is little doubt that, the element of caricature in their portrayals of 'morbid' Calvinism notwithstanding, the Unitarians' moral challenge to more gruesome ways of articulating Christian doctrine helped to pave the way for such nineteenth-century writers as Thomas Erskine of Linlathen and John McLeod Campbell, who reminded those who would listen that the first word of the Gospel is grace, not sin, and who fostered the view that the atonement did not procure grace, it flowed from it.

When Fuller charges Kentish with omitting the atonement from his statement of principles, it is nothing more than an evasion on

Kentish's part to reply that he omits it because it is not a Unitarian conviction. The question is, whether it ought to be, and if so, in which sense? From Kentish's day to our own there have been varieties of liberal theology which – often in justifiable recoil from 'immoral' presentations of atonement theory – have taken a less than radical view of God's holiness and humanity's sinfulness, have accordingly managed with an understanding of the Cross as exemplary only, and have, unsurprisingly, found that what others regard as a reduced Christology will meet their need.[67]

Fuller is not on strong ground when he applies his *tu quoque* argument to the effect that, as a necessarian, Priestley ought to find Calvinism to his liking. Calvinists may be well advised to understand predestination and election as religious concepts rather than as equivalent or related to philosophical determinism. For example, it would appear that for Paul these religious ideas arise out of his grateful retrospective testimony that he has not been brought to his present stand by his own efforts: it is all of grace, and in the purpose of God. To press these ideas in a deterministic way and, still more, to encumber them with appeals to God's inscrutable will (about which, it would seem, some believers have known a good deal!) makes for disastrous theology, and prevents Calvinists from being variously libertarians or determinists in ethics, for example – which they may perfectly well be.[68]

While it cannot be said that all doctrinal issues between Unitarians and Calvinists – or trinitarians at large – have by now been resolved, it may be suggested that neither side is, either attitudinally or doctrinally, in exactly the same position as its forebears of the eighteenth century. It also seems to be the case that

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[67] See further, Alan P F Sell, *Aspects of Christian integrity,* (1990), (Eugene, OR, 1998), ch. 2.

[68] See William Cunningham's judicious paper, 'Calvinism and the doctrine of philosophical necessity,' in his *The reformers and the theology of the Reformation,* (1862, repr. London, 1967). He writes, 'Predestination implies that the end or result is certain, and that adequate provision has been made for bringing it about. But it does not indicate anything as to what must be the nature of this provision in regard to the different classes of events which are taking place under God's government, including the volitions of rational and responsible beings,' 508-9.

the specific doctrinal issues which concerned Fuller and his opponents are scarcely discussed at the present time. This may be partly because of liberalizing tendencies within many trinitarian folds, and partly because Unitarians have been marginalized by many ecumenical bodies. But this reference to ecumenism raises the question which undelies the old debate, and still haunts us today: Who is a Christian? Fuller's criteria are a commitment to Christ and a confession of Christ's deity and atoning work. Toulmin, reacting against this, accuses Fuller of placing a formula above a simple commitment to Jesus our Mediator. Now, on the one hand, it is undeniable that Christians of many communions may and do fall into sectarianism if, having equated God's truth with their formulations of it, they proceed to unchurch those who view matters differently. On the other hand, what are we to make of such a claim as that of P T Forsyth: 'There must surely be in every positive religion some point where it may so change as to lose its identity and become another religion'?[69] Thus is set the continuing ecumenical problem which the old debate between Fuller and the Socinians illustrates so clearly. The road to the solution of this problem is long and arduous. We may, perhaps, draw some consolation from the fact that even Matthew Henry, from whose sardonic remark concerning Socinians I set out, could also say:

> Those I call Christians, not who are of this or that party, but who call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord: those, whatever dividing name they are known by, who live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world. The question bye and bye will not be – in what place, or what posture we worshipped God; but, did we worship in the spirit.[70]

[69] P T Forsyth, *The principle of authority* (1913, repr. London, 1952), 219. For a caution against sectarianisms ancient and modern see Alan P F Sell, *Commemorations. Studies in Christian thought and history* (Cardiff,1993 and Eugene, OR, 1998), ch. 2.

[70] J B Williams, *The life of Matthew Henry,* 182.

Until we are faced by that question we may take further comfort from the likelihood that we shall not meet exact replicas of either Fuller or his Unitarian opponents in any dark alley. What the discussion topics of the heavenly fraternal will be remains to be seen.

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OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM IN THE ENLIGHTENMENT

D A Rees

If one is to examine concepts and attitudes of optimism and pessimism as found in the Enlightenment, it may be of interest to begin by considering counterparts to be found in classical antiquity. Various parallels are to be found among the Greeks with three different views to be discerned:

1 the pessimistic spectacle of a gradual decline from a Golden Age;

2 a picture of the gradual rise of civilization from primitive beginnings;

3 a cyclical pattern, mostly with a pessimistic tone.

Such different attitudes, however, may appear in combination.

The tale of a decline from a Golden Age appears first around 700 BC in Hesiod's *Works and days*. It looks back to a Golden Age of happy idleness, followed in turn by the successive degenerations of a silver age, a bronze and an iron, with the sequence broken by the heroic age intervening between the bronze and the iron. On the other hand, the late 6th-5th century philosopher-poet Xenophanes maintained that the gods had not revealed everything to mortals from the beginning, but by seeking in the course of time they make improvements in their discoveries.[1] The middle years of the 5th century saw the tragedian Aeschylus, in his *Prometheus bound*, celebrate the rise of civilization, depicted in mythical form as brought about by Prometheus' gift of fire to man, provoking the wrath of Zeus; a few years later a splendid chorus in Sophocles' *Antigone* glorified the achievements of man. Some years afterwards, Protagoras, one of the dominating figures in the sophistic movement characterized as the 'Greek enlightenment', is depicted in the early 4th century dialogue of Plato named after him, as recurring to the Promethean myth.[2] Protagoras, himself an agnostic in religion, despite the mythological trappings, delineated the rise from scattered groups to organized city life, with the consequent

[1] Xenophanes, fr.18.

[2] Plato, *Protagoras*, 320d-322a.

need for rules of justice if mankind was to survive. The other most celebrated account in classical antiquity of the rise of civilization comes from the Epicurean school in the mid-1st century BC, Lucretius' *On the nature of things*.[3] Beginning with a graphic account of the state of primitive man in its pre-social stage, it goes on to trace his rise through the beginnings of social life, dwelling in huts, wearing skins and using fire, making social agreements and developing language, these followed by the rise of government and the rule of law. Lucretius presents us too with his explanation of the rise of the belief in gods (the curious Epicurean account of the gods being compatible with bitter hostility to traditional religion), the use of metals, bronze and then iron, weaving and agriculture. The account closes with a celebration of what has been a step-by-step rise to its present culmination. At the same time, Lucretius does not fail to present us with the darker side of the picture. After all, Epicureanism itself favoured a quiet life, unmarked by social ambition. Primitive man had had to struggle against wild beasts, but technological advances had been marred by the development of weaponry and large-scale human conflict, while the growth of luxury had brought no corresponding increase in human happiness.

It is from the rival school of the Stoics, however, that we find a vision of human progress stretching into the future. In his *Natural questions*, Seneca foresees that a time will come when our descendants will feel surprise at our ignorance of what is clear to them, and the paths of the comets will be understood. Long before Plato had looked to the future with enthusiasm for the prospects for solid geometry.[4] On the moral side, however, we find that the historian Tacitus, sympathetic to Stoicism and writing at the end of the 1st century AD, in his account of the Germanic tribes in *Germania*, showed a respect for their tribal morality, their tradition of chastity in particular, and the absence of luxury from their way of life.

Among cyclical theories, astronomical Great Years and Stoic periodical conflagrations lay outside the scope of practical action. In his *Meditations*, Marcus Aurelius sounds a somewhat pessimistic

[3] Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, bk.5.

[4] *Republic*, VII, 528c.

note as he contemplates the eternal sameness of events and circumstances: 'Moreover, [the rational soul] goes over the whole Universe and the surrounding void and surveys its shape, reaches out into the boundless extent of time, embraces and ponders the periodic rebirth of the Whole and understands that those who come after us will behold nothing new nor did those who came before us behold anything greater, but in a way the man of forty years, if he have any understanding at all, has seen all that has been and that will be by reason of its uniformity.'[5] Similarly: 'The rotations of the Universe are the same, up and down, from age to age.'[6] On his own task as Emperor, he remarks: 'Don't hope for Plato's Utopia, but be content to make a very small step forward and reflect that the result even of this is no trifle.'[7]

The myth in Plato's *Politicus* pictures God as a divine helmsman, periodically taking charge of the universe, after which it falls away in a decline until he sees the need to take action once again to set things right.[8] Akin to this, but with human affairs more directly in mind, is the picture Plato sketches in the *Timaeus* of periodical natural disasters from which fresh beginnings have to be made.[9] A similar account appears in the *Laws* , accompanied by a judgment on the moral superiority of early forms of society with subsequent developments marking a decline in that respect.[10] Plato's account of the degenerate constitutions in the *Republic* is not merely an abstract typology, but sets out what he regards as a natural process of deterioration.[11] Later in the mid-2nd century BC, Polybius surveys afresh the cycle of change in political constitutions, while seeing the mixed constitution of Rome as providing a brake on change and an anchor of stability.[12]

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[5] A S L Farquharson, trans., *The meditations of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus* (Oxford, 1944), XI.1.

[6] *Meditations of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus*, IX.28.

[7] *Meditations of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus*, IX.29.

[8] *Politicus*, 272d-273e.

[9] *Timaeus*, 22c-23c; cf.*Critias*, 109c-110a.

[10] *Laws*, III, 676c-680e.

[11] *Republic*, VIII-IX.

[12] *Histories*, VI.3-5.

Modern scholars have asked themselves whether a concept of progress, such as we might understand the term, is to be discerned in antiquity. J B Bury found little trace of it and, indeed, not a great deal before Turgot in the mid-18th century.[13] L Edelstein, however, stressing the accumulation of scientific and technological advances, argues that there was in these fields a vision of progress extending into the future.[14] His judgment is echoed by R. Nisbet.[15] In a judicious survey, E R Dodds concluded that only in the 5th century BC was that concept widely accepted, that the most explicit statements refer to scientific progress, and that there was a tension between it and moral progress.[16] He adds that there was a correlation between the expectation of progress and actual experience. When the experience came to a halt in late antiquity, so likewise did the expectation.

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If we turn to more recent centuries, we find a fresh celebration of hope in Bacon. Truth, he proclaims, was a daughter of time, not of authority, and antiquity was in reality the world's youth. The centuries following looked back to Bacon as the herald of scientific progress. He proclaims the goal of that progress as the good of humanity in *The advancement of learning*, to which the short and unfinished *New Atlantis*, echoing Plato in its title, can be regarded as an appendage.[17] The intellectual engine of this progress was the abandonment of traditional Aristotelianism and the application to nature of experiment and inductive enquiry as expounded in his *Novum organum*. Warning against the snares or 'idols' to which the human intellect is prone, he nevertheless found ground for hope. Though he unduly depreciated the progress already being registered

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[13] J B Bury, *The idea of progress: an inquiry into its origin and growth* (London, 1920).

[14] L Edelstein, *The idea of progress in classical antiquity* (Baltimore, Md., 1967).

[15] R Nisbet, *History of the idea of progress* (New York, 1980).

[16] E R Dodds, 'The ancient concept of progress' in *The ancient concept of progress and other essays* (Oxford, 1973), 1-25.

[17] *The advancement of learning* (1605); *New Atlantis* (1627).

in his time,[18] he nevertheless singled out what he regarded as the three most practical developments of recent centuries which pointed the way to the future: printing, gunpowder and the compass needle.[19] Keenly interested as he was in practical applications and remembered above all for his dictum that knowledge is power, he nevertheless insisted that the experiments to be pursued should be those which brought light rather than immediate fruit, thinking here of long-term benefit.[20] The underlying message can be described as humanity-centred and utilitarian.

At the end of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th, in the very different philosophical tradition of speculative metaphysics, Leibniz proclaimed that this was the best of all possible worlds, only to provoke the scorn of Voltaire in *Candide*.[21] But at an empirical level Leibniz's short essay *On the ultimate origination of things* closes with a brief glance at the gradual progress that has been made in the cultivation of the earth and the prospect of infinite further progress in the future.[22] In Italy, somewhat later, cyclical themes were taken up in a highly original and erudite way in Vico's *Scienza nuova*, but these had little influence until the following century.[23]

More important for our present purposes is the general influence, both in Britain and in France, of Locke's *Essay concerning human understanding* first published in 1689, with its rejection of innate ideas, whether in the speculative realm or the practical. Locke's primary aim was to provide a firm epistemological basis for the science he had seen developing around him in the work of such men as Boyle, Sydenham, Huyghens and Newton, pleading modestly that ''tis ambition enough to be employed as an Under-

[18] *Novum organum* (1620), I.5.

[19] *Novum organum*, I.109-10; 129).

[20] *Novum organum*, I.3; I.70.

[21] Voltaire, *Candide* (1759). For Leibniz, see *Monadology* (1714), §85; *Principles of nature and of grace* (1714), §15. See G W Leibniz, *Philosophical essays*, trans. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber (Indianapolis and Cambridge, 1989), 206-25.

[22] See G W Leibniz, *Philosophical essays*, 149-55. The work is dated 23 November 1697.

[23] Vico, *Scienza nuova* (1725).

Labourer in clearing Ground a little, and removing some of the Rubbish, that lies in the way of Knowledge'.[24]

In Locke's empiricist approach there lay important implications for the future. In the absence of innate ideas we are not completely, but very heavily dependent on influences from without, and this principle would place in a radically new light the age-old problem of the relative place in human life of nature and of nurture or education, with which Plato had grappled in the *Republic* and Aristotle in the *Nicomachean ethics*. It is no accident that Locke devoted serious attention to considering the best form of education in *Some thoughts concerning education*. That in itself does not require the details of his epistemology, but it is highly significant that Locke writes: 'I imagine the Minds of Children as easily turn'd this or that Way, as water it self'.[25] He later adds: 'having had here only some general Views, in reference to the main End, and aims in Education, and those designed for a Gentleman's Son, whom, then being very little, I considered only as white Paper, or Wax, to be moulded and fashioned as one pleases'.[26] Extreme developments of empiricist epistemology were to be worked out in the associationist school, as by Hartley.[27] Locke, however, had warned against the dangers to which the association of ideas might lead, as a source of possible error by contrast with rational inference.[28] In any case, if man was not limited by a set of innate ideas, indefinite possibilities of development might seem to lie before him, and if there is a single positive idea ascribable to the 18th century Enlightenment above all others, that, it may be suggested, is the idea of the perfectibility of man by social influences.

So much for the future. But one may also note another aspect of Locke on the moral and especially the religious side. While strictly cautious in its vision of man, his *Reasonableness of Christianity*

[24] Locke, *Essay concerning human understanding*, Epistle to the reader. References to P H Nidditch ed. (4th.edn., Oxford, 1975).

[25] Locke, *Some thoughts concerning education* (London, 1693), §2.

[26] *Some thoughts concerning education*, §217.

[27] David Hartley, *Observations on man, his frame, his duty and his expectations* (London and Bath, 1749).

[28] *Essay concerning human understanding*, II.33.

embodies a rejection of traditional doctrines of original sin.[29] While not himself a Socinian, Locke here follows the Socinian tradition. This rejection is a continuing theme in enlightenment thought. It was also to be followed by Rousseau, though between the two there was a shift away from revealed religion and from individual responsibility to that of society.

How then one is to characterize the Enlightenment generally? Perhaps one can hardly do better than by quoting C L Becker:

> The essential articles of the religion of the Enlightenment may be stated thus: (1) man is not innately depraved; (2) the end of life is life itself, the good life on earth instead of the beatific life after death; (3) man is capable, guided solely by the light of reason and experience, of perfecting the good life on earth; and (4) the first and essential condition of the good life on earth is the freeing of men's minds from the bonds of ignorance and superstition, and of their bodies from the arbitrary oppression of the constituted social authorities.[30]

It was to Turgot that Bury traced the clearest beginnings of the modern idea of progress. Turgot was a young man of twenty three when he composed his *Philosophical review of the successive advances of the human mind.*[31] Here and in his discourses on universal history he surveyed the progress of the past through hunting, pastoral existence, agriculture, commerce and the development of towns, seen as a natural process of development whose stimulus lay in the economic sphere; and he rejoiced in the constant improvements to be seen around him in his own day.

But the optimism of the Enlightenment is associated above all with the appearance of the many volumes of the great *Encyclopédie*, at the hands mainly of Diderot and D'Alembert, with Diderot latterly alone in charge (with 11 volumes of plates).[32] Here, together with a wide-ranging classification of the forms of human

[29] John Locke, *The reasonableness of Christianity* (1695), chap. 1.

[30] C L Becker, *The heavenly city of the eighteenth-century philosophers* (New Haven, 1932), 102-3.

[31] Turgot, *Discours sur les progrès successifs de l'esprit humain, prononcé le 11 décembre 1750.*

[32] *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (28 vols., 1751-72); repr. New York, 1969.

knowledge, were celebrated the developments of knowledge of the day and the growth in the arts and crafts. With an eye to the future, Diderot in the article 'Encyclopédie' recognized that there must be a limit to the capacity of the human intellect, though, on the other hand, no definite limit could be assigned.[33] At the same time it also had to be recognized that the mass of humanity must be left lagging further behind the attainments of the highest intellects. Diderot himself was a complex character, torn between optimism and pessimism, and uncertain of the future. In his posthumously published *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville* he extolled the simple life of the inhabitants of Tahiti.[34]

Here Diderot invites comparison with Rousseau, whose relations with the *Encyclopédie* for which he wrote articles including that on 'Political economy' were themselves complex. Rousseau was never spiritually one of the Encyclopédistes, and Voltaire indulged in caustic comments in his copy of the *Discourse on the origins and the foundations of inequality among men.*[35] His highly rhetorical discourse on the question 'Whether the re-establishment of the sciences and the arts has contributed to the purity of morals' begins by denouncing the servile conformity of modern society, in a manner which points forward to what he later says on *amour-propre* in the *Discourse on the origins of inequality.*[36] Anthropologists, it may be noted, have stressed the absence of personal individuality in tribal units where 'custom is king', by contrast with the diversity found in more advanced societies. The decline of nations had gone hand in hand with the growth of their sophistication, and Greek civilization is accordingly disparaged, by contrast with the hardihood of the Germanic tribes as depicted by Tacitus. Luxury is everywhere to be deplored. Theoretical sciences are dismissed as a futile waste of time and as inimical to the military spirit and moral qualities generally. In applied science Rousseau, paradoxically for a budding author, deplores the invention of printing. Both in morals and religion the simplicity of

[33] *Encyclopédie*, V.635-48A.

[34] Diderot, *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville* (1796).

[35] J J Rousseau, *Discourse on inequality*, trans. Maurice Cranston (Harmondsworth, 1984), 46 and the editor's notes at 175 ff.

[36] J J Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* (1750).

the primitive is extolled. Rousseau was writing, it may be recalled, in a period which placed increasing value on philanthropy and when sympathy and benevolence were recurring themes in moral philosophy. From his standpoint the implications for the future of morals would seem to be bleak.

More important is the *Discourse on inequality*, whose most famous pronouncement is the opening of part II which views with dismay the multitudinous consequences which had flowed from the original institution of private property. In part I Rousseau had already denied that man was naturally evil; the state of nature proper was not one of social and thus moral relationships, and the disastrous consequences of self-esteem, or *amour propre*, could not at this stage arise. That was to be the evil at the heart of sophisticated social relationships, where appearance smothered reality. The happiest state of mankind was not indeed the state of nature proper, but the next stage above that: 'the golden mean between the indolence of the primitive state and the petulant activity of our own pride, must have been the happiest epoch and the most lasting.'[37] This is the stage at which mankind now had work and collaboration, the building of dwellings and the family. The fatal step came with the division of labour, agriculture and metallurgy, leading to proprietorship and conflict. Rousseau did not indeed look for the abolition of property now that it had come into being. In the 'Discourse on political economy' he was anxious not for absolute economic equality, but for the curbing of extremes of wealth and poverty.[38] In the *Social contract* he laid it down as one of the functions of the state to establish laws of property.[39]

Rousseau had constantly in mind the age-old contrast of nature and nurture in the human condition. Nurture must not mean the imposition of the artificial. His position found what is perhaps its most famous expression in the rhetorical flourish at the beginning of *Émile*, where he declares that everything is good as it comes from the hand of God, but everything degenerates at the hands of

37 J J Rousseau, *Discourse on inequality*, 115.

38 J J Rousseau, 'Économie' in *Encyclopédie*, V, 337-49; *Discours sur l'oeconomie politique* (1758).

39 J J Rousseau, *Du contrat social* (1762), I.9.

man.[40] This is both pessimistic and paradoxical, man being himself the creation of God. Original sin being rejected, man in his present condition is the product of society. The issue of personal responsibility, here implicit in the face of social determinism, is later brought out directly by Godwin and by Robert Owen in the declaration that man's character is made not by him, but for him. Such implications, however, were not immediately before Rousseau's mind. In *Émile*, like Locke before him, he envisages not an educational scheme for society as a whole, but a tutor with a single pupil.

Rousseau and Diderot both nurtured an idealization of the primitive life, but on the other side of the Channel there was, on the whole, a more moderate approach to the spectacle of human history and progress. Primitivism has no place, while modest but continuing progress is expected. Such utopian hopes as are entertained are grounded, at least in part, on empirical evidence. In *The wealth of nations*, Adam Smith envisages a natural tendency to economic improvement unless hindered by misguided governmental interference outside the proper, and strictly limited sphere of government. The engines for this improvement are twofold, namely the division of labour, which had been deplored by Rousseau in his *Discourse on the origins of inequality*, and freedom of trade. The basis for hope lies in the beneficent tendencies of human self-interest, inasmuch as it is true of man generally that 'the study of his own advantage naturally, or rather necessarily leads him to prefer that employment which is most advantageous to the society'.[41] He proceeds to survey the gradual development of economic life, in spite of various hindrances, from its disordered state when the Roman Empire was overthrown through the centuries that ensued. Simultaneously Gibbon in his *History of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire* proclaimed in often quoted words: 'If man were called to fix the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that

40 J J Rousseau, *Émile* (1762).

41 Adam Smith, *An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations* (1776), IV(2); page references are to ed. Edwin Cannan (New York, 1994), 482.

which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus.'[42] Here he concurred with the judgment of Hume in his essay 'On the populousness of ancient nations'.[43] Meditating on the fall of the Western Empire, however, Gibbon suggests to his readers that 'we may inquire with anxious curiosity, whether Europe is still threatened with a repetition of those calamities, which formerly oppressed the arms and institutions of Rome.'[44] He finds reassurance in three factors: the existence of no danger or minimal danger from external barbarians, the political and military system of modern Europe, and the development of modern armaments. His successors two centuries later might reflect that Europe could provide horrors enough of its own. While he acknowledges that 'ages of laborious ascent have been followed by a moment of rapid downfall', his final conclusion is that 'every age of the world has increased, and still increases, the real wealth, the happiness, the knowledge, and perhaps the virtue, of the human race'.[45]

From Adam Smith and Gibbon we may turn to consider two figures from a different intellectual tradition, Richard Price and Joseph Priestley, both dissenting ministers of religion who, retaining belief in the Christian gospel and divine providence, represent the Enlightenment in a peculiarly English form. We find in both philosophers a vision of the future drawn in part from millennialist religious expectations and in part from a survey of general tendencies of the time. In Price the two strands of thought are found together in the triumphalist tones of his general thanksgiving sermon delivered in November 1759 on 'Britain's happiness, and the proper improvement of it':

> There are many indications of an approaching general amendment of human affairs. The season fixed by prophecy for the destruction of the *man of sin* cannot be far distant,

[42] Edward Gibbon, *History of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-88), ch.3. Page references are to ed. David Womersley (3 vols., 1994), I, 103.

[43] Initially published in Hume, *Political discourses* (1752). Available in editions of *Essays moral, political and literary*.

[44] *Decline and fall of the Roman Empire*, II, 511.

[45] *Decline and fall of the Roman Empire*, II, 515-16.

> and the glorious light of *the latter days* seems to be now dawning upon mankind from this happy Island.[46]

Further improvement, he admonishes his hearers, is still to be looked for.[47] He looked back to the Reformation, but had in mind also, no doubt, the continuing religious disabilities of Dissenters. More significant, is the address he delivered nearly thirty years later in 1787 on 'The evidence for a future period of improvement in the state of mankind'. Surveying the movements of his day, he observes 'a progressive improvement in human affairs'.[48] He argues: 'it is in the nature of improvement to increase itself ... nor are there, in this case, any limits beyond which knowledge and improvement cannot be carried.'[49] The whole tendency is to be seen in a religious light: 'this end is to be brought about by the operations of Providence concurring with those tendencies to improvement which I have observed to be inseparable from the nature of man.'[50] Reason and virtue are to constitute the means. The utopianism envisaged is one of gradual steps of improvement, not of a sudden transformation.[51]

This same combination, the religious interpretation of the empirical evidence, is to be found in Price's younger friend Joseph Priestley, as in his *Essay on the first principles of government.*[52] In somewhat similar language to Price's, we read: 'The great instrument in the hand of divine providence, of this progress of the species towards perfection, is *society*, and consequently *government*.'[53] Progress is to be measured in terms of the good and happiness of the majority of the members of the state, and the

[46] Reprinted in D O Thomas ed., *Richard Price: political writings* (Cambridge, 1991), 12.

[47] *Richard Price: political writings*, 10.

[48] *Richard Price: political writings*, 154.

[49] *Richard Price: political writings*, 157.

[50] *Richard Price: political writings*, 163.

[51] See D O Thomas's discussion of Price's millenarianism in *Richard Price: political writings*, xi-xii.

[52] Reprinted in Peter N Miller ed., *Joseph Priestley: political writings* (Cambridge, 1993). Priestley's *Essay* was published in 1768 and in a second edition in 1771.

[53] *Joseph Priestley: political writings*, 9.

means by which this goal is to be achieved is a moderate, not a radical democracy, religious disabilities and qualifications being silently disallowed.[54] There is, in addition, a strong emphasis laid on education which, Priestley argues in sect. iv, is not to be placed in the hands of the state. Fixed rules would be inimical to improvement, whereas 'the operations of human reason, though variable, and by no means infallible, are capable of infinite improvement.'[55] Improvement is the constant theme. We must take care that any improvement made is not such as to prove a hindrance to indefinite improvements in the future, which, if permitted, 'may carry us to a pitch of happiness of which we can yet form no conception.'[56] He warns his readers, however, that such progress is bound to be slow. As salutary warnings against the failure to progress, he points back to the cases of classical Sparta and ancient Egypt, where the maintenance of tradition led to ossification. Here his attitude is the very opposite of Plato who, in the *Laws* holds Egypt up as an example to follow on account of its long tradition of cultural uniformity.[57]

It is necessary, however, to enquire further what, in the general aspirations of the Enlightenment, was considered to be possible for man, and how those possibilities were to be realised. Priestley's answer has been noted above. The empiricist tendency deriving from Locke laid the stress on the influences brought to bear on the individual by the society in which he found himself. Against this background the social and political thinker had to direct his attention first and foremost to men in society as they actually were. Diderot, while foreseeing some progress for mankind generally, argued that the mass of humanity must reach a point beyond which it could proceed no further, however far the highest intellects might advance.[58] One may contrast the judgment of Adam Smith at the beginning of *The wealth of nations* that 'The difference of natural

54 *Joseph Priestley: political writings*, 13-14.

55 *Joseph Priestley: political writings*, 45.

56 *Joseph Priestley: political writings*, 110. See, generally, sect. 10.

57 Claude-Adrien Helvétius, *De l'homme, de ses facultés intellectuelles et de son éducation* (2 vols., 1773); Plato *Laws*, II, 656c-657b.

58 'Encyclopédie' *Encyclopédie*, V, 635-48A.

talents in different men is, in reality, much less than we are aware of…'.[59]

For such hope of improvement as might be effected, it was natural on the European continent to turn to benevolent absolutism, to the figure of the enlightened despot. Voltaire maintained a correspondence with Frederick the Great, and Diderot visited Catherine the Great. Helvétius, in his *Treatise on man* which he dedicated to Catherine and Frederick, thought the possibility of the emergence of such a ruler a matter of chance, herein putting us in mind of the philosopher-king in Plato's *Republic*, a figure whose possibility, however unlikely, was not to be excluded.[60] An interesting case is that of Jeremy Bentham who, judging governments by a utilitarian criterion, rejected Blackstone's portrayal of the balanced constitution, as found in the England of his day, as in itself ideal.[61] At one time Bentham hoped to interest Catherine the Great in schemes for reform, but later, in the republication of his *Catechism of Parliamentary reform*, turned to democratic control as ensuring the coincidence of interests between rulers and ruled.[62]

For the full tide of futuristic utopianism, if indeed that term can be used of a vision of indefinite improvement rather than of static perfection, we have to turn to Godwin and Condorcet. Godwin turns not to a benevolent despot, but, on the contrary, to anarchism: 'If the annihilation of blind confidence and implicit opinion can at any time be effected, there will necessarily succeed in their place an unforced concurrence of all in promoting the general welfare.'[63] Here speaks the utilitarian, but he adds that some doubt remains whether this transformation will ever come about. The utopian speaks out most plainly when he remarks: 'the term of human life may be prolonged, and that by the immediate operation of the intellect, beyond any limits which we are able to assign.'[64] Here he touches upon the important question of the possible future growth

59 *Wealth of nations*, I(2), 16.

60 Plato, *Republic*, 473a-c.

61 Jeremy Bentham, *Fragment on government* (1776).

62 Jeremy Bentham, *Catechism of parliamentary reform* (1817).

63 William Godwin, *Enquiry concerning political justice* (1793), III(6); page references to ed. Isaac Kramnick (Harmondsworth, 1976), 248.

64 *Enquiry concerning political justice*, appendix to VIII(9), 776.

of population and its implications which, as he foresees, may be advanced as an objection. Such problems, however, belong to the distant future: 'Myriads of centuries of still increasing population may pass away, and the earth be yet found sufficient for the support of its inhabitants.'[65] Moreover, when the limit is reached, mankind will probably cease to propagate. It is as well to note that he concedes in his final sentence that 'the substance of this appendix is given only as matter of probable conjecture.'[66] In any case, his words called for, and were to receive severe criticism within a short space of time.

We find a similar utopianism in Condorcet, although in no way tied to anarchism. His *Sketch for a historical picture of the progress of the human mind*, a remarkable work by a remarkable man, was written under circumstances of difficulty and danger, and only published aftter his death the preceding year.[67] As predecessors as apostles of the doctrine of progress he mentions Turgot, Price and Priestley in particular. What we have was to have been part of a larger scheme. Here Condorcet outlines the progress of civilization in a series of stages from primitive tribalism through pastoral and agricultural stages, and then through classical times to the revival from the regression of the Dark Ages. The eighth stage runs from the invention of printing to the time when philosophy and the sciences shook off the yoke of authority, while the ninth runs from Descartes to the foundation of the French Republic. The tenth stage is that of the future over which he waxes lyrical. The perfectibility of man is indefinite, growth feeding upon itself. Improvements in medicine and health may promise an indefinite increase in the average span of human life. Here, like Godwin, he finds himself compelled to touch on the problem of the consequent increasing size of the population and of the means necessary for its sustenance. He looks for social reform springing from enlightenment as well as to the beneficial effects of savings schemes for old age, but fails to put forward any real answer, ending with a glowing peroration.

[65] *Enquiry concerning political justice*, VIII(9), 769.

[66] *Enquiry concerning political justice*, appendix to VIII(9), 777.

[67] Condorcet, *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain* (1795).

Godwin and Condorcet both turned their attention, in however cursory and unsatisfactory a manner, to the problems sure to arise from the prospect of future growth in the population of the world and the consequent pressure on the means of subsistence. The comparison of population in classical and modern times was the theme of Hume's essay 'On the populousness of ancient nations' which set off a debate.[68] Price concerned himself with the question of the size of the population in his own times, but he was under the false impression that 18th century England had experienced a decline in population and, in any case, was primarily interested in the proper provision of personal life insurance.[69] It was not, indeed, until the 19th century that England undertook a regular census. Now, however, the figure of Malthus stepped onto the scene. The first edition of his *Essay on the principle of population* is written largely, although not entirely, at an abstract and theoretical level; the second and later editions are in fact an entirely new work, much larger in bulk and drawing on a mass of evidence such as was then available from different parts of the world.[70]

Malthus' central theme is based on the calculation that, unless modfied in some way, the natural tendency in the growth of population is one of geometrical proportion, while the growth of the means of subsistence was arithmetical.[71] The inevitable consequence is the unremitting pressure of population upon resoruces, while the only countervailing forces, apart from voluntary restraint, are vice and misery. With the force of these arguments behind him, he turns to the demolition of the optimistic hopes of Condorcet on the future of population and thus of human

[68] Initially published in Hume, *Political discourses* (1752) and included in editions of *Essays moral, political and literary*.

[69] Richard Price, *Observations of reversionary payments* (1771; 2nd.edn. 1773).

[70] Thomas Malthus, *Essay on the principle of population* (1798; 2nd.edn. 1803). Page references to E A Wrigley and David Soulden eds. *The works of Malthus* (8 vols., London, 1986), vols.1 (1798 edn.)-3.(1826 edn.)

[71] *Essay on the principle of population*, chap.1 (*Works of Malthus*, 1, 5-10).

happiness and then to Godwin.[72] The problems cannot be thought of, as Condorcet and Godwin had imagined, as postponable to an indefinite future. It is idle to suppose with Godwin, moreover, that the human species will ever cease to propagate. Nor, again against Godwin, can one suppose that universal benevolence will outweigh the pressing needs of the individual.[73] 'The great obstacle', he writes, 'in the way to any extraordinary improvement in society, is of a nature that we can never hope to overcome. The perpetual tendency in the race of man to increase beyond the means of subsistence, is one of the general laws of animated nature, which we can have no reason to expect will change.'[74] We need not, however, be driven to complete despair: 'Independently of what relates to this great obstacle, sufficient yet remains to be done for mankind, to animate us to the most unremitted exertion.'[75]

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72 *An essay on the principle of population*, (1798 edn.), chaps. 8-9 (Condorcet), 10-15 (Godwin).
73 *Essay on the principle of population,* chap.15
74 *Essay on the principle of population,* chap.17; in *Works of Malthus,* 1, 121.
75 *Essay on the principle of population*, chap.17; *Works of Malthus*, 1, 121.

CONSCIENCE AND THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF MORALS: RICHARD PRICE'S DEBT TO JOSEPH BUTLER

John Stephens

In 1788 Price had his portrait painted by Benjamin West.[1] He is shown sitting, as in his library. His right hand holds a letter, his left rests on a copy of Butler's *Analogy of religion*, a book that he first read in the winter of 1740. He recorded that it was Butler who had first taught him the proper method of reasoning on moral subjects which meant above all the supremacy of conscience.[2] The *Analogy* was published in 1736, three years before Hume's *A treatise of human nature* called many of its assumptions into question. Both books were studied by Price who acknowledged that Hume's scepticism showed him the need to set his own principles on secure foundations.[3] His interest centred on Hume the epistemologist.[4] In

1 Cf. Helmut von Erffa and Allen Staley, *The paintings of Benjamin West* (New Haven and London, 1986), 546-48.
2 Richard Price, *A review of the principal questions in morals* (1758), ed. D D Raphael (Oxford, 1974), 3 [all reference are to this edition unless otherwise stated]; preface to the first edition: '*There is no writer to whom I have near so much reason to acknowledge myself indebted as* Dr. Butler, *the late Bishop of* Durham.' In his *Observations on the importance of the American Revolution* (1784), he recalls that 'In early life I was struck with Bishop Butler's *Analogy of Religion....* I reckon it happy for me that this book was one of the first that fell into my hands. It taught me the proper mode of paying a due regard to the imperfection of human knowledge. His sermons also, I then thought, and do still think, excellent.' See D O Thomas ed., *Richard Price: political writings* (Cambridge, 1991), 142. Later still in 1787 the *Sermons on Christian doctrine* contains many citations of Butler. It is clear that he had his works to hand in the composition of the book since he added that 'whenever I had been conscious of writing after [Butler], I have almost always either mentioned him, or quoted his words; and the same I have also scrupulously done with respect to other writers.' There is no doubt that in Price's mind the debt was a substantial one and one that was particularly important in his early years. See William Morgan, *Memoirs of the life of the Rev. Richard Price* (1815), 8.
3 Price studied Hume in early life and subsequently observed, 'Though an enemy to his scepticism I have profited by it. By attacking, with great

A review of the principal questions in morals (1758), he frequently refers to the first *Enquiry*,[5] and, on specific points, to the *Treatise*: nowhere does he refer to the *Enquiry concerning the principles of morals* (1751).

Butler postulated conscience as a mechanism superior to, and directive of, other elements in human nature rather than something which merely approved an action.[6] In so doing he was responding to debates on the nature of morality that had taken place in the 1720s and 1730 around the question whether morality was something objective in itself or whether it is constituted by obedience to the will of God.[7]

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ability, every principle of truth and reason, he put me upon examining the ground upon which I stood and taught me not hastily to take anything for granted. *Observations on the American Revolution*, in Thomas ed. *Price: political writings*, 142.

[4] For Price's epistemology in general, see John Stephens, 'The epistemological strategy of Price's *Review of Morals*', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 5 (1986), 39-50.

[5] Hume's *Philosophical essays concerning human understanding* (1748) later re-entitled *Enquiry concerning human understanding*.

[6] A N Prior, 'Eighteenth-century writers on Twentieth-century subjects', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy and Psychology*, XXIV (1946), 168-82; cf. D D Raphael, 'Bishop Butler's View of Conscience', *Philosophy*, 24 (1949), 22-38.

[7] This view was put forward by Daniel Waterland in response to Samuel Clarke's posthumous, *Exposition of the Church catechism* (1730) in his *Remarks* on the same to which Arthur Ashley Sykes replied. Waterland replied in his *Nature, obligation and efficacy of the Christian sacraments* which in turn led to further pamphlets by the original protagonists along with Thomas Chubb and Thomas Johnson. Waterland's view is that moral virtues consist of obedience to the divine will: Sykes that morality has an independent authority. Butler's conscience was seen (e.g. by Thomas Johnson *An essay on moral obligation* [1731], 31) as an expression of this parallel to Hutcheson's moral sense. Ralph Cudworth's *A treatise concerning eternal and immutable morality* (1731) was in part published in response to this debate. Edward Chandler wrote in the introduction (xi),'It is well known that the loose principles, with regard to morality [presumably those of Hobbes] that are opposed in this book, are defended by too many in our own time. It is hoped also that the new controversies springing up, that have some relation to this subject, may be cleared and

These debates revolved around the epistemology of morals. Some, such as Shaftesbury and his followers, held that morality could be deduced from the constitution of human nature. Others supposed that it consisted in the pursuit of happiness: man was made to be happy while moral behaviour was defined as the pursuit of happiness in a social context (as opposed to uncontrolled hedonism). Others, such as Samuel Clarke, postulated a capacity for the direct intuition of moral truths. To ground morality in human nature provided a clear motive for action, but at the cost of making it vulnerable to subjectivity; to ground it in the perception of truths, on the other hand, guaranteed objectivity, but left open the motivation to moral action. Hutchesons' moral sense was one attempt to get round this problem; Butler's conscience, another.

The moral sense could easily be seen as something subjective and certainly was by Price, but Butler saw conscience both as a guarantee of objective morality and as a motive to its practice. The immediate roots of this view of conscience lay in elements of seventeenth-century scholasticism and its insistence that man was created with moral capacity, which in scholastic terms was characterised as *synteresis*, by which general moral principles became manifest, and *conscientia*, which indicated the correct course of action in particular circumstances.[8] Butler differed from his predecessors in isolating conscience rather than, for example, benevolence, as a dominant characteristic of human nature. Butler,

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shortened by the reasons herein proposed'. This introduction is not included in Sarah Hutton's recent edition (Cambridge, 1996).

[8] Cf. H R McAdoo, *The structure of Caroline moral theology* (London, 1949), 66ff; Robert Sanderson, *Lectures on conscience and human law*, ed., in an English translation, with preface by Christopher Wordsworth (Lincoln,1877), 87ff. Robert A Green, 'Instincts of Nature: Natural Law, Synteresis and the Moral Sense', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 58 (1977), 173-98. It is curious that although Henry Grove in his *A system of moral philosophy* (1749), to which Price subscribed, treats conscience in a similar fashion, citing Butler's seventh and tenth sermons which deal with false conscience, he does not discuss Butler's theory of the dominance of conscience. On Butler, see Stephen Darwall, *The British moralists and the internal ought: 1640-1740* (Cambridge, 1995), 244 ff., esp. 252-54. My emphasis of course is on what Price thought Butler said, or wanted him to say.

concerned to *describe* human nature, lent sufficient ambiguity in his expression for there to have been scope for argument as to exactly how conscience related to other elements of human nature and in particular whether the judgement of conscience was always right. Price, however, had no doubts that Butler allowed conscience dominance, but also that conscience, properly directed, has an absolute authority. For Price virtue and conscience are inextricably connected.[9]

The objectivity of ethics in Price's time was usually expressed in terms of 'fitnesses' based on natural and eternal differences of things and their relations, language particularly associated with Samuel Clarke. On this view, the rightness or wrongness of an action is based on an objective order antecedent to all positive appointment. Clarke states that '*assent* to a plain speculative truth, is not in man's power to withold' though he may chuse not to act in conformity to this insight.[10] Given this admission it is not surprising that Clarke's contemporaries found themselves reducing the ideal of fitnesses into self-love, the moral sense or whatever other theory they favoured. Morality, they thought, had to be expressed in terms of something in human nature that was capable of realising it: Clarke's 'plain speculative truth' did not allow for this. In fact Clarke's fitnesses could be argued to mean very little indeed. Price put it thus in a footnote in the first edition of the *Review*:

> *Dr. Clarke* and other writers, sometimes use the phrase, ETERNAL RELATIONS OF THINGS. Those who think

[9] See D O Thomas, *The honest mind. The thought and work of Richard Price* (Oxford, 1977), 87-111: chapter V, 'Obedience to conscience'.

[10] Cf. Clarke, *A discourse concerning the unchangeable obligations of natural religion* (4th edn., 1716), 50, 55. James P Ferguson, *The philosophy of Samuel Clarke and its critics* (New York, 1974), 170ff. Clarke is of course quoting *Meno*, 85, whilst Price seems specifically to rely on Theatetus. Clarke argues that the fact that whole nations exist in total ignorance of the laws of righteousness as of mathematical truths shows 'that Men have great need to be taught and instructed in some very plain and easy, as well as certain truths .... and is ... one good argument for the reasonableness of expecting a *Revelation.*' See D D Raphael ed., *British moralists 1650-1800* (2 vols., Oxford, 1969), I, sect. 232, 235, 238.

> this a strange phrase, will, I suppose, think it still stranger to be told, that it means what remains of relations and things, after the ceasing of their *actual* existence; that is, their *possible* existence, their ideas, their abstract and intelligible essences; which, with whatever is true or knowable of them, are necessary, eternal, and always the same.[11]

It was Clarke's vagueness that made possible the reductionist tactics of his opponents though Price thought that both were beside the point. For him all moral ideas 'are *ultimately* approved, and for justifying which no reason can be assigned; as there are some ends which are *ultimately* desired, and for chusing which no reason can be given' and 'therefore be ascribed to some power of *immediate* perception in the human mind.' Any one that doubts that our ideas of right and wrong are simple ideas, Price argues, 'need only try to give definitions of them, which shall amount to more than synonymous expressions.'[12] Expressions such as '*acting suitably to the natures of things; treating things as they are; conformity to truth; agreement and disagreement, congruity and incongruity between actions and relations*' cannot '*define virtue*; for they evidently *presuppose it.*'[13] When we speak of '*suiting* actions to circumstances' or of an '*agreement* and *repugnancy* between them' we are in fact speaking in terms of right and wrong. Price wishes 'that those who have made use of them had attended more to this, and avoided the ambiguity and confusion arising from seeming to deny an *immediate perception* of morality without any deductions

[11] Footnote in the first edition of the *Review* (1758), 219-22, to the text at p. 127, Raphael ed. (1974). Fitnesses only start to have a clear meaning, 'after considering, that all actions being necessarily right, indifferent, or wrong; what determines which of these an action should be accounted is the *truth of the case*; or the relations and circumstances of the agent and the objects. In certain relations there is a certain conduct right. There are certain manners of behaviour which we unavoidably approve, as soon as these relations are known. Change the relations, and a different manner of behaviour becomes right. Nothing is clearer than that what is due or undue, proper or improper to be done, must vary according to the different natures and circumstances of beings.' Ibid., 124-25.

[12] *Review*, 41.

[13] *Review*, 125.

of reasoning; and from attempting to give definitions of words which admit not of them.'[14] He has already argued that it is 'absurd' to enquire 'what *obliges* us to practise virtue', since virtue cannot be defined in terms other than itself. He cannot understand those 'who, because they cannot find any thing *in virtue and duty themselves*, which can induce us to pay a regard to them in our practice, fly to self-love, and maintain that from hence alone are derived all inducement and obligation.'[15]

If Price rejects self-love, he nevertheless had to contend with other theories of motivation which attempt to ground obligation in human nature. Since he insists that morality is autonomous, it is not surprising that he thinks Shaftesbury and Hutcheson both err in supposing that human nature is created moral. For Price, reason commands in such a way 'that an action which is under no influence or direction from a *moral judgement*, cannot be in the practical sense *moral*; that when virtue is not pursued or intended, there is no virtue in the agent. Morally good intention, without any idea of moral good, is a contradiction.'[16] He can agree with Shaftesbury that,

> if a creature be generous, kind, constant, and compassionate, yet if he cannot reflect on what he himself does or sees others do, so as to take notice of what is worthy and honest, and to make that notice or conception of worth and honesty to be an object of his affection, he has not the character of

[14] Ibid.

[15] *Review, 110-11.* The clearest exposition of these views in 1740 would have been John Gay's introduction to Edmund Law's translation of William King's, *De origine mali* (1702), *An essay on the origin of evil ... to which is prefixed a dissertation concerning the fundamental principles and immediate criterion of virtue* (London, 1731). In a note to this translation, not reprinted in later editions [xi, at p.66], he observes that the great defect in those who see morality in terms of essential rectitude and eternal relations 'seem to arise from not sufficiently attending to the above mentioned *Moral Sense* or *Conscience* (as the meaning of the word is wellfix'd by Mr. *Butler*) which is of itself both rule and obligation....' Law's associate, Thomas Johnson, interprets Butler in the same way *Quaestiones philosophiae* (Cambridge, 1734, 3rd edn., Cambridge 1741), 220.

[16] *Review*, 188-89.

> being virtuous; for thus and no otherwise he is capable of having a sense of right and wrong, &c.[17]

Price cites several passages from Shaftesbury, but thinks his account of virtue in the *Enquiry*,

> is ... on several accounts extremely deficient, particularly on account of his limiting virtue so much as in general he seems to do, to the cultivation of natural affection and benevolence; and overlooking entirely, as Dr. *Butler* observes, the *authority* belonging to virtue and the principle of reflexion.

For Price this is equivalent to a perception of truth and commands human nature in a way different from bias or instinct.[18]

Hutcheson's moral sense theory, to which it is clear Price had given attention, is also rejected though he evidently realised that Hutcheson was attempting to create a credible theory of morals.[19]

[17] *Review*, 190 citing Shaftesbury's *Inquiry concerning virtue*. First published in 1699, Price's references are to the revised *Inquiry* which formed the first two volumes of the *Characteristicks of men, manners, opinions, times* (3 vols, 1711). See the edition by Philip Ayres (Oxford, 1999), I, 204.

[18] *Review*, 190n. Price remarked that Shaftesbury, 'has, I think, made many excellent observations on virtue and providence, on life and manners; nor can it be enough lamented, that his prejudices against Christianity, have contributed so much towards defeating the good effects of them, and staining his works.' Shaftesbury is also cited at *Review*, 145n. On conscience and virtue, Price notes, 'Now *Goodness* in mankind is this state [in which the pre-eminence of the reasonable faculty is] restored and established. It is the power of reflexion raised to its due seat of direction and kept in the throne and holding under its sway all our passions.' He argued that as along as any passion preserves an ascendancy, 'God and conscience have not the throne...' *Review*, 217, 221.

[19] Hutcheson is one of the most frequently cited authors in the *Review*. Price refers to the *Inquiry into the original of our ideas of beauty and virtue* (1725) [*Review*, 42, 65, 209], *the Essay on the nature and conduct of our passions and affections. With illustrations upon the moral sense* (1728) [*Review,* 14, 39, 67, 110], the *Philosophiae moralis institutio compendiaria* (1742) [*Review*, 139], and several extensive references to the *System of moral philosophy* (1755) [*Review*, 144, 161, 215-17, 248], presumably added at the final stage before publication. It seems clear that, having read Hutcheson, Price did not consider it necessary to

Price noted that Hutcheson's account of obligation was 'not perfectly accurate', though it agreed 'in some measure' with his own. Price objected to Hutcheson's definition of virtue in terms of approval, that is to say that someone is obliged to undertake an action '*when every spectator, or he himself, upon reflexion, must approve his action and disapprove omitting it*'. Price argues that 'obligation to act, and reflex approbation and disapprobation do, *in one sense*, always accompany and imply one another', yet they are 'as different as an *act* and an *object* of the mind, or as perception and the truth perceived'. Obligation and approval are not equivalent: there is a distinction between saying that 'it is our *duty* to do a thing; and to say, we *approve* of doing it. The one is the quality of the action, the other the *discernment* of that quality.' This distinction is at the root of Price's epistemological concerns; approval is, as it were, a secondary quality and as such subjective.[20]

It is not surprising that Price prefers Clarke's view that,

> The judgment and conscience of a man's own mind, concerning the reasonableness 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 and strictly so, than any opinion whatsoever, of the authority of the giver of a law, or any regard he may have to its sanctions by rewards and punishments; for whoever acts contrary to this sense and conscience of his own mind, is necessarily self condemned.[21]

consider the ethical views of either Hume, whose views he identified, as Prior noted (*Logic and the basis of ethics* [Oxford, 1949], 98), 'perhaps too unreservedly with Hutcheson's or Adam Smith. The *Theory of moral sentiments* was not cited in the second editions (1769) of the *Review* and only in passing in the third (1787) in the Appendix (281-82). It would appear that Price did not became aware of the *Theory* until after 1769, for he mistakenly suggests that it was published after the second edition of the *Review* [*Review*, 281]. Shortly before his death in June 1790, Smith sent Price a copy of the sixth edition of the *Theory*. D O Thomas and W Bernard Peach eds., *The correspondence of Richard Price* (3 vols., Durham, North Carolina, Cardiff, 1983-1994), III, *February 1786-February 1791*, ed. W Bernard Peach; 326, Price to La Rochefoucauld, 14 Oct. 1790. As to Hume, there are three specific citings of the *Treatise* in the first edition of the *Review*, one is epistemological (96), the other two references emphasize Hume's reduction of morality to pleasure (pp.63 and 212), citing *Treatise*, III, 103, & 154, i.e. *A treatise of human nature*, ed. L A Selby-Bigge, 2nd edn. ed. P H Nidditch (Oxford, 1978), 517, 546-7.

[20] *Review*, 116-17, citing Hutcheson's *Illustration on the moral sense*. Sect. I; cf. also the comments at *Review*, 14-15.

For Clarke relates obligation to truth, but he understands conscience in a slightly different sense to Price, using the term, presumably following Locke, to mean a judgement of the morality of an action. Hence, when a man follows a course of action that interferes with 'any present Interest, Pleasure or Passions', his own mind 'commands and applauds him for his Resolution, in executing what his Conscience could not forbear giving its assent to, as just and right'. But conscience so understood is not sufficient to entail obligation. A man can see the 'certainty and universality' of obligation in the same way that he can assent to a proposition in mathematics; 'even though his *Practice*, through the prevalence of Brutish lusts, be absurdly contradictory to that *Assent*'. Although Clarke is right to base morals on the eternal reason of things he still needs to resort to the 'secondary and additional obligation' furnished by the sanction of rewards and punishments to determine motivation.[22]

It is in the context of these theories that Price's reliance on Butler must be understood. He refers to the obligation implied in reflex approbation 'the supremacy belonging to the principle of reflexion within us; and the authority and the right of superintendency which are constituent parts of the idea of it.' He argues that any being endued with reason and conscious of right and wrong is necessarily a *law* to himself which makes him accountable for his actions in spite of the 'greatest degree of ignorance or scepticism possible,

[21] *Review*, 118; Price's citation is Clarke's *Evidences of natural and revealed religion* (6th edn., 1725), 43. The published title is *A discourse concerning the unchangeable obligations of natural religion* (1st edn. 1706).

[22] Clarke, *Evidences*, 53-55. Cf. John Locke, *An essay concerning human understanding*, I, iii, 8; on Locke and conscience, see John Colman, *John Locke's moral philosophy* (Edinburgh, 1983), 65 ff.

with respect to the tendencies of virtue, the authority of the Deity, a future state and the rewards and punishments to be expected in it'.[23] What 'makes an agent ill deserving is not any opinion he may have about a superior power, or positive sanctions; but his doing wrong, and acting contrary to the conviction of his mind.' Price quotes (or rather paraphrases) Butler, 'What renders obnoxious to punishment, is not the fore-knowledge of it, but merely violating a known obligation.' Butler sees man as a clock, well-regulated by an autonomous conscience. Price is specific that knowledge strengthens conscience.[24]

For Butler conscience is one factor amongst several that command and induce right action. He can therefore allow that other elements in human nature reach to this end, but none have the intellectual status and therefore dominance of conscience. Benevolence is a trait in human nature, an 'affection' like self-love, ambition and curiosity: they are means by which intelligence can ring good about, but are not to be confused with good itself.[25] In Prior's words, Price is anxious to make a 'distinction ... between a definition of a moral term, and a significant ethical generalisation'.[26] He is anxious therefore to distinguish obligation from benevolence or beneficence pointing out that, though beneficence in general is a duty it is not universally so.[27] Butler is cited denying that

[23] *Review*, 119.

[24] *Review*, 119, citing the preface to Butler's *Fifteen sermons preached at the Rolls Chapel* (London, 1726, 2nd edn. with corrections and additions and with the Preface, London, 1729), 20. See W R Matthews ed., *Fifteen sermons ... by Joseph Butler* (London, 1967), 17. Butler's original reads, 'because it is not foreknowledge of the punishment which renders obnoxious to it; but merely violating a known obligation'. Price also refers to the fourth observation of the *Dissertation on virtue* at the end of the *Analogy of religion* to explain the tendency to be less censorious of private than public misconduct and later cites Butler's approving reference to ancient criticisms of the Epicureans at *Sermons,* p.32; see *Review*, 151, 199n., and Matthews ed. *Sermons*, Pref. 25-6, § (42).

[25] *Review*, 69.

[26] Prior, *Logic and the basis of ethics*, 100.

[27] *Review*, 119 ff; at 121, Price notes that 'the precise limits of some general duties cannot be determined by us.' Obligation can vary according to circumstance: 'In order to form a judgment in these cases, there are so

benevolence is the whole of virtue and that misdirected beneficence can undermine obligation. It is clear to Price that promises cannot only be binding upon any one 'any further than he thinks the observance of them will be productive of good upon the whole to society.'[28] That would again reduce morality to what is approved.

Price found in Butler a principle of virtue which commands rather than merely approves although he is ill at ease with its ontological vagueness. Butler accepted Locke's assertion that man and his faculties are created with sufficient capacities for the needs of this life: there is no question, however, of the direct apprehension of objective truth in the manner of Clarke. Price rejected Locke's epistemology partly for that reason, arguing that, although an implanted morality such as Butler's may convey the will of (a good) God, we have in fact direct access to the divine mind, which guarantees objectivity and avoids the suspicion of arbitrary morality implicit in an implanted moral faculty. This is because 'truth having always a reference to MIND; infinite, eternal truth implies an infinite, eternal MIND'. God's will depends on his understanding which morally determines it.[29] In asserting that morality is eternal and immutable, however, Price 'is not asserting, that there is any thing distinct from God, which is eternal and necessary, and independent of him; but "resolving all to his nature, founding all ultimately on this; and asserting this only to be eternal and necessary, and independent"'.[30] For Price, this epistemological

many particulars to be considered in our own circumstances and abilities, and in the state of mankind and the world, that we cannot but be in some uncertainty. There are indeed degrees of *defect* and *excess*, which we easily and certainly see to be wrong: But there is a great variety of intermediate degrees, concerning which we cannot absolutely pronounce, that one of them rather than another ought to be chosen.'

[28] *Review*, 132.

[29] *Review*, 88 .

[30] *Review*, 1st edn., 153-54; see revised text, ed Raphael, 89. Price is here quoting from Sharp's correspondence with Catherine Cockburn, which was first published in 1751. Price assumes that truth once perceived exists and that truth is therefore found in God along with its dependent happiness, misery and benevolence. Price retained the quotation in the second edition (1769) but not the third (1787). See *The works of Catherine Cockburn* (London, 1751), 353-460.

foundation is vital since in Butler's scheme it is possible for someone to follow his conscience honestly believing himself to be right when in fact he is not. Price allows for the possibility of error, but access to the divine mind gives him a different and superior basis of judgement: he can still err honestly but he has a duty to assure himself of the rightness of an action in a way unnecessary with Butler.

* * * * *

Price's aim was to construct a rationalist ethical theory based on objective truth. Morality, like a triangle, is what it is 'unchangeably and eternally': like every object of the understanding it 'has an indivisible and invariable essence; from whence arise its properties, and numberless truths concerning it.'[31] Price takes this argument a stage further and argues that moral relations operate in the same way and supposes that the terms of morality such as obligation and duty stand in a relation analogous to that of attraction, force and movement in Newtonian mechanics.[32] He is specific about the analogy:

> *Obligation* to action, and *rightness* of action, are plainly coincidental and identical; so far so, that we cannot form a notion of the one, without taking in the other. This may appear to any one upon considering, whether he can point out any difference between what is *right, meet* or *fit* to be done, and what *ought* to be done. It is not indeed plainer, that figure implies something figured, solidity resistance, or an effect a cause, than it is that *rightness* implies *oughtness* ... or *obligatoriness*. And as easily can we conceive of figure without extension, or motion without a change of place, as that it can be *fit* for us to do an action, and yet that it may not be what we *should* do, what it is our *duty* to do, or what we are under an *obligation* to do. — *Right, fit, ought, should,*

[31] *Review*, 50.

[32] John Stephens, 'Price, Providence and the *Principia*', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 6 (1987), 77-93, at 85-86.

> *duty, obligation*, convey, then, ideas necessarily including one another.[33]

It follows 'That virtue, *as such*, has a real obligatory power antecedently to all positive laws, and independently of all will; for obligation, we see, is involved in the very nature of it.'[34] The 'it' is virtue. This is to say that intellectual perception of the rightness of an action implies an obligation to do it, and that Price assumes that our participation in the divine mind is active as well as contemplative. Even though our participation in the Divine mind is limited, what we perceive is true if incomplete, which distinguishes it from an implanted capacity such as Hutcheson's moral sense. The moral world is sustained by all manner of agents, with different capacities, who often fail to understand the system through inattention or indifference even though, because of the nature of our mind, we can, *like* God, judge an act in terms of its total consequences and we have to do thus if we are to avoid reducing morality to general rules.[35]

This also means that morality could be seen as independent of revelation, since it follows from man's own apprehension of truth, a point that Price has made earlier,

> It follows, therefore, that the greatest degree of ignorance or scepticism possible, with respect to the tendencies of virtue, the authority of the Deity, a future state, and the rewards and punishments to be expected in it, leaves us still truly and fully accountable, guilty, and punishable, if we transgress this law.... For what makes an agent ill-deserving is not any opinion he may have about superior power, or positive sanctions; but his doing wrong, and acting to the conviction of his mind. 'What renders obnoxious to punishment, is not the fore-knowledge of it, but merely violating a known obligation.'[36]

This does not mean that Price ignores Christianity, but it is clear that for him Revelation, though he accepts its truth, is puzzling:

[33] *Review*, 105.

[34] Ibid.

[35] See Richard Price, *Sermons on the Christian doctrine* (London, 1787, 2nd edn., 1787), 162-3 on agency.

[36] *Review*, 119.

doctrines such as the atonement are things unclear to him. He was 'convinced that the order of nature is perfect, that infinite wisdom and goodness governs all things an that Christianity came from God, but at the same time puzzled by many difficulties, craving for more light and resting with assurance only on this one truth - that the practice of virtue is the duty and dignity of man, and in all events his wisest and safest course.[37]

In his attempt to demonstrate the objectivity of morals, Priced argues against his contemporaries that either their notion of morality is arbitrary since it is derived from human nature or else that they suppose that man is not naturally capable of moral action and so needs to be cajoled and bullied. Price's view is that the moral imperative is internal to human nature in that it is part of that nature to perceive truth and act on that perception. It is easy to imagine the seventeen year old Price being impressed both by Butler's notion of conscience which seemed to impose order on human nature in a way that was itself natural: man did not *need* to be cajolled or bullied, since perceiving what is right and acting on it comes naturally to him. This in Price's eyes was an ordered human nature in a way that Shaftesbury's was not. The combination of Butler's account of human nature with Cudworth's epistemology created a synthesis which he used against both Shaftesbury and Hutcheson: his reaction to Hume (at least in the *Review*) was secondary to this. It was Butler's demonstration of how human nature operated which when combined with Cudworth's philosophy gave Price the key to the reconciliation of thought and action which is at the heart of his philosophy.

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[37] *Observations on the importance of the American Revolution*, loc.cit, 142.

PRICE AMONG THE UNITARIANS

R. K. Webb

In the general introduction to their edition of the correspondence of Richard Price, D O Thomas and Bernard Peach point to the puzzling fate that befell one of the most remarkable minds of the eighteenth century. Price was not only an eminent Dissenting minister, but also (as Thomas and Peach put it) 'philosopher, theologian, mathematician, pioneer in the development of the theory and practice of insurance, expert in public finance, demographer, and political pamphleteer', held in great respect, whatever the disagreements, by the leading intellects of his time. But between Price's death in 1791 and the publication of Roland Thomas's biography in 1924, 'it seemed that Price's reputation and fame had died with him, and his achievements, excepting perhaps those in moral philosophy, were either undervalued or completely ignored'.[1] This essay is an attempt to examine a small but significant sector of that neglect – among the English Unitarians – and to suggest some explanations.

The neglect of Price cannot be fully appreciated without considering the lasting fame of his close friend and intellectual sparring partner Joseph Priestley. Certainly the two men were linked in the minds of their contemporaries, and the hyphen in the original title of this journal, *The Price-Priestley Newsletter,* suggested the existence, two centuries later, of a potential readership that still sensed an identity between the two, based on ideas and shared context. Indeed, it seems highly likely that if, at almost any time in the past century, a historian of political thought or of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century English radicalism, were asked to free-associate with the name 'Price', the answer would have been 'Priestley' and *vice versa.* But such an automatic identification would be far less likely among specialists in other fields or in a more general intellectual audience, where Price's name, if known at all, might call up Burke or Butler or Clarke, while Priestley would probably summon 'oxygen' or 'chemistry'.

[1] D O Thomas and Bernard Peach, *The correspondence of Richard Price* (3 vols., Cardiff and Durham N. C., 1983-94), vol. I, v.

English Unitarians would draw on a different set of associations with Priestley: among the historically informed, Hartley certainly, Lindsey and Belsham probably, or possibly (by opposition) Martineau; for nearly everyone else 'martyr' or 'religious liberty' would come to mind. Price's name would surface among Unitarian historians, probably tagged as an Arian, but for most members of the denomination, he would be virtually unknown. Let us look at some measures of this forgetfulness.

Occasions

It has been often enough remarked that Joseph Priestley is unusual in the frequency with which his centenaries have been observed. Thus, on 25 March 1833, a dinner at the Freemasons' Tavern in Birmingham commemorated the centenary of his birth; the forty-two stewards were 'chiefly scientific men of the highest repute in the various walks of philosophy', among them Brewster, Roget, Dalton, Faraday, Lubbock, and Rennie. Three days later, again in Birmingham at a dinner at Dee's Royal Hotel, another celebration was held, with nearly two hundred present. The chairman, John Corrie, F. R. S. – the long-time president of the Birmingham Philosophical Institution – gave an address praising the wide range of Priestley's philosophical accomplishments. Among those responding to the toasts were Joseph Parkes, the liberal politician, on Priestley as man and citizen; the Rev. John Kentish, minister of New Meeting, on Priestley as philosopher and theologian; the Rev. William Bowen of Cradley, Priestley's son-in-law, responding for Priestley's family and descendants at home and abroad; the Rev. John Grundy, minister of Paradise Street, Liverpool, on the cause of truth and of civil and religious liberty; the Rev. Charles Berry of Leicester replying to the toast to the radical classicist Samuel Parr and the famous liberal Baptist preacher Robert Hall, who had deeply admired Priestley despite their theological differences; the Rev. Hugh Hutton of Old Meeting; the Rev. Robert Kell of High Pavement, Nottingham; the Rev. Samuel Bache of New Meeting; the Rev. John James Tayler of Mosley Street, Manchester; and the Rev. James Martineau, newly appointed to Paradise Street – Unitarians all, as were the laymen among the responders and presumably most if not all of the audience. The *Christian Reformer*

also reported a speech by William Johns of Manchester – schoolmaster, sometime Unitarian minister, and joint secretary (with John Dalton) of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society – at a congregational meeting at Greengate, Salford, presided over by its minister, the Rev. John Relly Beard.[2]

Such celebrations were not, apparently, confined to centenaries. Four years earlier, in Birmingham on 13 April 1829, nearly a hundred persons, largely teachers in the Sunday Schools of Old and New Meetings, had come together with 'other Dissenters, Episcopalians [sic], and Roman Catholics', to honour Priestley. There were the usual tributes to his talents and toasts to religious liberty, joined with a timely eulogy 'on the honesty of His Majesty's Ministers in avowing and acting on their present liberal sentiments on the Catholic question'.[3] The celebration is remarkable on two counts: that Unitarians, with their inveterate liberalism, paid tribute to Wellington and Peel, and that the legislative achievement of Catholic Emancipation was tied to Priestley and, a bit late though explicitly, to his birthday.[4]

As the two hundredth anniversary of Priestley's birth approached, Walter H Burgess, secretary of the Unitarian Historical Society, called the occasion to the attention of readers of the *Inquirer*, asking that notices be inserted in church calendars and, if possible, that mention of Priestley be arranged with local newspapers. One particularly appropriate celebration was held in Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds, where Priestley had been minister; there were addresses on the occasion by the minister W L Schroeder and by S F Dufton on chemistry. The daughter and son of the Rev. J M Dixon communicated to the *Inquirer* passages from an address on Priestley that Dixon had given to his congregation in Bowl Alley Lane, Hull, on 12 October 1879, almost certainly in slightly tardy recognition of the seventy-fifth anniversary of Priestley's death. They also sent an extract from the well-known address given by Thomas Henry Huxley at the dedication of the Priestley memorial in Birmingham in 1874, restoring the Unitarian references that Sir

[2] *Christian Reformer*, 19 (March 1833), 133-7, 142-3, 169-85.

[3] *Christian Reformer*, 15 (April 1829), 198.

[4] Ibid.

Oliver Lodge had omitted when he quoted Huxley in a chapter on Priestley in *Nine famous Birmingham men* (1909) – 'words ... repeated here today so as to be in our minds on Monday, 13 March, Priestley's 200th birthday'.[5] The 250th anniversary in 1983 was the occasion of a history day at the meeting in London of the Royal Society of Chemistry (the Third Priestley BOC Conference), at which the papers distilled the remarkable advances in Priestley scholarship in the last quarter-century and integrated his science with his powerful Unitarian commitment.[6] The conference was not mentioned in the *Inquirer*, but the paper had earlier published an article on Priestley by John McLachlan and a review of his *Joseph Priestley, man of science, 1733-1804: an iconography of a great Yorkshireman* (1983).[7]

The centenary of Priestley's death in 1904 was marked by the unveiling of a memorial tablet at Warrington on the site of Priestley's residence in Academy Street; by a fund-raising effort, taking off from the occasion, by the Midland Christian Union for the support of liberal churches in the district; and by a commemoration in Leeds, with lectures by the minister and historian Alexander Gordon – then principal of Unitarian Home Missionary College in Manchester and the author of one of the two entries on Priestley in the *Dictionary of National Biography*--and the distinguished chemist Thomas Edward Thorpe, F. R. S. A memorial sermon preached on the occasion by the minister at Mill Hill, Charles Hargrove, became a four-part biographical series in

[5] *Inquirer*, 26 Feb., 4 and 11 March 1933. The *Inquirer* for 18 March notes that the addresses by Schroeder and Dufton, with a poem by Arthur Bennett, were published by the Sunrise Press in Warrington. The following week the paper carried more on the Leeds celebration and printed a letter on Priestley at Hackney.

[6] The papers were published by the Royal Society of Chemistry, *Oxygen and the conversion of future feedstocks* (London, 1984), Special Publication no. 48, the title being the scientific subject of the conference. Four of the papers were republished in A Truman Schwartz and John G McEvoy eds., *Motion toward perfection*: *The achievement of Joseph Priestley* (Boston, MA, 1990).

[7] *Inquirer*, 5 March and 25 June 1983.

the *Inquirer*.[8] No doubt it would be possible to multiply the occurrence of such events through entries in congregational records and reports in the local press.

There is no such record for Price, in 1823, 1891, 1923, or 1991. Indeed, the only commemoration I have been able to find is a sermon by Thomas Kitson Cromwell, minister of Newington Green, where Price had preached for so many years, on the erection of a memorial tablet in the chapel. Cromwell, who had left the Church of England for Unitarianism around 1830, served as minister at Newington Green from 1839 to 1864, when he assumed the pulpit at Canterbury, which he held until his death in 1870. He was a firm adherent of the older Unitarianism derived from David Hartley and Joseph Priestley, which underlay the argument of *The soul and the future life* (1859); the little book was anonymously and sympathetically, though not uncritically, reviewed in the *Christian Reformer* for August 1859 (pp. 461-67). Cromwell's by then 'conservative' Unitarian views were forthrightly stated in a letter to the *Inquirer* in 1866 and expanded the same year into a pamphlet, *Whither are we tending?*, attacking what he called the 'transcendental deism' of James Martineau and John James Tayler; he deplored Martineau's rejection of the Unitarian name and defended the 'historical Christianity' of the New Testament, as then embattled members of the 'Old School' understood it.

Unfortunately, given these credentials, Cromwell's sermon does not offer a serious engagement with Price as a theologian or philosopher. The brief prefatory memoir is largely drawn from the *Memoirs* by Price's nephew William Morgan (1815), including some of Morgan's errors, as was pointed out in a perfunctory review in the *Christian Reformer*. Further, Cromwell's tribute to Price comes with its own little puzzle. The sermon was preached on 23 October 1842, eighteen months after the actual centenary of Price's death. It appears that the idea of a tablet originated with someone other than Cromwell, but the raising of funds must have been less than successful, for the sermon ends with an oddly

[8] *Inquirer*, 16, 23, & 30 Jan., 6 Feb. 1904. Thorpe (who was later knighted) published much on Priestley, in his *Essays on historical chemistry* (1902), as well as a book on Priestley in 1906 (reprinted 1976) in the series *English men of science*.

strained appeal to those who had not yet contributed. There was in 1841 no *Inquirer* to carry an appeal for funds – the paper makes no mention of the memorial or the sermon in 1842 or 1843 – and congregational records that might throw some light on the transaction are, evidently, not to be found. However that may be, this modest commemoration stands as a singular exception to Unitarian neglect of obvious occasions for remembering Price.[9]

Publications

Despite the absence of centenary observances, Price is certainly in evidence (though far less so than Priestley) in both the *Monthly Repository* and the *Christian Reformer* in the generation or so after his death.[10] Some of Price's appearances are mere passing mentions, as in Gogmagog's account of his joining the Dissenters: 'I supposed that a Price, a Robinson, a Priestley was the organ,

[9] The inscription on the tablet is printed on the last page of the published version of the sermon: Thomas Cromwell, *The late Richard Price, D.D., F.R.S., characterized in a sermon...* (1842). *Christian Reformer*, n.s. 10 (Jan. 1843), 57 On Morgan's death in 1833, the *Unitarian Chronicle and Companion to the Monthly Repository* (2: 252-5) published an obituary that contains much information about Price.

[10] The listing of mentions of Price that follows is representative rather than complete, although more are mentioned than not. The *Monthly Repository* was founded in 1806, the *Christian Reformer* in 1815. Both were edited by the Rev. Robert Aspland, of Hackney, the latter intended as a more accessible periodical than the *Repository*, which was devoted to more serious theological discussion. Both reported on local Unitarian matters. When W J Fox took over the editorship of the *Repository* in 1828, he began its conversion to a more strictly literary magazine. In 1833, denominational reporting was shifted (though not entirely) to the short-lived *Unitarian Chronicle and Companion to the Monthly Repository*, succeeded in 1834-5 by the *Unitarian Magazine and Chronicle*. In 1834 the *Reformer*, in a new and larger format, became the principal source for coverage of Unitarianism, prior to the development of denominational newspapers, the *Inquirer* in 1842 (and still in existence), the *Unitarian Herald* in 1861-89, and *Christian Life*, 1876-1929. Fox's break with Unitarianism after 1835 brought the transfer of the *Repository* to other editors, and it ceased to exist in 1838. The *Reformer*, edited by the Rev. Robert Brook Aspland after 1844, lasted until 1863.

each in his own day and place' of those persecuted champions of stolen constitutional rights;[11] some are quotations without obvious occasion, such as the brief citation of Price on pure existence[12] or the publication of a 1748 letter from Price to a Miss Ashurst;[13] the odd anecdote is related, as in a review of a life of Ezra Stiles;[14] and an occasional panegyric is quoted from the work of others, e.g. in the course of an extract from Anna Laetitia Barbauld's essay on public worship,[15] from William Hone's *The spirit of despotism* and from a pamphlet by Robert Hall.[16] Price is briefly defended against Southey and Coleridge in an extract from a *Monthly Review* notice of the former's life of Wesley.[17] There is a short notice of a republication of Price's *Observations on civil liberty*.[18]

Only two extended discussions of Price appear in the *Repository* in these years. One is a two-part review of William Morgan's *Memoirs of the life of the Rev. Richard Price, D. D., F. R. S.*[19] The second is a review, also in two parts, of Price's *Sermons on various subjects*.[20] The first of the reviews was signed 'N', identified in the key to contributors published by Professor Mineka as the Rev. John Kentish, the learned, patrician senior minister at New Meeting, Birmingham;[21] the identity of the second reviewer remains unknown. Both greatly admired their subject for his personal qualities, the range and value of his published works, and the power and attractiveness of his preaching, which both had known well.

All this was probably enough to keep Price's memory alive, at least among the minority of Unitarians who read the denominational journals. But, while Priestley is referred to with

[11] *Monthly Repository*, 1 (March 1806), 125.

[12] *Christian Reformer* 1 (Aug. 1815), 303.

[13] *Christian Reformer*, n.s. 4 (Aug. 1837), 46-47.

[14] *Monthly Repository*, 3 (May 1808), 244-45.

[15] *Christian Reformer*, 11 (Oct. 1825), 342.

[16] *Monthly Repository*, 16 (March 1821), 166; 17 (March 1822), 182-83.

[17] *Monthly Repository*, 16 (Oct. 1821), 595.

[18] *Monthly Repository*, 12 (March 1817), 175.

[19] *Monthly Repository*, 10 (Aug. and Sept. 1815), 504-8, 578-86.

[20] *Monthly Repository*, 12 (Jan. and Feb. 1817), 43-8, 111-16.

[21] Francis E Mineka, *The dissidence of Dissent: the Monthly Repository, 1806-1838* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1944), 396.

some frequency in the last two decades of the *Reformer*'s existence, the only mention of Price that goes beyond the incidental is in an article by John Relly Beard on Christian hymnology. When Beard turns to attack the worship of Christ, the unquestioned authorities he cites are Lardner, Priestley, Lindsey, and Belsham; Price, 'although an Arian', is extensively quoted in confirmation.[22] That sparse record lends a note of valediction to the reprinting in 1830 by the British and Foreign Unitarian Association (of which Aspland was secretary) of *Sermons by Richard Price and Joseph Priestley*, first published in 1791 and again in 1814 by Joseph Johnson; they were reprinted once again in 1836 as volume nine of the BFUA's series of *Unitarian Tracts*.[23]

Finally, we must consider the Arian periodical, the *Christian Moderator*, over a short life that began in May 1826 and ended in December 1828, having attained, the closing address explained, neither a large enough circulation nor a sufficient list of contributors to ensure survival, though grateful note was taken of the support given 'by a small body of enlightened Independent friends'. It might be expected that Price, as an Arian, would have received some significant attention, but the only appearance I have found is in a letter from 'J. B.' in the first issue, which lists eminent past adherents of Rational Religion, beginning with Newton, Locke, and Clarke and ending with Price, Hugh Worthington (the younger), and Abraham Rees.

[22] *Christian Reformer*, n.s. 17 (Feb. 1851), 88-9. Instances of incidental mention are in biographical articles on the poet Samuel Rogers, n.s. 12 (April 1856), 197; on Charles Wellbeloved, n.s. 14 (Oct. 1858), 524-5, and on the Scottish clergyman Thomas Somerville, n.s. 17 (June 1861), 427. There is also a stern objection to the ignorant caricatures of Priestley and Price in an account of the events of 1789 in Thomas Wright's *England under the House of Hanover*, n.s. 5 (March 1849) 177.

[23] Price: 'Of the security of a virtuous course'; 'of the happiness of a virtuous course'; 'of the resurrection of Lazarus'. Priestley: 'The importance and extent of free inquiry into matters of religion'; 'on habitual devotion'; 'on the duty of not living to ourselves'; 'of the danger of bad habits'.

The magazine carried memoirs of Worthington (d. 1813) and Rees (d. 1825) as well as of others of recent memory, but not of earlier Arians. An exception for Price might seem warranted, if not for the recent centenary, then for his well-known and direct contravention, on grounds dear to Arians, of Priestley's doctrines. But it is difficult to suppress the thought that the conductors of the *Moderator* were caught up in a present debate framed by the Unitarian enemy – from J. B.'s complaint that Unitarians had arrogated the term Rational Dissent exclusively to themselves to the extended attention given to refuting Belsham's *Discourses*, part 1 in August and September 1826 and part 2 in June, July, and October 1827.[24]

Historians

In the second volume of Earl Morse Wilbur's panoramic *A history of Unitarianism*,[25] Price is little more than a spear-carrier for Lindsey, Belsham, and above all Priestley, though he receives independent attention for his address to the Revolution Society in 1789 and Burke's massive rejoinder; a lengthy biographical footnote cites Thomas's life.[26] Wilbur's history of the *History* traces the growth of his interest in the Unitarian story from a rudimentary knowledge drawn from Joseph Henry Allen's *An historical sketch of the Unitarian movement since the Reformation* (1894) to the completion of his monumental work, making evident his overarching interest in continental Unitarianism – which takes up the whole of the first volume – for which he acquired some of the necessary languages and to which he devoted two years' research abroad.[27] Wilbur's fears that he might have to omit any research on the ground in England were put to rest by combining a tutorship in homiletics at Unitarian College Manchester and a

[24] It should be added that the *Moderator* paid much attention to Northern Ireland, where Arianism was still the dominant theological position.

[25] *A history of Unitarianism*: volume 1, *Socinianism and its antecedents*; volume 2, *In Transylvania, England, and America* (Cambridge, MA., 1946 and 1952).

[26] *History of Unitarianism*, vol. 2, 296 and 306-7.

[27] See *Proceedings of the Unitarian Historical Society*, 9 (Boston, MA, 1951), 5-23, esp. 18-19.

Hibbert fellowship for eighteen months in 1933-34, apparently with such success that, on the eve of his departure, he notes (as do I with a mixture of mystification and mortification) that, had he had another two weeks, he would have hardly known how to use them. But neither his extensive reading nor his conversations with historians of English Unitarianism appear to have suggested greater attention than he eventually gave to Price.

The relevant chapter in Walter Lloyd's survey, *The story of Protestant Dissent and English Unitarianism* (1899), entitled 'Lindsey, Priestley, and Belsham', mentions Price not at all, nor – understandably – do briefer sketches.[28] In Henry Gow's somewhat longer account, *The Unitarians*, Price appears glancingly in connection with Priestley and with the French Revolution, but not with the other subject of that chapter, Theophilus Lindsey.[29]

A historian with whom Wilbur was assuredly in touch was Herbert McLachlan, then principal of Unitarian College, Manchester [UCM], Wilbur's base for part of his stay in Britain; McLachlan was publishing at the time his study of the Unitarian movement.[30] In that book, Price appears on lists of names – tutors at Hackney College, authors favourably reviewed by Anthony Robinson in the *Analytical Review* – and is mentioned as the friend of Anna Laetitia Barbauld and of the mother of Samuel Rogers. In the chapter on philosophy, McLachlan gives Price his due as an original philosophical writer, while noting that his influence was greater in Germany and America than in England, importantly on William Ellery Channing, who claimed that he was saved from Locke's philosophy by reading Price, in particular the *Four*

[28] W G Tarrant, *The story and significance of the Unitarian movement* (London, 1910, repr. 1947). Brooke Herford, 'Unitarianism in England' in *Unitarianism: its origin and history* (1890), Price is mentioned as Priestley's friend in Joseph Henry Allen, *An historical sketch of the Unitarian movement since the Reformation* (1894), 154, 156.

[29] Henry Gow, *The Unitarians* (London, 1928), 85-6.

[30] H McLachlan, *The Unitarian movement in the religious life of England. I. Its contribution to thought and learning 1700-1900* (London, 1934). McLachlan's preface is dated 14 October 1933.

dissertations.[31] McLachlan goes on to concede the obvious fact that Price's philosophical influence on English Unitarianism was negligible, compared to the impact of Priestley and Belsham.

McLachlan's consideration of Price is limited by his Unitarian emphasis and by the subtitle of his book, rather narrowly construed. In 1938, however, appeared *The Unitarian contribution to social progress* by Raymond V Holt, a book apparently projected as a companion volume to McLachlan's but not so presented on publication, leaving the older work, with an anticipatory roman numeral in its title, with the appearance of incompleteness.[32] In Holt's book, Price receives more index entries than anyone but Priestley, nineteen as against thirty, though most of Price's appearances in the text are in association with Priestley. Two lengthy sections, however, claim attention for Price in his own right: one deals with his work on actuarial matters, pensions, and the national debt; the other is on the genesis and aftermath of the Revolution Society address in 1789.[33]

One of the peculiarities of this very odd book is the author's decision to print the names of Unitarians 'in the widest sense' in italics, which are conferred on historical figures with rather tangential connections to Unitarianism, such as Jeremy Bentham or Charles Dickens, and denied to those who abandoned it, even if, like Harriet Martineau, they were profoundly and permanently influenced.[34] Holt's view of Price as solidly identified with

[31] McLachlan, *Unitarian movement*, I, 243-45; see also Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, *Reminiscences of Rev. Wm. Ellery Channing, D. D.* (1880), 367-68, and Anna Letitia Le Breton, *Correspondence of William Ellery Channing, D. D. and Lucy Aikin from 1826 to 1842* (1874), 67-68, 81-82, the sole references. It seems odd to me that, when Lucy Aikin reported that reading the Price-Priestley correspondence had profoundly unsettled her Priestleyan views, Channing did not devote more attention to Price as a catalyst for furthering in his friend what he could only have considered a favourable development.

[32] *The Unitarian contribution to social progress in England* (London, 1938). A revised edition was published by the Unitarian Lindsey Press in 1952.

[33] Ibid., 76-79, 106-10.

[34] Dickens admired the preaching of Edward Tagart and frequently attended services at Little Portland Street, London; see John P Frazee,

Unitarianism is thus typographically confirmed. Holt succeeded McLachlan as principal of UCM in 1944, having been a tutor (and later librarian and warden) at Manchester College Oxford, where Wilbur spent a portion of his leave working in the College's extensive manuscript holdings, so the two men must frequently have met and conversed. Why is not the greater importance that Holt assigned to Price reflected in any degree in Wilbur's history?

Holt is not alone in claiming Price as a Unitarian, though he asserts it more clearly and gives Price more attention than his fellow-historians. Thirty years later, in H L Short's brilliantly compressed chapter in C G Bolam et al., *The English Presbyterians,* greater precision prevails, but in only a single reference, noting Price as a Presbyterian who, despite political agreement with Priestley, did not follow him in theology and metaphysics.[35] The best example of sensitive discrimination seems to me, not surprisingly, in Alexander Gordon's little *Heads of Unitarian history* (1895): Price gets scant notice, but in section twenty-seven he figures as 'the most distinguished of the London Arians' and more expansively in section ninety-nine as one 'who bred in Independency, became the ornament of the Presbyterian name. Sharing not one of Priestley's speculations, Price proved himself his true partner in a common devotion to truth, at once the gentlest of controversialists and the warmest of friends'. One would have thought that, if only as a foil for Priestley, a man of these qualities had fuller claim on Unitarian historians than has been granted him.

D O Thomas and Bernard Peach take Roland Thomas's *Richard Price,* as, if not a turning point in awareness of Price, at least as a tentative ending of more than a century of forgetfulness.[36] Yet it is doubtful that the book made much impression within Unitarianism. Both Unitarian newspapers took notice of it, to be sure. The brief,

'Dickens and Unitarianism', *Dickens Studies Annual*, 18 (1981), 119-43. Harriet Martineau's Unitarianism is central to the interpretation in my *Harriet Martineau, a radical Victorian* (London, 1960).

[35] C Cordon Bolam, Jeremy Goring, H L Short and Roger Thomas eds., *The English Presbyterians. From Elizabethan Puritanism to modern Unitarianism* (London, 1968), 232.

[36] Roland Thomas, *Richard Price, philosopher and apostle of liberty* (Oxford, 1924).

unsigned review in *Christian Life* for 29 November 1924, refers to Price's many accomplishments and welcomes 'a pleasant and attractive account of this interesting man'. In a much longer review in the *Inquirer* for 14 February 1925, H W Stephenson, minister at Ilminster. found fault with Thomas for the limitation of his sources, erratic citation, and a failure to recognize shortcomings or difficulties in Price's work, yet he too welcomes a 'serviceable account' that broke the puzzling absence of commemoration of the bicentenary of Price's birth, an occasion surely worthy of both decent and honourable notice. It is a little disconcerting to find that the book was not noted at all in the *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society.*

Observations

What, one wonders, might have happened to Price's posthumous reputation had the professional associations of actuaries and demographers possessed the keen historical awareness and the celebratory aggressiveness of the chemists,[37] or if, indeed, the subjects had even a substantial fraction of the glamour that has inhered in chemistry for most of two centuries? On the other hand, could one imagine any historical or philosophical sensibility that might have equated the dubious immortality conferred by Burke on Price with the palpable horror of the physical destruction visited on Priestley and his family in the Birmngham Riots in 1791, with its sad ratification of a life lived out in exile? To ask such questions, even half-facetiously as I have done, is to answer them. Priestley was fated by myriad circumstances – among them the lasting force of his personality and the odd attractiveness of his delight in controversy[38] – to loom far more prominently in history than does

[37] It should be remembered that the founding meeting of the American Chemical Society took place at Priestley's house in Northumberland, Pennsylvania in 1876.

[38] See the interesting defence of Priestley's controversy in a letter to the editor of the *Monthly Repository* (n.s. 2: 152-4} from William Turner, the eldest son of the great Newcastle minister of the same name, who taught science and metaphysics at Manchester College from 1809 to 1827, when he became minister at Northgate End, Halifax. Turner noted that Priestley was rarely the aggressor in his battles and that his alleged asperity was

Price, his talented friend, his equal as a political theorist, his superior as a philosopher and, it would seem, as a preacher. But that goes to general reputation and not to the more complex question of their comparative reputations in Unitarian history and awareness. Here, too, Priestley's larger shadow was inescapable: he was a founder of modern Unitarianism even more convincingly than he was the father of chemistry. The question is not why Priestley should have primacy, but why Price was almost forgotten after the generation that had known him disappeared.

The answer lies, in part, in the ten years that separated the births of the two men, a divide scarcely noticeable in their lifetimes but widened in the early years of the nineteenth century. That kind of accident of a few years' difference in a birthdate was recalled with admirable objectivity by the great French historian Elie Halévy (1870-1937), referring in a discussion in 1936 to his teaching at the École des Sciences Politiques, where, from 1901 until his death in 1937, he alternated lecturing on the history of England after 1815 with a course on the history of European socialism.

> I was not a socialist. I was a 'liberal' in the sense that I was an anticlerical, a democrat, and a republican – to use a word then pregnant with meaning, I was a 'dreyfusard'. But I was not a socialist. Why? It was, I am sure, for a reason of which I have no right to be proud. I was born five or six years too soon. I was a student at the École Normale from the summer of 1889, just after the fall of Boulanger, to the summer of 1892, just before the Panama crisis began. They were years of dead calm. During those three years, I did not know a single socialist at the École Normale. If I had been five years younger, if I had been at the École Normale between, say, 1895 and 1900, if I had been the classmate of Mathiez, Péguy, and Albert Thomas, it is very likely that I would have been a socialist, free to develop in a direction it is impossible for me to imagine.[39]

almost always more than balanced by the 'violence and bigotry' of his foes, 'Dr. Price and Bishop Newcome ... perhaps the only exceptions....' The identification of 'W. T.' is confirmed by Mineka.

[39] *The era of tyrannies: essays on socialism and war*, translated by R K Webb with a note by Fritz Stern (1938, tr. New York, 1965), 'The era of

Most of Price's exact contemporaries were Arians, the position adopted with considerable variation by advanced Dissenters and Anglican Latitudinarians since the challenge thrown down to orthodoxy early in the century by Samuel Clarke. Priestley's conversion to Unitarianism came in 1768 at the age of thirty-five (after reading Nathaniel Lardner's long-suppressed *Letter on the Logos*), when Price was already in his mid-forties. In the last decades of his life, Arians and the small but growing number of Unitarians easily coexisted, probably more easily than did liberals and socialists in France in the first decade of the twentieth century or certainly than in the third. Perhaps, then, Price's death in 1791 is an even more important accident: it came just at a crucial moment in the denominational evolution of Unitarianism.

Addressing the puzzling question of why Unitarians and their supporters in Parliament would have ventured a petition for toleration in the unpromising circumstances of 1792, Dr. G M Ditchfield has sketched the situation of the Unitarians at that juncture with admirable insight and succinctness.[40] He proposes that the subject be approached, not from the standpoint of the persecutions and obloquy of the 1790s that are so present to our historical imaginations, but from what Unitarians knew in 1791 and 1792 of their general situation and of developments in the very recent past. Unitarian views remained illegal under the Toleration Act of 1689; that the law and its penumbra still had force was proved by many instances of discrimination, deprivation, and prosecution. At the same time, the incidence of such persecution had been individual and local, not general, and there were impressive numbers of people in the Church of England and outside it who maintained similar beliefs with an apparent impunity

tyrannies', 209-10. Halévy continues: 'When we apply the methods of historical research to ourselves and come to discover the reasons for our beliefs, we often find that they are accidental, that they spring from circumstances beyond our control. Perhaps there is a lesson of tolerance in that. If we have learned it well, we have to ask if it is worth while to massacre each other for beliefs whose origins are so flimsy'.

[40] 'Anti-trinitarianism and toleration in late eighteenth-century British politics: the Unitarian petitition of 1792', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 42 (Jan. 1991), 39-67

ensured by a becoming discretion. But disquieting signs of a revival (long feared by Priestley, among others) of the persecuting and destructive spirit of the reign of Queen Anne – the riots of 1791 the most alarming – gave new urgency to the need for legal protection.

This need was made the more pressing by the rapid advance within the more liberal sectors of Dissent (and to a small extent the Church) of open Unitarianism. Theophilus Lindsey's avowedly Unitarian chapel in Essex Street from 1774 had powerful protectors, who could not be replicated in more ordinary Dissenting congregations that too were beginning to espouse doctrinal Unitarianism, threatening the casual protection that had been conferred by formal sectarian names, particularly Presbyterian. That the parliamentary petition was to fail could not be argued against those who saw the urgency in the need to try.

A critical point within the rapidly evolving doctrinal situation was reached with the founding early in 1791 of the Unitarian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Practice of Virtue by the Distribution of Books, known (mercifully) to contemporaries and historians as the Unitarian Society. The Society's rules were drafted with a preamble that left no doubt of the meaning of 'Unitarian'. Ditchfield calls it 'deliberately divisive' and quotes Belsham, newly liberated from his inherited Independency, as saying that the intent was to 'lay aside all ambiguity of language' and to insist on the unity of God and the humanity of Jesus, in flat opposition to the Trinity of the orthodox and to the assumption by the Arians of a quasi-divine role in the world of the divinely created, pre-existent Son.

Theophilus Lindsey had said of his close friend Richard Price that 'though an Arian [he] is one of the firmest Unitarians I know'[41] That sense of common identity led Price to join the Unitarian Society on its founding, determined that he would not deprive it of whatever weight his name would carry. As he died within two months of his adherence, it is impossible to know what his reaction might have been to the single-minded enforcement of the newly

[41] Lindsey to William Turner of Wakefield, 28 October 1786, Lindsey Correspondence, Dr. Williams's Library, quoted in Ditchfield, 48.

strict nomenclature and its doctrinal content. Might he have resigned, as did the greatly admired John Prior Estlin, minister at Lewin's Mead, Bristol, who, though Unitarian, nevertheless protested against the narrowness of the new dispensation? Or would he have brought his immense prestige to bear to secure some modification, if not of the language of the preamble, of its enforcement? Belsham may have been an enthusiast for the narrow definition, but his career as Priestley's (and Hartley's) bulldog had scarcely begun, his brilliant debut as an unsurpassed polemicist in his letters on William Wilberforce's *Practical view of the prevailing religious system* still seven years in the future. However that might be, or might have been, the new turning was fatal to the memory of Price among the newly defined and confident Unitarians.[42]

Towards the end of the second installment of his review of Morgan's memoir of Price in 1815, John Kentish takes pains to establish the rightful limitation of the term Unitarian to 'the persons who reject the tenet of the pre-existence of Christ, and maintain the humanity – the true and sole humanity – of his nature', notwithstanding the tendency among contemporaries to use the term in 'a *generic* sense'.[43] Kentish addresses specifically Arian beliefs in this passage – though we should recall that Arianism covers considerable doctrinal variation – but the decades at whose midpoint he was writing had seen a notable advance in the evident persuasiveness of a wider range of Priestleyan doctrine than the simple humanity of Christ.

Even among the dwindling number of Arians there was movement. The *Monthly Repository* carefully records cases of Arians persuaded to Unitarianism strictly defined. Samuel Fawcett, who ended his career as minister at Sidmouth, was one, but by far the best documented is the conversion of Edmund Butcher, also of Sidmouth. His progress was noted in bulletins in the *Repository* and summarized in his own account in the preface to the new, third volume of his collected sermons published in 1819. Drawing in

[42] Dr. Ditchfield, who is editing Theophilus Lindsey's letters, has told me that there are many admiring references to Price in the manuscripts but that Price is all but absent from Belsham's memoir of Lindsey.

[43] *Monthly Repository*, 10: 583-5.

good part on a sermon he had preached before the Western Unitarian Society in 1809, he describes his gradual discarding of pre-existence in a way that, *mutatis mutandis*, might have applied to a liberal turning socialist a century later.[44] A similar progress is traced in the sermons of Joseph Bealey, minister at Warrington from 1786 to 1791 in succession to William Enfield and thereafter at Cockey Moor, Lancashire (Ainsworth).[45]

Unitarianism also attracted laymen of other religious backgrounds in greater or lesser degree, like the *littérateur* Francis Webb or Sir Charles Abraham Elton, Bart., whose conversion around 1808 was almost as dramatic as his deconversion twenty years later, which scandalized the little Unitarian public.[46] Awareness of this broader current led Kentish to remark, of those Arians who chose to call themselves Unitarians, that

> it is a pleasing, though a novel, sight to behold the increasing anxiety of men to be ranked among *Unitarians*; the epithet, we find, has lost much of the odium, not to say contempt, once attached to it on the part of those by whom it is now challenged as their right; and he who is known by a name so honourable, will not, we may hope, be a stranger to the principles and conduct which it really implies'.[47]

These gradations of belief should themselves discourage a simple explanation of the neglect of Price as due only to his Arianism, though they also offer a challenge to Unitarian historians to be as precise as possible about their use of these slippery terms while recognizing the looseness of usage at the time.

[44] Edmund Butcher, *Sermons for the use of families* 3 (1819), iii-xii. See the obituary in *Monthly Repository*, 17(May 1822), 309-12 in which John Evans recounts the conversion, omitted in the short earlier notice a month earlier (p. 247). *Christian Life* for 31 March 1891 prints extensive excerpts from Butcher's account: 'probably none of our readers have ever seen it'. Butcher's 1809 sermon is *Unitarian claims described and vindicated*.

[45] 'A memoir of the Rev. Joseph Bealey', *Monthly Repository*, 8 (Dec. 1813), 753-61.

[46] On Webb and Elton, see entries in the *New Dictionary of National Biography*, forthcoming.

[47] See note 42.

But there is more. These same years saw the firmer establishment of other Priestleyan views among Unitarians who were recovering their confidence (not least in their expectation of ultimate victory over all the world) after the dark years of obloquy and persecution during the French Revolution. The *Monthly Repository* throughout its theological phase prior to the 1830s is filled with discussions of Hartley, Priestley, and Necessarian thought.[48] This interest was stimulated in part by Belsham's *Elements of the philosophy of the human mind* in 1801; by a new complete edition of Hartley's *Observations on man* in 1810 which, like the 1791 edition, escaped the truncation that Priestley had imposed on it in his abridgement of 1775; by Southwood Smith's influential *Illustrations of the divine government* in 1816, with subsequent editions in 1817 and 1822; and by Eliezer Cogan's many essays in the *Repository*. Manchester College York, and in particular the two tutors responsible successively for instruction in science, mathematics, and mental and moral philosophy – William Turner and Thomas Hincks – turned out a cohort of young ministers who could transmit part or all of this broader Priestleyanism to interested or susceptible members of their congregations. This new dogmatic strain co-existed in the College with the older non-sectarian ethos of Presbyterianism but became increasingly dominant.[49]

Thus, by one means or another, the emergence of Unitarianism as a denomination (as opposed to a theological tendency) at the beginning of the nineteenth century was accompanied by the creation and diffusion of an internally consistent set of theological and metaphysical doctrines. This development mirrored a wider phenomenon in English Protestantism, marked by a clearer drawing of denominational and sectarian boundaries and by the rediscovery and spreading importance of dogmatic foundations for those

[48] Although Fox's intention was to increase the literary content of his journal and to abandon most religious discussion to the *Christian Reformer*, the post-1828 *Repository* continues to carry some theological discussion, notably in the early articles of Harriet Martineau, then in the full Necessarian flight.

[49] See David L Wykes, 'Dissenting Academy or Unitarian seminary? Manchester College at York (1803-1840), *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, 19 (April 1988), 102-12.

differences. The regnant Priestleyan system in Unitarianism left little room for the anti-deterministic outlook of Richard Price and others of his contemporaries. The celebrated 'candour' of Priestley himself and of his late eighteenth-century contemporaries had given way to a new degree of certitude (and even a measure of close-mindedness) that the memory of a good man and an 'honest mind' could hardly surmount.[50]

By a splendid accident of timing, early in 1829, 'rather late to write upon this subject', Thomas Belsham encountered a twin broadside from the Methodist preacher Joseph Benson, stationed at Hull at the time of publication in 1788. *A scriptural essay towards the proof of an immortal spirit in man, being a continuation of the Remarks...* was a funeral sermon for a young man who was at his mother's deathbed but was himself carried off by the disease; *Remarks on Dr. Priestley's system of materialism, mechanism, and necessity in a series of letters to the Reverend Mr. Wesley...* is said on the title page to be prefatory to the *Essay*, but it appears from internal evidence to have been written later. The *Essay* is argued from biblical texts ('those infallible records of truth') to show that the young man's 'better part was not dead but alive, and should live for ever-more'. The nine letters of the *Remarks* were filled with extensive quotations from Priestley, which were then subjected to heavy doses of irony and sarcasm.[51]

[50] I have sketched the drawing of sectarian lines in the opening pages of 'The limits of religious liberty: Theology and criticism in nineteenth-century England', in Richard Helmstadter ed., *Freedom and religion in the nineteenth century* (Stanford, CA, 1997), 120-49, esp. 120-4. One should recall J H Newman's statement in the *Apologia pro vita sua*: 'From the age of fifteen, dogma has been the fundamental principle of my religion; I know no other religion; I cannot enter into the idea of any other sort of religion; religion, as a mere sentiment, is to me a dream and a mockery....What I held in 1816, I held in 1833, and I hold in 1864. Please God, I shall hold it to the end.' John Henry Cardinal Newman, *Apologia pro vita sua: being a history of his religious opinions*, ed. with intro. and notes by Martin J Svaglic (London, 1967), 54.

[51] Richard Treffy, *Memoirs of the Rev. Joseph Benson* (1853), 103-4, quotes an earlier biographer: 'When the pamphlet...was ready for sale, Mr. Benson announced it in the pulpit, but hoped that no one, except persons of superior understandings, would purchase it, as it was rather

I have not found any reference to Benson's works in Unitarian periodicals in the few years preceding Belsham's attack, so it is unclear how they came his way or why, at that distance in time, their demolition seemed so important. Even more puzzling, Belsham took the opportunity to attack Price's understanding of the spirit, although Benson nowhere mentions Price, though Price might have been a valuable reinforcement for an argument that relies heavily on Priestley's *Disquisitions relating to matter and spirit* and the *Doctrine of philosophical necessity illustrated*.

Having read Benson and presumably having seen the opportunity for a conclusive demolition, Belsham promptly sent to the *Monthly Repository* a statement worthy in form and substance of a scholastic.[52] In thirteen brief numbered paragraphs he defended Priestley's materialism, asserted the close identity of Priestley's matter and Price's spirit, and pursued the consequences of the differing views of the two men, in particular for resurrection after an annihilation that diffuses the body into particles.

> 10. Upon Dr. Priestley's principle, therefore, there can be no true resurrection but by a location of the original stamina in the original form. There may be a thousand cases imagined of exactly similar stamina placed in an exactly similar form, and producing exactly similar beings; but there is only one case of identity.
>
> 11. In order to make two similar beings equally happy, a similar combination of particles must be placed under the *same* or an equal process of discipline.
>
> 12. Nothing could insure the perfect happiness of Dr. Price's man, because with precisely the same discipline he might act a part the very reverse of what he does; which is very like an opposite effect from the same cause.
>
> 13. Every sentient creature is conscious that he possesses no power of self-determination, but to say that it involves a

above the capacity of common readers. This was said in great simplicity, but it produced an effect which he had not anticipated; for nearly all his hearers purchased the work, every one thinking that he had a superior understanding. This caused a smile among a few; but all were quite sure that the author meant what he said.'

[52] *Monthly Repository*, n.s.3 (April 1829), 239.

> contradiction, and is in itself impossible, is more than can be warranted.

This analysis eventually found its way to Jersey, to the chemist William Henry, who, while praising the clarity of Belsham's argument, dissented strongly on the main point of the resurrection, insisting that Priestley's view of matter could never be reconciled to Price's spirit, in as much as 'every thing "material" is *perishable*, whilst that which is "spiritual" is *immortal*.'

> In fine, Sir, let it be conceded to the disciples of Priestley, that the body 'returneth to the dust' never to be reanimated, but let us also have the Christian consolation of agreeing with Price, that there is a soul, an immaterial, ethereal principle, which followeth not the fate of the body but returneth to the God who gave it.[53]

By the time this reply was published in December, Belsham was dead.

It has always seemed to me that Belsham's death in 1829 is a remarkable watershed, though in its main outlines, if not in all details, the Priestleyan dispensation survived in strength for another four decades and in some respects even beyond. What is

[53] *Monthly Repository*, n.s.3 (Dec. 1829), 795-7. It must be emphasized that acceptance of every aspect of developed Priestleyanism was limited to relatively few people – though those who did accept it were often very strategically placed, in Unitarianism and in wider English society. Priestley himself had recognized that his materialism was inessential to Unitarian belief and also that his broader views might be invalidated in later ages (though he thought they would not). John Kentish preached a sermon at New Meeting on 24 March 1833, for the centenary of Priestley's birth, published as *The Christian minister approving himself by his views, his labours, and his trials*. In laying out the essentials of Priestley's theological vision, Kentish mentions his work on evidences, his scriptural scholarship, his advocacy of the principles of Dissent, and his contributions to devotional and practical religion, but materialism and necessity are passed over lightly. It should also be pointed out that William Henry gave an encomium of Priestley as a scientist at the first meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1831; it was published as *An estimate of the philosophical character of Dr. Priestley*. Both works were reviewed in the *Christian Reformer*, Kentish in (23 May 1833), 209-16; Henry in 22 (June 1832), 246-53.

remarkable in the present context is that Henry's appeal to Price's argument was not replicated in the course of the reaction that so profoundly assaulted the Priestleyan dominance from the 1830s.

A reader may have noticed that in the summary of James Martineau's remarks at the Priestley dinner in Birmingham in 1833 there is no mention of Priestley himself. If the summary reflects what Martineau actually said, it was a commendable act of discretion, for, at the very moment of that commemoration, Martineau was anonymously publishing in the *Monthly Repository* a brilliant critique of Priestley's views, insightful and sympathetic but ultimately destructive – the opening salvo in a long campaign to liberate (as he saw it) his denomination from its Priestleyan fetters, to become a church rather than a sect.[54]

In Martineau's matured views and those of his lieutenants, the soul and free will take a central place, so it might be expected that they would find an honoured place for Price and his late defenders like William Henry. Not a bit of it. In John James Tayler's *A retrospect of the religious life of England* (1853), the narrative moves directly from Deism to the school of Hartley and Priestley, with no mention even of Arianism, let alone Price, although in a letter to J H Thom shortly after the *Retrospect* was published, Tayler declared himself, 'on the subject of the soul and its relations to God...wholly *with* Dr. Price, and wholly *against* Dr. Priestley'.[55] C B Upton, in his discussion of Martineau's philosophy, finds it 'somewhat remarkable' that there is no clear evidence of influence from either Price's *Review of the principal questions and difficulties of morals* or from the Scottish intuitionists, Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart.[56]

Indeed, in *Types of ethical theory*, Martineau devotes only a few pages to Price and those, it seems to me, of a surprisingly

[54] *Monthly Repositoryi*, n.s.7 (Jan., Feb., and April 1833),19-30, 54-8, 231-41, The essay is the first in Martineau's *Essays, reviews and addresses* (4 vols., 1890 and 1891), 1: 1-42 . See also his 'Church-Life? or Sect-Life?', 2: 381-420.

[55] 12 Feb. 1855, in John Hamilton Thom ed., *Letters embracing his life of John James Tayler, B. A.* (1872), 2: 28,

[56] James Drummond and C B Upton, *The life and letters of James Martineau* (2 vols, London, 1902), 2: 270-1.

ungenerous nature. He faults Price for having, in his anxiety to escape from the uncertainties of the sensibility set out by Shaftesbury and Hutcheson and from the conclusions of the Scottish moral sense philosophers, resorted only to a reason inadequate to the task: he approached but did not realize the distinction Kant made between speculative and moral reason and failed to appreciate (like other members of what Martineau calls the dianoetic school) that speculative reason must be balanced by intuitive reason.[57]

Martineau addresses this shortcoming, characteristically, in language as subversive as it is attractive, so it is hardly surprising that his followers, who so profoundly remade English Unitarianism, would have little to say to restore Price to the reputation he had gained a century earlier and that still showed some signs of life in the early decades of the nineteenth century. In their view, Price shared in his century's faults, faults carried to the extreme in Priestley, or, more accurately, in the extension of Priestley by Belsham and others, against which Martineau's efforts were in the first instance directed. Price's historical place around 1850 and for more than a century after thus comes to resemble a common fate of mediating figures caught between opposing forces. Memory of his person and his role, like theirs, was all but eradicated.

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[57] James Martineau, *Types of ethical theory* (2 vols., Oxford, 1885), II, 438-47.

CHRISTIAN GARVE AND IMMANUEL KANT: THEORY AND PRACTICE IN THE GERMAN ENLIGHTENMENT

Howard Williams

Introduction

The Breslau translator and popular writer Christian Garve was a good deal more typical figure of the German Enlightenment than was Immanuel Kant. Breslau lies in Silesia which had been annexed in 1744 by Frederick the Great of Prussia at the end of the war with Austria. Although a number of years younger than Kant (Garve was born in 1742 and Kant in 1724) he became well known as a writer and publicist before Kant's critical philosophy was to establish him in the 1780s as a philosopher of the first rank. Beginning in the 1760s, Garve captured the public's eye and imagination with his many translations into German both of classical writings and contemporary works in European philosophy. Garve drew especially from the writings of British philosophers and social commentators in seeking to present to the German speaking world the most significant philosophical and social currents of his time. Garve is more typical of the German Enlightenment than Kant because of his derivative, eclectic approach and his stress on developing a 'philosophy of life'.[1] Garve appears to have taken for granted a certain intellectual and philosophical backwardness in Germany and sought to remedy it by making available to the German public new editions of the classical writers and lively translations of his own selection of leading British thinkers and social commentators of the day.

In Garve's literary output we can see the German Enlightenment as a reaction and response to the Enlightenment in other leading European states. Garve appears to have seen his role as one of keeping the German public up to date with some of the leading intellectual, social and political trends of the day. He wanted to demonstrate the relevance of philosophy, to take higher thought from the scholar's study to the people. He never made great claims for his own originality but he prided himself on the accessibility of

[1] Leonie Koch-Schwarzer, *Populare Moralphilosophie und Volkskunde: Christian Garve – Reflexionen zur Fachgeschichte* (Marburg, 1998),1.

his work. Garve saw himself as engaged in an educational task of drawing the public into philosophy and literature, taking very seriously the goal of popular enlightenment. What signified success for Garve was to engage as wide a section of the public as possible in philosophical, literary and political debate; the absolute standard of the discussion did not concern him as much as its extent and intensity. Garve wanted the German speaking world to have an intellectual life which matched in its liveliness that of Britain and France. In this respect Garve deserves high praise for providing his fellow subjects with the means for realising this goal.

Kant provides a sharp contrast to Garve in these respects. Instead of being eclectic and derivative in his approach to philosophy, Kant was highly systematic and innovative. Garve's approach was low-risk philosophically and Kant's entirely high risk. If Garve's own ideas were to prove mistaken he could still point to the important contribution he had made to German letters through his translations and commentaries; had Kant's main ideas proved to be misplaced he would have had little to fall back on. To this day, Kant's pre-critical output commands next to no attention from non-specialists. Doubtless Kant would have shared Garve's view that Germany was philosophically and socially less advanced than Britain and France. Kant engaged closely with the leading French and British philosophers of his day. Rousseau and Hume were amongst the philosophers that delighted him most. Kant would even have reason to be grateful to Garve for making available in German a full translation of Burke's *Enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful* (translated by Garve in 1773) after his own essay *Observations on the feeling of the beautiful and sublime* had been stimulated by Moses Mendelssohn's review and summary of the work in 1758.[2] But Kant's recognition of foreign excellence did not lead to a derivative approach in his own philosophy. True to his own motto 'dare to be wise' expressed in his essay 'What is Enlightenment' Kant insisted on finding his own path in

2 E Burke, *Enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful*, edit with intro. by James T Boulton (1958, revis. edn. Oxford, 1987), xlvi.

philosophy.[3] This path took into account the French and British Enlightenments, but struck out in its own new critical direction. In contrast to Garve and most other prominent figures of the German Enlightenment, who presented to the public past philosophical orthodoxy drawn, for example, from Leibnitz or Locke, Kant developed his own philosophical theory.

Although Kant was a more ambitious philosopher than Garve and most of his contemporaries, this did not lead to a supercilious attitude towards Garve and other German philosophers. Kant engaged with the writers around him. He corresponded extensively with leading figures of his time such as Moses Mendelssohn, J H Lambert, Marcus Herz, and Karl Reinhold. Garve was treated with the same respect. Kant wished to see himself as part of the German Enlightenment, but not thereby lagging behind the general pace of European Enlightenment. Kant's engagement with Garve therefore tells us a good deal about how he saw his own role and the role of philosophy. Kant shared with Garve the desire to inform the German public, and to raise the level of cultural and philosophical debate but, above all, Kant prized excellence in pursuing this aim. Popularity should not be gained at the expense of philosophical rigour.

I shall take as my focus for Kant's engagement with Christian Garve the essay 'On the Common Saying: That may be correct in Theory, but it does not apply in Practice' which Kant published in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* in 1793. The first section of the essay which deals with the relation between theory and practice in morality is written as a reply 'to some objections raised by Professor Garve'.[4] The *Berlinische Monatsschrift* provided an important setting for some of the main debates of the German Enlightenment and Kant several times used the journal to make public his views on the leading issues of his day. Two of Kant's most famous essays 'Idea for a Universal History with a cosmopolitan purpose' (November 1784) and 'An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment' (December 1784) appeared in

3 Kant, *Political writings*, ed. H Reiss (Cambridge, 1991), 54. Future references are to this edition.

4 Kant, *Political writings*, 64.

the journal. The essay on 'Theory and Practice' represented no exception to this in that it provided Kant with his first opportunity to comment in print on the French Revolution. The French Revolution brought out some important differences between Garve and Kant which Kant sought to tackle systematically under the rubric of the relation between theory and practice. As a background to this clash between Garve and Kant, I shall look first at Garve's significance in the German Enlightenment and, secondly, at the close intellectual relationship which developed between Kant and Garve.

Garve and the German Enlightenment

Much of the understanding of British and Scottish philosophy in eighteenth century Germany was mediated through Christian Garve. He was a talented translator and publicist who is often regarded as the quintessential representative of the popular philosophy movement that strongly influenced German letters in the period 1760-90. Garve began his public intellectual career by publishing a revised version of J N Meinhard's translation of Henry Home's *Elements of criticism* which appeared in three volumes between 1763-66 in Leipzig. The choice of Home's work was perhaps symptomatic of Garve's concern to connect philosophy with wider literary and cultural life. Later in 1768 Garve published a translation of a book by James Porter which depicted the political, ethical and religious life of the Turkish people.[5] Garve showed a great interest in mores and customs amongst people, and clearly believed that a great deal could be learned by comparison with other cultures. In 1772 Garve published a translation of Adam Ferguson's *Institutes of moral philosophy*. He also translated the *Moral and political philosophy* of William Paley;[6] and in 1894 he published a very fine translation of Adam Smith's *Wealth of nations*. Garve in addition completed another highly significant

[5] *Observations on the religion, law, government, and manners, of the Turks* (2 vols., London, 1768).

[6] Paley's book went through countless reprints and new editions well into the nineteenth century. His popularity in Britain appears only to have waned as Christianity and utilitarianism were driven further and further apart.

translation when he brought out Cicero's *De officiis* in 1784. Garve's translations were very widely read and not least his translation of Cicero, completed at the request of Frederick the Great.[7] In the writing of his *Groundwork to the metaphysic of morals*, Kant was strongly influenced by Cicero's stoic philosophy. We can see from the essay on *Theory and practice* that Kant was in possession of a copy of Garve's three volume translation of Cicero.[8]

If we add to these much valued translations Garve's own considerable output, mostly in the form of essays, we have a huge scholarly corpus. Between 1775 and 1798 Grave produced more than ten collections of his own essays. He dealt with topics as various as the relationship between morality and politics, the condition of the peasantry, the situation in his own native Silesia, biographies of his contemporaries and the history of ethics. Yet it is as though Garve disappeared from the intellectual scene with his death. He is very much a minor figure in the history of philosophy. Rarely mentioned in most general histories, his only apparent claim to attention is his relationship with Kant. Hegel, for instance, in his *Lectures on the history of philosophy* only mentions Nicolai, Mendelssohn, Sulzer, Eberhard and Tetens as figures of the German Enlightenment. Hegel is utterly disparaging about the popular philosophy movement of which Garve was part, claiming that 'philosophical research ... could not stoop lower'.[9] But it may well be possible that there is more to Garve than often credited. Kant certainly thought him a significant figure, read many of his writings closely and corresponded with him fairly frequently. In his political writings Kant returns time and again to the problem of the relationship between politics and morality, dealing with it

[7] Johan Van der Zande', 'The Microscope of Experience: Christian Garve's Translation of Cicero's *De Officiis* (1783)', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 59 (1998), 75.

[8] Kant, *Political writings*, p69n

[9] G W F Hegel, *Werke*, Vol. 20 (Frankfurt am Main, 1971), 308. Hegel identifies the popular philosophy movement with the Enlightenment in Germany and says that it took as its theme the notion of the 'usefulness of all things'. This approach was explicitly 'taken up from the French.' (Ibid.)

systematically in the *Metaphysics of morals* but also making it a central theme in the essay on *Theory and practice* and *Perpetual peace*. There is every reason to believe that the problem was posed for him by Garve's many writings on the subject, foremost amongst which is the *Treatise on the relationship between morality and politics* first published in 1788.

As Fania Oz-Salzberger puts it, 'Garve was a central figure of the German Enlightenment, much better known to his contemporaries than to posterity. He was a prolific translator of major British works and an author of tracts in moral philosophy. He was also one of the best known *Popularphilosophen*, a leader of a movement which dominated the German intellectual scene in the 1770s and 1790s.'[10] Garve's choice of British writers to translate was eclectic and individual. Like Garve himself, many of those writers he chose to translate were a good deal more prominent in their own time than ours. He translated, for example, a book on the condition of the Edinburgh poor by a John Macfarland which is now very difficult to trace in British library records. Similarly he translated Alexander Gerard's discussion of the origin of genius,[11] which was perhaps a book of greater note, but it appears that the discussion engendered by Garve's translation was far greater than any debate on Gerard's work that occurred in Britain. Garve not only wrote on moral theory but also social, historical and literary issues. Garve, for example, investigated closely the conditions in the countryside in his home country, publishing a book *On the Character of the peasantry* in 1786. In his writings he paid close attention to style and the clear presentation of his ideas, and one of his most frequent criticisms of Kant was of his lack of clarity as an author and his tendency to coin new phrases and terms in order to present his philosophical arguments.

Garve's literary productivity seems staggering. Generally speaking his translations were not merely literal presentations of the texts. He tried to convey the ideas of the original in the most appropriate and fluent German. Moreover, most of his translations

[10] Fania Oz-Salzberger, *Translating the Enlightenment: Scottish Discourse in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford, 1995), 191.

[11] *An Essay on genius* (London: 1774). Translated as *Versuch über das Genie* by Christian Garve (Leipzig, 1776), viii + 424.

were accompanied by detailed and valuable introductions.[12] His translations of Cicero, Aristotle and Ferguson were accompanied by introductions and textual analysis of this kind. Garve offered an interpretation of the original as well as the translation. This is what made his translations literary events of such significance. As Oz-Salzberger aptly remarks, 'it seems that Garve often had a touch of Midas when it came to producing new translations or breathing new life into older ones.'[13] This seems to be particularly true of Garve's translations of Ferguson's *Institutes of moral philosophy* and Cicero's *On duties*. These translations not only led to detailed discussions of the views of Ferguson and Cicero, but also to a close investigation of Garve's own commentaries. Garve's comments on Ferguson's *Institutes* comprised more than a third of the book, and, in Oz-Salzberger's view, influenced the reception of Ferguson's work in Germany as much as, if not more than, the substance of the translation itself.[14] Garve was selectively presenting to the German public what he took as significant in current philosophy, social and economic commentary and supplementing that with his own choice of classical texts. Garve was acting as a kind of filter for the educated German public through which past and present philosophy, social and political theory was being received. His choice of Aristotle and Cicero as classical writers to translate and the vast array of (primarily) British and French writers he translated reflected his own philosophical bent.

What was this philosophical bent? It is said that Garve liked to regard himself as the German Hume.[15] Modesty would have prevented Garve from representing himself as the equivalent of Hume in originality and intelligence, but the comparison was meant

[12] 'The merit of a good translation in Garve's sense was not verbal accuracy but rather empathy with the world of the author, rethinking his thoughts with one's own mind and in one's own language. But Garve was not interested in the past for its own sake. Throughout his philosophical commentary he used Cicero as a means of comparison to his own time.' Johan Van der Zande 'The microscope of experience', 82-3.

[13] Oz-Salzberger, *Translating the Enlightenment*, 192.

[14] Oz-Salzberger, *Translating the Englightenment*, 200.

[15] Johan van der Zande, 'In the image of Cicero: German Philosophy between Wolff and Kant', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 56 (1995), 429

seriously as a depiction of the philosophical trends he represented. Garve followed Hume in his reliance on the senses and observation in grounding philosophical discussion. He did not follow Hume fully along the sceptical path, but he did in the range of his interests and concerns. Hume was not only the author of the highly abstract philosophical *A Treatise of human nature*, but also of the more socially oriented *Natural history of religion* and the highly concrete and detailed six-volume *History of England*. Above all, it is likely that Garve would have admired Hume for the clarity of his writing style. In his style Hume combined clarity with erudition. Hume contrived to be popular without being shallow. This for Garve was a key goal.

Kant and Garve

Kant's intense engagement with Christian Garve goes back at least as far as the review which Garve published in a literary and philosophical journal the *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen*: *Zugabe* (2) in 1782 of the *Critique of pure reason*. Kant was considerably irritated by the review although it was not in every respect hostile. Particularly unacceptable for Kant was the identification of his position in the review with that of George Berkeley, the Irish idealist philosopher. Kant tried to correct this misrepresentation in a lengthy appendix to *Prolegomena to any future metaphysics* (1783).[16] In the Appendix Kant challenged the reviewer to defend any of the eight propositions which Kant presents as contradicting themselves within traditional metaphysics. Should the reviewer be able to prove that any one of these propositions can wholly withstand objection, Kant undertakes to abandon his critical philosophy. He adds the one further condition that the reviewer should 'step out of his incognito' or, in other words, reveal his identity.

In response to this challenge Garve did reveal his identity to Kant in a letter of July 13, 1783. The tone of the letter is highly apologetic and defensive. Garve explains to Kant that he 'cannot in any way recognize that review, in the form that it was published, as

[16] *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, Akademische Ausgabe (Berlin: 1898-2000), Vol. IV, 372-83.

my own.'[17] Garve claims, with some justification, that the original review that he sent to the editor of the journal Feder had been considerably shortened and amended before its publication. Thus the review does not entirely represent Garve's opinion, although Garve none the less says that 'I bear some responsibility for it'.[18] Feder had reduced the review to some one-third of its original length and Feder himself had contributed approximately a third of its final content. Although the review was finally published in its original form in the *Allgemeinen deutschen Bibliothek*[19] Kant was never entirely happy with Garve's portrayal of his position in the *Critique of pure reason*. And even in his apologetic letter Garve remarks that he, like Kant, is convinced there are limits to our knowledge. 'But I do not see how your *Critique of Pure Reason* has contributed to overcoming these difficulties. At least the part of the book in which you bring these contradictions to light is incomparably clearer and more illuminating (you yourself will not deny this) than are those parts where the principles for resolving these contradictions are supposed to be established.'[20]

The most interesting difference of opinion which comes to light in the Garve-Feder review concerns their lukewarm reception of Kant's views on practical reason. In the *Critique* Kant had wanted to clear the way for faith by removing knowledge. By faith Kant had in mind the application of practical reason in our lives. Although Kant took the view that there were severe limitations to the application of pure reason in the theoretical realm he concluded there were fewer restrictions to our use of practical reason. In the use of our practical reason we were entitled to range beyond what we could take in through our senses and understanding in order to seek our improvement as individuals and as a species. In the review

[17] I Kant, *Correspondence*, ed. and trans. by A. Zweig (Cambridge, 1999), 191; *Ak* 10, 328-9

[18] I Kant, *Correspondence*, 191; *Ak* 10, 329

[19] *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*, Supplement to Vols. XXVII-LII, pt. II, 838-62 (1783). For an English translation see Schultz, Johann *Exposition of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. James C. Morrison (Ottawa, 1995), 179-199

[20] I Kant, *Correspondence*, 194; *Ak* 10, 332

Garve-Feder say of Kant's approach to practical philosophy: 'The manner in which the author finally wants to provide grounds for the common way of thinking through moral concepts, after he has deprived it of the speculative we prefer to pass over; because we can find ourselves least therein. Anyway there is a way in which to link the concepts of the true and general laws of thought to general concepts and fundamental principles of right conduct which has its basis in our nature, which can guard us from the excesses of speculation or bring us back from them. But we do not recognise these in the expression and wording of the author'.[21] Garve shows himself to have utilitarian or eudemonist convictions in the review. He was an eclectic philosopher who followed both Cicero and the British empiricist philosophers in his ethics. Garve took from Cicero the idea that there was a harmony in nature that we could express through our right actions. He also followed Cicero in thinking that morality and expediency could be combined. But Garve added to this as well an appreciation of British social and political philosophers like Ferguson and Paley who argued that self-interest and the pursuit of pleasure were in the right context themselves moral. The Garve-Feder review regrets that Kant fails to combine ordinary ways of thinking with a 'middle path between excessive scepticism and dogmatism'. To do this it is necessary to accommodate what we might now call utilitarian considerations. As Garve and Feder put it, 'first of all the correct use of the understanding of general concepts of right conduct must correspond to the fundamental principle of our moral nature, thus the advance of happiness.'[22]

Relations between Kant and Garve were often stormy, but it is possible to detect in their correspondence a mutual respect which appears to have grown stronger over the years. This culminates in a heart-rending exchange of letters in 1798, at a time very close to Garve's death in the December of that year. The immediate cause of the exchange of letters was the gift that Garve had made to Kant

[21] Albert Landau, *Rezensionen zur kantischen Philosophie 1781-87* (Bebbra, 1991), 16 , Schultz, Johann, *Exposition of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 175.

[22] Landau, *Rezensionen zur kantischen Philosophie 1781-87*, 16, Schultz, Johann *Exposition of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 175.

of a copy one of his last publications *A Survey of the most significant principles of the theory of ethics* (Übersicht der vornemsten Prinzipien der Sittenlehre). The book contained a printed dedication to Kant. In the accompanying letter Garve strikingly remarks: 'I shall always respect you as one of our greatest thinkers, a master of the art of thinking, who trained me when I was still an apprentice and beginner.' Garve for his part speaks of a bond between himself and Kant which he wants to mark with the dedication so that 'this hidden, silent connection which has existed between us for so long should be made still firmer in our old age.'[23] Garve goes on to describe in disturbing detail the nature of his face cancer which was shortly to lead to his death. For the most part the substance of Kant's reply to Garve has to do with Kant's own condition. Kant reports that his health 'is less that of a scholar than that of a vegetable'. Kant expresses himself as deeply frustrated by his condition which prevents him from putting the vital finishing touches to his critical philosophy. To all appearances though, Kant (despite their many differences over the years) reciprocates Garve's generosity and kindness, referring to Garve as 'dearest friend' and thanking him for the receipt of his book 'so full of kindness and fortitude'.[24] He finds the description of Garve's condition deeply moving and commends Garve for his 'strength of mind in ignoring that pain and continuing cheerfully to work for the good of mankind'. In contrast with Garve's, Kant's reply is somewhat at a more formal philosophical level ending with a correction to a comment Kant found on skimming through Garve's book. Contrary to Garve's assertion, Kant asserts that it was 'not the investigation of the existence of God,' but rather the antinomies of pure reason which first 'aroused' him from his 'dogmatic slumber'.[25]

We can only conclude from this exchange of letters that Kant respected Garve both as a person and a scholar. The book, which Garve had dedicated to Kant, does not present an uncritical view of Kant's philosophy. Indeed, Garve sustains in his account of Kant

[23] I Kant, *Correspondence*, 549; *Ak* 12, 254.

[24] I Kant, *Correspondence*, 551; *Ak* 12, 256.

[25] I Kant, *Correspondence*, 552; *Ak* 12, 258.

the criticisms that he had formulated and levelled over the years. (1. That Kant starts from unproven presuppositions and develops his ideas according to postulated goals; 2. That his rational law lacks motivational force; 3. That he ends by reuniting virtue and happiness after all, in contradiction to his own theory; and 4. that the moral law lacks content.)[26] Garve does not depart from his own empiricist, eudemonistic position in this survey, remaining true to his popular philosophy position. The main aims of the popular philosophers have been described by Oz-Salzberger as 'to promote education and morality by propagating a simplified and deliberately eclectic philosophy of reason and feeling'. More broadly the same writer goes on to describe popular philosophy as 'a none too rigid mixture of the metaphysics of Leibniz and Wolff with the ideas of the British common-sense school, steering clear of mechanism, materialism and atheism.'[27] Judging by three of the principal philosophers whom Garve translated from English into German we can affirm that the Christian, common sense part of this judgement rings true. Ferguson, Burke, and Paley were committed Christians who had a strong distaste for abstract, speculative methods. Garve's decision to translate William Paley's now little known book on moral and political philosophy is a particularly interesting one.[28] Paley was archdeacon of Carlisle and sought in this book to combine Christian doctrines with a form of utilitarianism. This seems to demonstrate how Garve strove to integrate the mores of the Enlightenment with traditional Christian belief.

The Essay on Theory and Practice

With Hobbes and Moses Mendelssohn, Garve is one of the three primary addressees of Kant's essay on *Theory and practice*. Indeed the broad framework of the essay seems to have been suggested by Garve's remarks both on the relation of theory to practice and the relation of morality and politics. As the title of Popular Philosopher

[26] I Kant, *Correspondence*, 552; *Ak* 12, 258.

[27] Oz-Salzberger, *Translating the Enlightenment*, 191.

[28] This was not always so. Paley's book went through countless new editions (three by 1786) well into the nineteenth century. See William Paley, *The principles of moral and political philosophy* (Edinburgh: James Robertson, 1817) 26th edition.

suggests, Garve was reaching a wide audience with his translations and publications. He also had the ear of the country's rulers. Garve spent much of his life in Breslau, living at home with his mother. He had briefly held a teaching position at Leipzig after undertaking research there; earlier he had studied at Frankfurt on Oder. Garve was unable to remain as a University professor at Leipzig owing to ill health. This ill health dogged him most of his life and the face cancer that he describes in his last letter to Kant finally brought his life to an end in 1798.

Garve's prime means of communication with his audience was the printed word. He occasionally gave lectures in Breslau to a circle of friends and admirers which were then published as contributions to journals or as part of his own collections of essays. One of Garve's collection of essays *Versuche der Verschiedene Gegenstände aus der Moral und Literatur* figures in the essay *Theory and practice*. It is also highly probable that Kant had read Garve's essay on morals and politics. Significantly Oz-Salzberger remarks that '*Die Verbindung der Moral mit der Politik* earned Garve the reputation of an "ultra-conservative", a defender of benevolent despotism, property and the social and political status quo.'[29] This is certainly a direction in which Kant would not go. Kant was a principled republican who was prepared to accord enlightened monarchs a role in inaugurating new and improved political structures, but not a lasting place in the political order. Kant's vision for the future was one of greater equality and independence for citizens. That 'the *Verbindung* was a defence, using the terms of natural law, of Frederick's domestic and foreign

[29] Oz-Salzberger, *Translating the Enlightenment*, 209. Christian Garve, *Abhandlung über der Verbindung der Moral mit der Politik oder einige Betrachtungen über die Frage in wiefern es möglich sei, die Moral des Privatlebens bei der Regierung der Staaten zu beobachten* (Breslau, 1788). Garve claims (p.3) that on the one hand it is the duty of the philosopher not to abandon justice and strict virtue at least in theory, because without this the passions of humans so easily allow one too readily to make exceptions in the execution of the law. On the other hand, it is a requirement of his reason for philosophy not to demand anything which is impossible because otherwise the person trying to carry out justice would become an object of contempt.

policies' would have considerably tried Kant's patience with the Silesian popular philosopher.[30] Kant provides in his political philosophy the most telling critique of Frederick's *Realpolitik*, and presents his own ideal of gradually spreading *Perpetual peace* as an alternative to it. Garve's whole line of argument in *Die Verbindung* seems to have been designed to irritate Kant.

As Oz-Salzberger reports, 'Garve began by asserting the usefulness of a state-of-nature hypothesis for analysing the relations between sovereigns. The happiness of a state depends on the power and the influence of its ruler, who is ideally committed to the "security, freedom, and well-being of all nations". However, the moral sphere in which a statesman acts is, by its nature, more abstract, and the results are less immediate and direct, than those of the individual in his limited domestic circle. The sovereign bears greater responsibility than a *Hausvater* does, because the well-being of a whole society depends upon him. Consequently, the morality of the ruler's acts is less clear-cut.'[31] For Garve there are two major differences between the responsibilities of the private individual and those of the statesman. First, the sovereign is in a condition of nature in relation to other sovereigns; and, secondly, the sovereign has to care for the well-being of the whole of the society, in contrast, the private man has only ' to guard his own interests and the interests of his dependents.'[32]

Garve seems here to be hinting at a doctrine of the 'office-holder' who in his or her personal relations is bound by the same moral rules as others, but in relation to the role of office-holder is free to interpret his or her responsibilities more freely. Garve seems also to imply that the larger the extent of the territories of a sovereign, the larger his responsibilities may be. Thus, as a consequence the sovereign may interpret ordinary morality even more freely. Garve remarks in almost a Machiavellian spirit, 'if whole societies have privileges in relation to individuals, so large societies have

30 Oz-Salzberger, *Translating the Enlightenment*, 209.

31 Oz-Salzberger, *Translating the Enlightenment*, 209.

32 Garve, *Abhandlung ueber der Verbindung der Moral mit der Politik*, 5.

privileges in relation to smaller ones'.[33] This separation of the morality of the politician and ordinary morality is one that Kant strenuously opposed. This opposition can be seen as a prime motivation in the writing of both *Theory and practice* and *Perpetual peace*. Politics for Kant has to be brought into harmony with morality and, under no conditions, contrariwise, morality be brought into harmony with politics.

Garve probably stimulated Kant to think along the lines of the essay on *Theory and practice* by remarks that he had made in the appendix to one of his many essays in a collection published in 1792 entitled *Essays concerning a number of objects in morality, Literature and social life*.[34] Kant refers extensively to these remarks when criticising Garve and seems to have as one of his main objectives the challenging of Garve's apparently popular nostrums. Yet although Garve's popular philosophy is clearly the most immediate target of Kant's essay, it is interesting to note the comparative lengths of the sections on Garve, Hobbes and Mendelssohn in *Theory and practice*. The middle section on Hobbes is by far the longest, occupying pages 231-70 in the first edition of the essay in the *Berlinischen Monatsschrift*, September 1793, in comparison with the first section on Garve, which occupies pages 207-31, and the very short final section on Mendelssohn, occupying pages 271-84. Thus, although it is two of Kant's contemporaries who provide the immediate focus of the essay, I suggest that Hobbes represents the main adversary.

I would suggest that Hobbes becomes the main adversary because Garve, although a lively essayist who wished to capture the public's imagination, was not drawn to systematic issues. It was the derivative and eclectic nature of Garve's thinking which led to Hobbes. Kant had a great respect for thoroughness and consistency and sought to achieve the same in his own writings. In Hobbes, Kant, I would argue, found a philosophical opponent who drew together in a coherent way the problems raised by the issue of the

33 Garve, *Abhandlung ueber der Verbindung der Moral mit der Politik*, 55.

34 Christian Garve, *Versuche ueber verschiedene Gegenstände aus der Moral, der Literatur und dem gesellschaflichen Leben, Gesammelte Werke*, ed. K. Woelfel (Hildesheim, 1985), 111-16

relationship between theory and practice in morality, history and politics in a way which Kant's contemporaries Garve and Mendelssohn had only hinted at. Underlying the objections in Germany to his own moral philosophy, those of Garve in particular, Kant detected a more systematic voice. To that voice he turns in the section on Hobbes. Garve was self-consciously the representative of British empiricism in Germany. He avidly read and translated the latest works in British philosophy. In Garve, the spirit of Hobbes's philosophy was to be found, admittedly neither in its original nor in its best form but present in a mutated form. To Kant Hobbes was the voice of expediency, prudence and materialism in modern political philosophy, and it was upon him that Garve as a representative of the German Enlightenment was drawing.

Kant's main criticism of Christian Garve in *Theory and practice* is that Garve is theoretically inconsistent. Ultimately Kant follows the same line of criticism with Hobbes and Mendelssohn in the essay, but the objection to Garve sets the scene. Another way of putting this objection is to say that Kant regarded Garve's metaphysics as faulty. It is plausible to argue that Kant shared with Garve the objective of making philosophy a less exclusively scholarly pursuit. However Kant did not think that philosophy should be popularly taught at the expense of scientific accuracy. Kant shows no taste for scholasticism in his writings, but he does have an immense respect for systematic, thorough and consistent thinking. In moral or practical philosophy Kant thinks that metaphysics holds the key. A consistent and defensible metaphysics must underlie any moral and political theory Kant feels able to recommend. A wholly worthwhile moral and political life has for Kant to be founded upon a theory. In Kant's view Garve yields too much to existing moral and political activity in presenting the moral ideas of his popular philosophy. Life has for Kant to be guided by moral ideas and not moral ideas guided by life.

Kant acknowledges that 'it is obvious that no matter how complete the theory may be, a middle term is required between theory and practice, providing a link and a transition from one to

the other.'[35] There is naturally an 'act of judgement' which comes between the theory and the activity derived from it. But that this act of judgement must take place does not mean that the theory should be wholly subordinate to the practice. We would not think very highly of a doctor who is brilliantly versed in the study of medicine but who is incapable of curing a single patient owing to bad judgement. So likewise we are unlikely to place our trust in a lay person who has performed excellently when called upon to provide a recommendation about our health but who we know not to have studied medicine formally at all. When we are looking for the ideal person to cure us, we look for someone who has the proper combination of theoretical knowledge and experience. Neither the skilled practitioner nor the good theorist can afford to dispense with the knowledge that both theory and practice bring. The moral and political theorist who is solely abstract can expect little success. But also 'no-one can pretend to be practically versed in a branch of knowledge and yet treat theory with scorn, without exposing the fact that he is an ignoramus in his subject.'[36]

Kant does not think that Garve is the kind of person who ignores moral theory altogether to get on with the activity of living. Garve after all acknowledges the importance of learning and communicating clearly with the public in his writings and translations. However, Kant thinks Garve does this insufficiently and he might well be taken for a 'would-be expert who admits the value of theory for teaching purposes, for example as a mental exercise, but at the same time maintains that it is quite different in practice, and that anyone leaving his studies to go out into the world will realise he has been pursuing empty ideals and philosopher's dreams.'[37] The section of Garve's writings to which Kant pays special attention in *Theory and practice* emphasises heavily the differences Garve believes exist between the theoretical consideration of a topic and the considerations which come to mind whilst acting. Here Kant 'loudly and resolutely disagrees with Garve'. In Garve's view it is very difficult to decide whether or not virtue or happiness

35 Kant, *Political writings*, 61.
36 Kant, *Political writings*, 62.
37 Kant, *Political writings*, 62.

should be the highest goal of morality. He claims to understand very well the distinction Kant makes between the pursuit of virtue and the possible happiness that may indirectly arise from doing our duty. Garve finds it a very subtle and complex distinction however, which largely fails to affect the ordinary person. Kant's view is that human individuals should seek to make themselves worthy of happiness by acting from the motive of duty, rather than seek happiness as a goal in itself. Garve makes the psychological objection to this that, although the ideas of duty and happiness may be analytically distinct for the corporeal individual who both thinks and feels, it may in fact be impossible to keep duty and happiness apart. 'For my part', Garve says, 'I confess that I indeed grasp this division of ideas with my head, but that I do not find this division between desires and strivings in my heart.' Moreover, it seems to Garve 'inconceivable how any persons can be conscious of themselves purely separating their requirement to be worthy of happiness from their requirement for happiness itself'. Garve goes so far as to deny one of the central precepts of Kant's pure moral philosophy when he claims that it is not possible to pursue 'duty wholly without regard to self-interest'.[38]

The passage in Garve's writings to which Kant particularly draws attention follows on immediately this claim. In quoting it in *Theory and practice* Kant highlights Garve's aversion to theory and the deontological virtue ethics of the *Groundwork to the metaphysics of morals*. 'Such subtle distinctions between ideas become obscure even when we think about particular objects; but they vanish completely when it comes to action (practice), when they are supposed to apply to desires and intentions. The more simple, rapid and devoid of clear ideas the step from consideration of motives to actual action is, the less possible it is to determine exactly and unerringly the precise momentum which each motive has contributed in guiding the step in this and no other direction.'[39] In raising this objection to the role of theory in everyday life, Garve is

[38] Garve, *Versuche über verschiedene Gegenstände aus der Moral, der Literatur und dem gesellschaflichen Leben*, 112.

[39] Garve, *Versuche über verschiedene Gegenstände aus der Moral, der Literatur und dem gesellschaflichen Leben*, 112. Cf. Kant, *Political writings*, 70.

drawing upon a long tradition in moral and political theory. Aristotle raises a similar objection to the grand theory of his teacher Plato in his *Ethics*, arguing that we cannot hope to attain the same accuracy in moral theory that we can attain in the physical sciences. Both Machiavelli and Hobbes also argue for the supremacy of practice in different ways. Garve was probably most indebted to Aristotle for his views on practice – one of his earliest publications was an edition of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, and he later produced translations of the *Nichomachean Ethics* (1789) and *Politics* (1799). It is not surprising that Kant comes out on the side of Plato in defending theory, although Kant's transcendental idealism and the metaphysics of morals he draws from it is a good deal different from Plato's idealism and political theory. Garve may also have been influenced in his criticism of Kant's a priori theory of morality by the British empiricist philosophers he assiduously translated into German. Writers like Ferguson, Burke and Paley, although by no means dismissing theory and the principles drawn from it in moral philosophy, none the less placed a great deal of emphasis on considerations of expediency and prudence drawn from experience.

On the psychological point that we cannot distinguish in our desires between what derives from self-interest and what derives from the sense of duty Kant partially concedes to Garve. In Kant's view we can, on the one hand, never know with certainty that the emotion which arises from our sense of duty predominates but, on the other hand, we can never know with certainty that the self-interested desire for happiness always plays a part. As Kant puts it, 'I willingly concede that no-one can have certain awareness of having fulfilled his duty completely unselfishly. For this is part of inward experience, and such awareness of one's psychological state would involve an absolutely clear conception of all the secondary notions and considerations which, through imagination, habit and inclination, accompany the concept of duty. And this is too much to ask for. Besides, the non-existence of something (including that of an unconsciously intended advantage) can never be an object of experience.'[40] Psychological perception is necessarily always

[40] Kant, *Political writings*, 69.

incomplete. We can never verify with certainty our inner condition. We cannot understand what we cannot fully observe. But the path of psychological perception is anyway not for Kant the way to ground our ethics. Ethical behaviour can only be grounded in principles and these principles should determine the will.

'The concept of duty in its complete purity is incomparably simpler, clearer and more natural and easily comprehensible to everyone than any motive derived from, combined with, or influenced by happiness, for motives involving happiness always require a great deal of resourcefulness and deliberation. Besides, the concept of duty, if it is presented to the exclusive judgement of even the most ordinary human reason, and confronts the human will separately and in actual opposition to other motive, if far more powerful, incisive and likely to promote success than all incentives borrowed from the latter selfish principle.'[41] By its very nature utilitarianism involves a great deal of calculation of presumed advantages, disadvantages, hindrances and supports which is incompatible with the determination of our duty from a Kantian perspective. To Garve's suggestion that the pursuit of duty must always have an unknown and so a possibly calculating side to it, Kant responds that the pursuit of happiness is always an uncertain and often risky calculation.

Conclusion

The central objection that Kant has to Garve, which he expresses in 'Theory and Practice', is to the general moral theory which Garve supports. As befits his commitment to the empiricism of Locke and Hume, Garve was an exponent of the theory of happiness (Glueckseligkeit). It is possibly somewhat anachronistic to describe Garve's moral doctrine now as utilitarianism since the term was not widely current in Garve's day, but Garve was deeply influenced by those trends in philosophy which were to issue in modern utilitarianism. As part of the spirit of the German Enlightenment his reading and translation of British writers had acquainted him with political economy and the revived forms of Epicurean materialist philosophy which went so well with the appreciation of the benefits of the development of a market economy. Garve found

[41] Kant, *Political writings*, 70.

he was thoroughly convinced by these utilitarian doctrines, arguing in a passage to which Kant refers in 'Theory and Practice' that 'in the succession of our ideas the step forward from happiness to virtue is far more natural than the reverse'. For Garve, 'I must first above all know that something is good before I can ask whether the fulfilling of moral duties belongs under the rubric of the good' and whether something is good I can only know from experience. 'Happiness' is for Garve 'the only conceivable purpose of things'.[42]

Kant thoroughly rejects such utilitarian philosophy that rests on an Aristotelian notion of practical wisdom. For him enlightenment does not imply the single-minded pursuit of happiness, however skilfully this may be sought. As he sees it, the aim of enlightenment is autonomy. In his view, the pursuit of happiness leads to a thoroughly unreliable moral outlook and life. 'Thus a will which follows the maxim of happiness vacillates between various motives in trying to reach a decision. For it considers the possible results of its decision, and these are highly uncertain; and it takes a good head to find a way out of the host of arguments and counter-arguments without miscalculating the total effect.' Kant contrasts this to his own metaphysic of morals: 'On the other hand, if we ask what duty requires, there is no confusion whatsoever about the answer, and we are at once certain what action to take.'[43] Systematicity has a higher priority for Kant than popularity; philosophical rigour takes precedence over public attention and discussion. Kant does not judge Garve's combination of secular practical wisdom with Christian belief a success. Kant's programme of enlightenment calls for practical wisdom to be subordinated to a moral vision which draws its strength from a modern systematic rendering of Christian ethics. He sought to set out this systematic vision in the *Groundwork to the metaphysics of morals* (1785).

Garve followed the main trend of the Enlightenment in France in making the pursuit of happiness a central principle in his philosophy. He believed that the pursuit of happiness fell in with a divine plan for the development of humankind. He wanted to

[42] Garve, *Versuche ueber verschiedene Gegenstände aus der Moral, der Literatur und dem gesellschaflichen Leben*, 112.

[43] Kant, *Political writings*, 71.

remove the obstacles placed before the realisation of this plan by ignorance, superstition and social circumstances. He was optimistic about what could be achieved by the wise pursuit of happiness. Kant warned about the dangers he took to be inherent in this Epicurean or utilitarian philosophy. In Kant's view, giving priority to the pursuit of happiness led to an incoherent moral and political doctrine. Enlightenment for Kant implied the subordination of the pursuit of happiness (an aim we could not wholly renounce as natural beings) to the pursuit of virtue. We cannot leave it to fortune alone to ensure that our day to day actions lead to the realisation of a divine ideal. We have always to evaluate the principles underlying our actions in the light of such a higher ideal. Enlightenment does not inevitably lead to the highest good. But it can lead us to the knowledge of what virtue consists in. To be clear on the right principles for personal and social action is the basis for human progress. We then know how we should do our duty. In sincerely trying to do our duty to ourselves and to others, we may then with justification hope that we may realise the highest good.

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WE MAY VENTURE TO SAY, THAT THE NUMBER OF PLATONIC READERS IS CONSIDERABLE: RICHARD PRICE, JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, AND THE PLATONIC STRAIN IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH THOUGHT

*Martha K Zebrowski**

Richard Price and Joseph Priestley brought Plato and Platonism into the heart of their work. They were direct descendants of Renaissance and Reformation scholars and theologians who had an historical and philological interest in both Plato and early Christian doctrine. Price was the principal British champion of Greek Christian Platonism in the second half of the eighteenth century; Priestley, its principal critic. Price praised Plato. He engaged him on behalf of natural and Christian theology and in support of his own account of the divine and human mind, moral truth, and moral freedom. Priestley reproached Plato. He wanted to remove the alien and malignant graft of Platonism from Christian doctrine, and explained how both nature and scripture support the doctrines of materialism, unitarianism, and philosophical necessity. These friends and rational dissenters, who explored their profound philosophical and theological differences together, illustrate the nature and context of a thriving concern for Plato and Platonism in eighteenth-century Britain.

'*Plato* is *unfashionable*.' Owen Ruffhead wrote this in the *Monthly Review* in 1762, in his remarks on Floyer Sydenham's translation of Plato's *Banquet.* Sydenham had set out to translate all of the dialogues of Plato into English, and between 1759 and his death in 1787 he translated nine dialogues, published them with elaborate notes, and wrote two books on and in the Platonic tradition.[1] Ruffhead praised Sydenham and his project, but he also

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[1] Sydenham translated *Io* (1759), *Greater Hippias* (1759), *Lesser Hippias* (1761), *The Banquet* [*Symposium*] (Pt. I, 1761; Pt. II, 1767), *The Rivals* (1769), *Meno* (1769), *First Alcibiades* (1773), *Second Alcibiades*

wrote: 'There have been few, it is thought, if any, Platonic Lovers; and we may venture to say, that the number of Platonic Readers is now very inconsiderable.'[2] This was not entirely true.[3]

(1776), and *Philebus* (Pt. I, 1779; Pt. 2, 1780). *The Rivals*, *Second Alcibiades*, and, by some, *Greater Hippias* are no longer attributed to Plato. Sydenham's own works are *A dissertation on the doctrine of Heraclitus, so far as it is mentioned, or alluded to, by Plato* (London, 1775) and *Onomasticon theologicum; or, An essay on the divine names, according to the Platonic philosophy* (London, 1784). Sydenham published the earlier translations individually, but he also gathered them together with those he was publishing for the first time and with the *Doctrine of Heraclitus* and published them as *The dialogues of Plato*. There are very few of these sets. The order of the dialogues, the number of volumes, and the inclusive dates of publication vary from set to set, and some sets also include *Onomasticon theologicum*. The set in the Harvard University library, which includes the dialogues and Sydenham's two books, serves here as a reference [Plato *The dialogues of Plato*, trans. Floyer Sydenham, (4 vols., London, 1767-1784)]. For Sydenham see M L Clarke, *Greek studies in England, 1700-1830* (Cambridge, 1945), 113, n. 3; Jim Dybikowski, 'Floyer Sydenham', in *Dictionary of eighteenth-century British philosophers*, eds. John W Yolton, John Valdimir Price, and John Stephens (2 vols., Bristol, 1999), II, 858-59; Michael Prince, *Philosophical dialogue in the British enlightenment: theology, aesthetics, and the novel* (Cambridge, 1996), 169-74.

2 *Monthly Review*, 26 (March, 1762), 196. The italics in quotations throughout this essay are in the original. For the attribution of this review to Ruffhead, who is best known as the first editor of the *Statutes at large*, see Benjamin Christie Nangle, *The Monthly Review, first series, 1749-1789* (Oxford, 1934), 175.

3 Little has changed since Ruffhead wrote. There is still only a meager and fragmented understanding of the place of Plato and the character of the Platonic strain in eighteenth-century British thought. For an overview of the situation see the items by Clarke, Dybikowski, and Prince in note 1; Ernst Cassirer, *The Platonic renaissance in England*, trans. James P Pettegrove (1953; repr. New York, 1970); Frank B Evans, 'Platonic scholarship in eighteenth-century England', *Modern Philology*, 41 (1943), 103-110; William Ralph Inge, *The Platonic tradition in English religious thought* (New York, 1926); John H Muirhead, *Coleridge as philosopher* (London, 1930); *The Platonic tradition in Anglo-Saxon philosophy* (1931; repr. New York, 1965); Peter S Wenz, 'Berkeley's Christian Neo-Platonism', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 37 (1976), 537-546; Martha K

Plato may not have been the fashion in eighteenth-century Britain, but he certainly did have readers, and the number of Christian theologians among them was quite considerable. Sydenham prepared for the ministry himself, though later he resigned his position in the Church of England. He was the most productive of the few who took up Plato and Platonism as classicists and philologists and who made a real effort to understand the texts and the philosophy in their own terms. To Sydenham, Plato was the Divine Plato and also a political scientist. Platonism was a philosophy still more ancient than Plato that remained essentially consistent through successions of Platonists. In explaining Plato, Sydenham actually reiterated a view the second-century Platonist Alcinous presented in the *Didaskalikos*, or *The handbook of Platonism*, that Plato postulated as the divine first principle a mind or intellect that is likewise the good, truth, and beauty.[4] Sydenham recommended Plato as an antidote to those who placed too great an emphasis on sense in the explanation of human understanding, and he insisted that the divine mind is the sole rightful measure in moral, legal, and aesthetic judgment.[5]

More typical than Sydenham were those who took up Plato on behalf of Christianity and who understood him in some relation to Christianity. There was the theologian Samuel Clarke, for example. In *A demonstration of the being and attributes of God* and *A discourse concerning the unchangeable obligations of natural religion*, his Boyle Lectures of 1704 and 1705, Clarke sought to ground Christianity in reason and natural religion and to explain

Zebrowski, 'Richard Price: British Platonist of the eighteenth century', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 55 (1994), 17-35; '"Commanded of God, because 'tis Holy and Good": the Christian Platonism and natural law of Samuel Clarke', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 16 (1997), 3-28.

4 This interpretation of Plato pervades Sydenham's notes. For good examples of Sydenham's commentary in this vein, see Plato *Greater Hippias*, *Banquet*, *Meno*, in *Dialogues*, I, 95, n. 79; I, 171-73, n. 147; II, 108-11, n. 82 (individually paginated). Alcinous *The handbook of Platonism*, trans. John Dillon (Oxford, 1993), 9.2-3; 10.1-3.

5 For example, see Sydenham, 'A general view of the works of Plato;' Plato *Meno*, in *Dialogues*, I, 5-19; II, 49-53, n. 28, n. 30; 104-6, n. 78; 118-27, n. 85 (individually paginated).

what Paul meant when he said: 'the Gentiles which have not the Law, do by nature the things contained in the Law, these, having not the Law, are a Law unto themselves'. As the Greek Church Fathers, Clement of Alexandria and Origen, did in their second- and third-century Christian apologetics, Clarke drew on texts and ideas of Plato to illustrate his argument.[6] There was also Matthieu Souverain, a French Protestant minister who emigrated first to Holland and then to England after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes and who wrote *Platonism unveil'd: or, an essay concerning the notions and opinions of Plato*, published posthumously in 1700. Souverain wanted to recover the simple Christian beliefs of apostolic times from the doctrinal confusion he thought Clement of Alexandria and Origen introduced into Christianity with their Platonizing explication of the Prologue to the Gospel of John: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.... All things were made by him'.[7]

Richard Price, in the manner of Clarke, and Joseph Priestley, in the manner of Souverain, came to Plato on behalf of Christianity. In fact, all of them, and Sydenham as well, were in the tradition of Renaissance and Reformation scholars and theologians who had an historical and philological interest in both Plato and early Christian doctrine, who were committed to recovering ancient texts, especially ancient Greek texts, and making them available in new translations and editions, and who often worked with an eye to spiritual and institutional renewal. Marsilio Ficino, who produced the first complete Latin edition of Plato in 1484, and Erasmus, who produced translations and editions of many of the Greek and Latin Church Fathers in the following century, are certainly familiar figures. Ralph Cudworth is also well-known for his elaborate examination of the elements common to Platonism and Christianity

[6] Samuel Clarke, *A demonstration of the being and attributes of God* and *A discourse concerning the unchangeable obligations of natural religion*, in *The works of Samuel Clarke* (4 vols., London, 1738; repr. New York, 1978). Clarke's quotation of *Romans* 2: 14 is in *Discourse*, in *Works*, II, 615. Clarke italicized the quoted text; the capitalization is his.

[7] Matthieu Souverain, *Platonism unveil'd: or, an essay concerning the notions and opinions of Plato, and some antient and modern divines his followers*, no trans. ([London?], 1700). John 1: 1, 3.

in *The true intellectual system of the universe* (1678). But there were many others now less well-known. In the mid-fifteenth century, for example, George of Trebizond translated many of the Greek Church Fathers into Latin and brought out the first Latin edition of *Praeparatio evangelica*, Eusebius of Caesarea's early fourth-century collection of substantial extracts from classical Greek and Hellenistic philosophers. In 1665 Pierre Daniel Huet produced a life of Origen and an edition of his Biblical commentaries. In 1726 Johann Lorenz von Mosheim published *Institutiones historiae ecclesiasticae*, the most important of the Protestant histories of the early church. And in 1734 and 1739 the Huguenot intellectual Isaac de Beausobre, who was interested in pagan philosophies and their relation to early Christian doctrines and heresies, published *Histoire critique de Manichée et du Manichéisme*. It was a long and multifaceted tradition, but well beyond the scope of this essay.[8]

Price and Priestley, however, are evidence of its continued flourishing in eighteenth-century Britain and the matter at hand. While neither had the philological interest or historical skill of their predecessors, both wanted to recover the beliefs of the early Christian church and saw Plato as key to this recovery. Both looked at Plato from the perspective of Hellenistic pagan and Christian Platonists. Moreover, both used Platonic texts and doctrines to develop and explain their own positions regarding

[8] For an introduction to this tradition, see Jan den Boeft, 'Erasmus and the Church Fathers', in *The reception of the Church Fathers in the West: from the Carolingians to the Maurists*, ed. Irene Backus (2 vols., New York, 1997), II, 537-72; D W Dockrill, 'The Fathers and the theology of the Cambridge Platonists', *Studia Patristica*, 17, ed. E A Livingstone (Oxford, 1982), 427-39; 'The heritage of patristic Platonism in seventeenth century English philosophical theology', in *The Cambridge Platonists in philosophical context*, eds. G A J Rogers, J M Vienne, and Y C Zarka (Dordrecht, 1997), 55-77; Walther Glawe, *Die hellenisierung des Christentums* (1912; repr. Aalen, Germany, 1973); James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance* (Leiden, 1991); Charles Stinger, 'Italian Renaissance learning and the Church Fathers', in *Reception of the Church Fathers*, II, 473-510; Guy G Stroumsa, 'Isaac de Beausobre revisited: the birth of Manichaean studies', *Studia Manichaica*, 4, eds. Ronald E Emmerick, Werner Sundermann, and Peter Zieme (Berlin, 2000), 601-12.

mind, spirit, and matter, moral truth and knowledge, and moral freedom and necessity. Yet, in all of this they disagreed fundamentally. With their very different valuations and strategic uses of Plato, and their disagreements over philosophy and theology, Price and Priestley illustrate well the manifold and formative role Plato had in eighteenth-century British thought. This brief survey is the merest introduction to their understanding of Plato and Platonism, to their use of both in their own work, and to the larger question of what comprises the Platonic strain and its intellectual context in Britain in the eighteenth century.[9]

Richard Price saw in Plato a philosopher he could engage, on common ground and in a constructive way, in the business of doing philosophy. He wrote to Lord Monboddo, who began publishing his own *Antient metaphysics* in 1779: 'I am continually resolving to confine my attention for the future to moral, metaphysical, mathematical and theological subjects. With these I begun [sic], and they have always been my favourite and most delightful studies.... I was always a warm admirer of Plato among the antients, and of Cudworth and Clark [sic] among the moderns.'[10] In his library Price had Joannes Oporinus's Greek edition of

[9] No one in eighteenth-century Britain drew clear distinctions between Plato's own ideas and those of later Platonists, and certainly no one used the terms 'Middle Platonist', 'Middle Platonism', 'Neoplatonist', and 'Neoplatonism'. In order to reflect Price and Priestley's generalized and generalizing understanding of Plato, Platonists, and Platonism, and in order to avoid complicating the narrative unnecessarily, this essay simply uses the proper names of individual Platonists, with brief identifying information, and the terms 'Platonist' and 'Platonism'. It is helpful to keep in mind this comment by Paul Oscar Kristeller: 'The history of Platonism (as distinct from the history of Plato scholarship) is not a constant repetition of what Plato said, but a sequence of variations on the themes proposed by Plato.' 'Proclus as a reader of Plato and Plotinus, and his influence in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance', in *Proclus: lecteur et interprète des anciens: Actes du Colloque International du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris, 2-4 October 1985*, eds. Jean Pépin and H D Saffrey (Paris, 1987), 210.

[10] W Bernard Peach and D O Thomas eds., *The correspondence of Richard Price* (3 vols., Durham N.C. and Cardiff, 1983-1994), II, 65, Richard Price to James Burnett, Lord Monboddo, 2-12 Aug. 1780.

Platonis omnia opera, which includes Proclus's commentary on the *Timaeus*, and *Alcinoi In Platonicam philosophiam*, which is *The handbook of Platonism* by Alcinous.[11]

Price did not offer a comprehensive and systematic view of Plato in his work. He made occasional references to Plato, claiming him as an authority on topics he himself was explaining. In the dissertation 'On providence', for example, in the course of explaining the spiritual first principle he maintained was essential to the creation and perpetual direction of the universe, he said Plato 'teaches excellently' in the '10th Dialogue of Laws' that 'there is an universal mind possest [sic] of all perfection, which produced and which actuates all things'.[12] Still, Plato and Platonic elements are fundamental to Price's own system.

In his most important work on philosophy and natural religion, the *Review of the principal questions in morals*, Price set Plato against the new Protagoreans. These were John Locke, Francis Hutcheson, and David Hume. Price thought that, on the whole, in their epistemological and moral theories, they had endorsed the idea that man is the measure of all things. He objected to the theory that the human mind obtains all of its knowledge from sense

[11] *A catalogue of the library of the late Dr. Price* (London, Leigh and Sotheby, Auction June 12, 1799), 12, item 492; 4, item 142. These items are Plato *Hapanta Platonos: meth' hypomnematon Proklou eis ton Timaion, kai ta Politika. Platonis Omnia opera cum commentariis Procli in Timaeum & Politica*, Greek with title pages also in Latin, ed. Johannes Oporinus, with a prefatory epistle in Latin by Simon Grynaeus (2 vols. Basel, 1534); Alcinous *Alcinoou eis ta tou Platonos eisagoge. Alcinoi In Platonicam philosophiam introductio*, Greek and Latin, ed. John Fell (Oxford, 1667). For the problems associated with using the catalogue of Price's library, see Richard Brinkley, 'The library of Richard Price', *The Price-Priestley Newsletter*, 4 (1980), 4-15. The list of subscribers to Floyer Sydenham's translation of Plato includes a Rev. Mr. Price, but the catalogue of Price's library does not include any of Sydenham's translations ('List of Subscribers', Plato, *Dialogues* I, 6 [individually paginated]).

[12] Richard Price, 'On providence', *Four dissertations*, with a new intro. by John Stephens (2nd ed. London, 1768; repr. Bristol, 1990), 9-10n. Plato, *Laws* 898c. Price used quotation marks, but he paraphrased this entire section of Plato quite loosely.

impressions, to the skepticism it entails, and to the theory that moral judgments are based on a moral sense. In addition, he rejected the notion that right and wrong are merely products of the divine will. Price wanted to establish, to the contrary, that moral truth is eternal, immutable, and inherent in the very nature of things, that the human mind is able to know moral truth, or right and wrong, and that it obtains this knowledge in an immediate intellectual perception of the understanding. Moreover, he wanted to establish that moral freedom is the power of acting in accordance with moral truth.[13]

Price made the conception of God as mind and as truth itself central to his argument against the new Protagoreans. He arrived at this conception through a consideration of the divine attributes of immensity, eternity, independence, self-sufficiency, omniscience, perfection, and omnipotence. These attributes, he said, are not really distinct elements of God, but simply so many ways of looking at the one divine nature. Thus, in response to the claim that right and wrong are products of the divine will, itself an aspect of both knowledge and power, Price distinguished between God's will and his nature and argued that eternal and immutable truth, which includes moral truth, is independent of God's will, and is, in fact, identical with his nature. This divine nature he characterized as an eternal mind and claimed Plato in support of this conception. Plato, he said, argued that the eternal and incorruptible originals and exemplars of all created existents together make up one infinite, first intelligence.[14] Price characterized eternal truth and the divine mind in the same way in a comment to Lord Monboddo: 'That infinity of *abstract* truth and of *knowables* which I see to be necessary and eternal, I think to be the *Divine eternal mind*.'[15] He explained at some length why and how God, when he created the world, which he did freely, nevertheless acted in accordance with

[13] Richard Price, *Review of the principal questions in morals*, ed. D D Raphael (3rd edn 1787, repr. Oxford, 1974), 13-56; 85-130; 232-69.

[14] *Review*, 85-91, especially 88; 90n., for the divine eternal mind and Plato. See also 50-56; 'A dissertation on the being and attributes of the deity', app. to *Review*, 285-96.

[15] *Correspondence of Richard Price*, II, 67, Price to Monboddo, 2-12 Aug. 1780

the eternal and immutable truth that is his nature:

> Amongst the various possible schemes of creation, and ways of ordering the series of events, there is a *best*; and this is the rule and end of the divine conduct; nor is it possible, that seeing this, and all things being equally easy to him, he should deviate from it; or, that the being into whose nature as the *necessary exemplar and original of all perfection*, every thing true, right, and good, is ultimately to be resolved, should ever chuse [sic] what is contrary to them.[16]

This last remark about the being whose nature is the exemplar and original of all perfection points to the source and foundation of Price's conception of God as mind. This is Plato's account in the *Timaeus* of the demiurge who, wanting to make the best world, framed this world and everything in it after the model of the intelligible living creature:

> Now if this world is good and its maker is good, clearly he looked to the eternal.... for the world is the best of things that have become, and he is the best of causes. Having come to be, then, in this way the world has been fashioned on the model of that which is comprehensible by rational discourse and understanding and is always in the same state.... Let us rather say that the world is like, above all things, to that Living Creature of which all other living creatures, severally and in their families, are parts.[17]

In his own account Price fused into a single entity, whose knowledge is identical with his being and who is truth itself, the demiurge and the intelligible model that Plato presented as separate and distinct.

The fusion of the demiurge and model had a long history. After Plato, Hellenistic Platonists, Neopythagoreans, Jews, and Christians sought to explain the relation between the demiurge or creator and the rational, eternal model.[18] For example, in *The handbook of*

[16] Price, *Review*, 243-44.

[17] Plato *Timaeus*, trans. Francis M Cornford (Indianapolis, 1959), 29a, 30c-d.

[18] For the relation of the Platonic ideas to the divine mind, see John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* (rev. ed., Ithaca, 1996); Harry Austryn Wolfson, 'Extradeical and intradeical interpretations of Platonic ideas',

Platonism Alcinous explained that there is a primary God or intellect who is always engaged in thinking his own thoughts and who is truth itself.[19] And, in *Contra Celsum*, Origen characterized the God of the universe as mind.[20]

Price drew directly on Alcinous and indirectly on Origen. That he not only had Alcinous in his library but sometimes used *The handbook of Platonism* as an interpretive guide to Plato is clear from the fact that in the *Review* he enlisted Alcinous, along with Plato, on behalf of his argument against Hutcheson that reason rather than a moral sense is the moral faculty in a human being. At another point, he used a form and language that resemble Alcinous closely to explain that eternal, necessary mind supposes eternal, necessary truth.[21] Of course, Price also had Proclus's commentary on the *Timaeus* in his library, but nothing in his language or treatment of God as mind reflects the complexity of Proclus. On the other hand, though he nowhere referred directly to Origen, Price did say that the philosophical and theological system he presented was, by and large, the same as the system Samuel Clarke presented, and Clarke certainly did refer to Origen and consider him at length.[22]

Samuel Clarke had two related theological projects. He wanted to recover the beliefs of early Christians regarding the nature and relation of God and Christ the Word or Logos, and he wanted to ground these beliefs not only in scripture, but also in reason and natural religion. On the basis of his philological analysis of Biblical texts, as well as the scriptural commentaries and theological arguments of many Greek and Latin Fathers, he concluded, in *The Scripture-doctrine of the Trinity* (1712), that the early

Religious philosophy (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), 27-68; *The philosophy of the Church Fathers* (3rd ed. rev., Cambridge, Mass., 1970), 141-286.

[19] Alcinous, *Handbook of Platonism*, 9.2-3, 10.1-3.

[20] Origen, *Contra Celsum*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge, 1980), 7.38. Chadwick refers the reader to Plato *Republic* 509b (425, n. 3).

[21] Price, *Review*, 217; 86. Alcinous, *Handbook of Platonism*, 29.2; 9.3. Note that ch. 28 in the Fell ed. of Alcinous, which Price owned and cited, corresponds to ch. 29 in the Dillon ed.; ch. 9 is the same in both eds.

[22] *Review*, 90; 118; 286; 288-89n; 290-92; *Correspondence of Richard Price*, II, 67, 100, Price to Monboddo, 2-12 Aug. 1780, and April ?, 1781.

church understood God the Father alone as self-existent. Christ was a divine being, his eternally begotten son, and, through Him, the creator of the world. He was subordinate to the Father, deriving his wisdom and power from Him.[23] Clarke's view of God, Christ, and their relation was essentially that of Clement of Alexandria and Origen, who arrived at it themselves while explaining scripture in similar terms to those which Hellenistic pagan Platonists developed for explaining the *Timaeus*. They characterized God as self-existent mind and Christ as his eternally-generated, divine, creating, and subordinate Logos. In the Boyle Lectures Clarke claimed he was explaining this same God in philosophical rather than scriptural terms. Characterizing God as mind or intelligence, he drew on Origen, as well as Plato and Cicero, to sustain his thesis.[24]

Price adopted Clarke's conception of God as mind. His understanding of God, in philosophical terms, was essentially that of two Hellenistic Platonists, one pagan and the other Christian, who developed their own conceptions of God in their efforts to explain and illustrate the nature of the first principle in their respective traditions. Like Clarke, he claimed the God he explained in philosophical terms was also the God of scripture.[25] However, while Price had as great a commitment to the recovery of the doctrines of early Christianity as Clarke had, he explicitly rejected the subordinationist position Clarke set out in *The Scripture-doctrine of the Trinity*. In his *Sermons on the Christian doctrine* Price called Clarke's explanation of Christ's derivation from God incomprehensible and said it was grounded in a misinterpretation

[23] Samuel Clarke, *The Scripture-doctrine of the Trinity*, in *Works*, IV, 124-32; 134-47; 151-78.

[24] Clarke, *Demonstration*, in *Works*, II, 569; *Discourse*, in *Works*, II, 626-27.

[25] Price, *Review*, 270. But compare: 'supposing a number of sage philosophers or learned Platonists had been employed in the office and duty of Christ's Apostles. These would have expected nice metaphysical theories and subtle speculations in Christianity.' Richard Price, 'On the character of the Apostles and first disciples of Christ', *Sermons, on various subjects* (London, 1816), 4.

of scripture.[26] For his own part, when he was considering scripture, Price declined metaphysical speculation on the nature and relation of God and Christ. His was an Arian interpretation. He thought scripture alone, and the Gospel of John in particular, declare that Christ was something more than a mere man, that he descended to earth from a state of pre-existent dignity. In the beginning he was with God, and he was God's instrument in ordering the world, but he was not himself its creator.[27]

The divine eternal mind is the measure of all things. Man is not. Satisfied that God freely created the best world in accordance with the eternal and immutable truth that is his nature, Price argued that a human being is able to know this truth and that human moral freedom is the power of acting in accordance with moral truth. Here too he turned to Plato. To explain the operation of the human mind, he took up the *Theaetetus*, Plato's own response to Protagoras, as well as Ralph Cudworth's *Treatise concerning eternal and immutable morality*, published posthumously in 1731, which he used as something of a guide to the *Theaetetus*.[28] To explain human moral freedom and action in accordance with moral truth, he simply cast the human being in the role of the demiurge of the *Timaeus*.

Price considered together the propositions that the human mind gets all of its ideas from sense impressions and that it gets its ideas of right and wrong from a moral sense. He argued that the human mind actually has different kinds of ideas. The mind does have ideas that are the immediate effects of its passive reception of sense impressions, such as ideas of colour and sound. It also has ideas that arise from these, such as the ideas it forms when it reflects on the effects on itself of beauty and order. In these cases,

[26] Price, 'Of the Christian doctrine, as held by Unitarians and Socinians', *Sermons on the Christian doctrine* (Boston, 1815), 46.

[27] Price, 'Of the pre-existence and dignity of Christ', *Sermons on the Christian doctrine*, 54-80.

[28] For the *Theaetetus* and Protagoras, see Price, *Review*, 21n; 33n [*Theaetetus* 152a, 158a]; 37n [*Theaetetus* 185c-187a]; 53-55; 54-55n [*Theaetetus* 152a-152e; 157d; 172b]. For Ralph Cudworth, *A treatise concerning eternal and immutable morality* (London, 1731; repr. New York, 1976), see *Review*, passim.

the ideas do not refer to any thing real outside the mind. But the mind also has ideas immediately from its active and vital understanding or intelligence. Some of these denote real properties of external objects, such as figure and extension. Other ideas denote actions and passions of the mind itself, such as volition and consciousness. Ideas of the understanding, which include moral ideas, refer to real and independent existence and truth, that is, they refer to and are conformable to invariable archetypes in the divine mind. In fact, when the human mind holds such ideas in thought, what it actually grasps is the divine mind itself, the necessary exemplar and original of all perfection.[29] Knowledge and morality, then, are no arbitrary affairs of taste. There is no better way of speaking about human understanding than to say it is the seizing of being; to call it, Price said, 'in *Plato's* language, the power in the soul to which belongs *katalepsis tou ontos*, or the apprehension of TRUTH.'[30]

Just as Price explained the human understanding as having a power scarcely less than God's power of knowing his own mind or nature, so too he explained human acts in accordance with moral truth as scarcely less than God's act in the creation. Price said that when God created the world he looked to the best as the rule and end of his conduct, that is, he acted in accordance with his nature, which is the true, right, and good. God is a moral law unto himself, but so is moral truth a law in and of itself and a law unto God. And so is moral truth a law to man, for the human understanding has the capacity to know it. In fact, the perception by his understanding of right and wrong is all that is necessary to excite or move a free

[29] *Review*, 17-56, especially 38-39.

[30] *Review*, 21; the phrase in italics is a transliteration of Price's Greek. Price may have had *Theaetetus* 187a in mind. Cudworth attributed the phrase to Aristotle (*Eternal and immutable morality*, 4.4.6, n.'r'). Cudworth's most recent editor seems to attribute the phrase to Cudworth himself, and notes that he often used Greek philosophical terminology that does not have a precise textual source (Cudworth, *A treatise concerning eternal and immutable morality*, ed. Sarah Hutton [Cambridge, 1996], 4.4.5). Note that 4.4.6 in the 1731 ed. of Cudworth, which Price used, corresponds to 4.4.5 in the Hutton ed. See also Aristotle, *Nicomachean ethics*, VI.3; VI.6.

individual to moral action. Then he has within his own intellect a guide he cannot reject. Of course, Price argued, anyone who lacks the power to move himself, to choose, and to initiate his own actions, is not a moral agent. But anyone who has physical liberty does have this power. All else that is required to make him fully a moral agent is that he act with a conscious regard for rectitude as the rule and end of his conduct.[31] In short, Price accounted for human moral freedom and action, understanding, as Plato said, that 'whenever the maker of anything looks to that which is always unchanging and uses a model of that description in fashioning the form and quality of his work, all that he accomplishes must be good.'[32]

Joseph Priestley objected to almost everything Richard Price had to say. Priestley was interested in Plato and in ancient philosophy in general, principally because ancient philosophy provided him with points of comparison for his argument in favour of the superiority of the doctrines of Christian revelation and with a foil for his own doctrines of materialism, unitarianism, and philosophical necessity. He surveyed pagan and Christian doctrine in *The doctrines of heathen philosophy, compared with those of Revelation*; *Disquisitions relating to matter and spirit*; *The history of the philosophical doctrine concerning the origin of the soul, and the nature of matter*; and *An history of the corruptions of Christianity*.[33] He was forthright about his substantial reliance on

[31] *Review*, 104-24; 181-89. See also 'On spiritual or inward liberty', *Sermons, on various subjects*, 205-25; *Observations on the nature of civil liberty*, in *Richard Price: political writings*, ed. D O Thomas (Cambridge, 1991), 21-23; Joseph Priestley and Richard Price, *A free discussion of the doctrines of materialism, and philosophical necessity*, with a new intro. by John Stephens (London, 1778; repr. Bristol, 1994), 130-44; 173-74; 340-59.

[32] Plato, *Timaeus*, 28a-b.

[33] Joseph Priestley, *The doctrines of heathen philosophy, compared with those of revelation* (Northumberland, 1804); *Disquisitions relating to matter and spirit. To which is added, The history of the philosophical doctrine concerning the origin of the soul, and the nature of matter...* (2nd edn., Birmingham, 1782); *An history of the corruptions of Christianity* (2 vols., Birmingham, 1782). See also *A general history of the Christian Church, to the fall of the Western Empire* (2 vols., 2nd edn., Northumberland, 1803-4).

the more specialized and comprehensive work of many modern authors, including, for example, Matthieu Souverain, Johann Lorenz von Mosheim, and Isaac de Beausobre, as well as Jean Le Clerc, the Protestant biblical scholar who translated Thomas Stanley's *History of the Chaldaick philosophy* into Latin and published it with his own notes in 1690, and John Toland, the deist and author of *Letters to Serena* (1704), which surveys ancient pagan doctrines regarding eternal mind and soul. But he also claimed a substantial personal familiarity with the writings of ancient philosophers and the Church Fathers. In his library, along with the modern authors, Priestley had Ficino's translation of *Platonis opera omnia*, Proclus's *In Platonis theologiam*, and many of the Church Fathers, including Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Eusebius of Caesarea.[34]

In *The doctrines of heathen philosophy* Priestley did find much in the ancients that he thought was positive. He detected the remnants of a primitive monotheism he admired and of a belief in a resurrection and future life, the latter of which he saw as evidence of an early and lost revelation. He praised Socrates, especially, for his moral character and attention to practical and social virtue. He praised Plato as well for his treatment of the attributes, providence,

[34] *Catalogue of the library of the late Dr. Joseph Priestley* (Philadelphia, sale by Thomas Dobson, 1816), 85-86. These items are Plato *Tou theiou Platonos Hapanta ta sozomena. Divini Platonis Opera omnia quae exstant*, Greek and Latin, trans. Marsilio Ficino as rev. by Simon Grynaeus and Antoine Vincente, with the Greek text of Henri Estienne (Lyon [Geneva], 1590); Proclus *Proklou Diadochou Platonikou eis ten Platonos theologian biblia hex. Procli successoris Platonici In Platonis theologiam libri sex*, Greek and Latin, trans. Aemilius Portus (Hamburg, 1618). Priestley also owned Plato *Platonis De rebus divinis dialogi selecti Graece & Latine*, ed. John North, trans. Marsilio Ficino, (2nd edn., enl. and amend., Cambridge, 1683). For the works and editions of the historians and Church Fathers in Priestley's library, see *Catalogue*, passim. For the revisions of Ficino's translation of Plato, see John Monfasani, 'For the history of Marsilio Ficino's translation of Plato', *Language and learning in Renaissance Italy* (Variorum edn., Aldershot, 1994), 293-99.

and moral government of God, and said he appreciated why early Christians had admired him for his piety. By way of illustration, he emphasized the *Laws* and gathered brief passages from this and several other dialogues.[35]

Priestley's historical survey of the ancients and his comprehension of Plato, however, were narrow, superficial, and undiscriminating. In *The history of the philosophical doctrine concerning the origin of the soul* he presented a view of Plato the theologian that had been commonplace since the Renaissance. He classified Plato's as an ancient, oriental philosophy with roots in Indostan, Persia, Chaldea, and Egypt. It was the philosophy of Orpheus and Pythagoras before it was Plato's. Priestley described the fundamental principles of this ancient and Platonic philosophy as beliefs in a supreme God who is an eternal mind or intelligence, a second mind or demiurge who is an emanation from the first and who is the maker of the world, the eternal nature and transmigration of human souls, and the evil nature of matter.[36] He objected to all of these principles. In *The doctrines of heathen philosophy* he gave a somewhat different account, and said, first, that according to Plato the supreme being constructed the universe 'according to a pattern of it previously formed in his own mind', and then, that Plato was confusing and sometimes made these ideas 'a second principle of things'.[37] All of these views about the divine mind and its ideas reflect in a rudimentary way the various attempts Hellenistic philosophers and theologians made to explain the demiurge and the rational, eternal model of the *Timaeus*. But Priestley was insensitive to these efforts and showed no awareness of his own inconsistency. Nor did he offer any textual evidence from Plato himself. And he certainly had no appetite for Plato's 'mysterious doctrine of ideas' and 'mysterious doctrine of numbers'. Plato, he said, 'indulged in various speculations concerning the nature of god and the universe.... Indeed, on these great

[35] Priestley, *Heathen philosophy*, v; x; 8; 10; 19; 76; 58-63; 125; 128; 124; 147-48. For the early revelation, see also *History of the philosophical doctrine*, 301.

[36] Priestley, *History of the philosophical doctrine*, 302-26; 388-400. See also *Disquisitions*, 206-23; 232-42.

[37] Priestley, *Heathen philosophy*, 125-26.

but obscure subjects he is in many respects perfectly unintelligible.'[38]

Still, Priestley's real objection was not to Plato so much as to the early, philosophizing Christians who, he claimed, corrupted the pure Christianity of Christ and the Apostles by introducing Platonic notions into their theology. Whereas Christ knew nothing of metaphysics and spoke to ordinary people in plain language, some Christians, who were embarrassed by the apparent ignominy of Christ's crucifixion, who had a Greek philosophic education themselves, and who wanted to make Christianity appealing to other educated Greeks, adopted an allegorical method of interpreting scripture and imported Greek philosophical principles into their exegesis. Chief among these philosophizing Christians were Justin Martyr and, especially, Clement of Alexandria and Origen.[39] It was with the 'false metaphysical principles' of Plato's 'doctrine of ideas' that they did the most damage.[40]

Although Priestley had as polemical a purpose in charting the corruption of Christianity by the Platonizing Fathers as he had in considering Platonism itself, he wrote a more genuine history of the development of Christian doctrine than he did of the ancient and Platonic philosophy. He intended to demonstrate how philosophizing Christians undermined what he thought were the early Christian beliefs in the unity of God, the mere humanity of Christ, and the bodily resurrection of all mankind. Still, he handled the formation and fluctuation of dogma and orthodoxy over the first four centuries after Christ with some sensitivity to the nuances of philosophical and theological language and concepts and to the transformation of ideas over time. And he was somewhat conscientious about specifying the patristic glosses he claimed were instrumental in moulding and shifting understanding of particular Biblical texts.

Priestley showed how, with the Gospel of John before them, but with Platonic notions of divine intelligence and the demiurge in

[38] *Heathen philosophy*, 127; 135; 125.

[39] Priestley, *Corruptions of Christianity*, I, 20-24; *History of the philosophical doctrine*, 327-29; 341-47; *Disquisitions*, 245-51; *History of the Christian Church*, I, 284-86; 292-304; 351-60.

[40] Priestley, *Heathen philosophy*, 127-28.

mind, Clement of Alexandria and Origen, along with other philosophizing Fathers, came to understand that the Word or Logos who was with God in the beginning and who made all things, was not, as Priestley thought John meant, merely God's attribute of reason, but the person Jesus Christ, a divine being, an emanation from God and subordinate to him, and the maker of the world. He showed how post-Nicene Fathers turned Christ, this subordinate divine being, into a co-equal member of the Trinity.[41] Priestley said that the Fathers who used the ancient and Platonic philosophy to support the doctrine of the pre-existence and divinity of Christ also used it to support the doctrine of the pre-existence and immortality of human souls, on the grounds that if one soul can exist apart from body, so too can all. He maintained that there is no scriptural basis for the doctrine of the immortality of the soul or for the related doctrine that matter is evil. The doctrine of scripture is rather that 'God made man of the *dust of the ground*'. 'According to revelation, *death* is a state of rest and insensibility, and our only, though sure hope of a future life, is founded on the doctrine of the *resurrection of the whole man*'.[42]

Though he engaged Price directly in terms of philosophy and natural religion and not history, and though he did not challenge Price specifically over his use of Plato, Priestley objected to precisely those aspects of Price's system that were the outcome of the Greek Fathers' Platonization of Christian doctrine. Price understood this. In *A free discussion of the doctrines of materialism and philosophical necessity*, the collection of their correspondence regarding their philosophical positions, Price said that Priestley's goal was 'to prove that there is no distinction between matter and spirit, or between the soul and body: and thus to explode what he calls the heathenish system of christianity, by exploding the doctrines of Christ's prae-existence, and an intermediate state.'[43] Priestley objected to Price's theories about the divine and human

[41] Priestley, *Corruptions of Christianity*, I, 20-70; 88-116; *History of the philosophical doctrine*, 340-41; 347-56; *History of the Christian Church*, II, 316-23.

[42] Priestley, *History of the philosophical doctrine*, 294-301; 391. The quotations are on pp. 294-95. See also *Disquisitions*, 153-73.

[43] Priestley and Price, *Free discussion*, 97.

mind, the nature of Christ, and moral freedom and action.

Priestley's alternatives to Price and the Platonization of Christian doctrine were materialism, Unitarianism, and philosophical necessity. In *Disquisitions relating to matter and spirit* and *The doctrine of philosophical necessity illustrated,* he argued that these doctrines are mutually entailing and founded in both nature and scripture. The principles of empirical science, he said, require that a scientist postulate no more causes of things than are sufficient to explain what he observes, and that when he observes the same effects he assign them to the same causes. Thus, when he observes that matter attracts and repels, a scientist may not properly postulate that something other than powers and forces in matter itself is responsible for these movements. For example, he may not postulate that God, or eternal mind or spirit, is the agent who perpetually moves matter. In fact, although Priestley argued that the eternal succession of finite beings and the design of the world prove the existence of a single, intelligent, eternal first cause, he also argued that these proofs leave open the question of whether God is material or immaterial and that this is of no consequence whatsoever. Moreover, he argued, while scripture talks of the power, presence, intelligence, and moral perfections of God, it does not support the notion of his immateriality.[44]

A scientist may also not properly postulate the existence of a human spirit or soul that is separate from the body and immortal. Because he never finds sensation, perception, and thought apart from the organized system of matter that is the body, he may not postulate that these are the activities of something other than the body, that is, of mind or spirit or soul. Rather, he must recognize that mind, the principle of perception and thought, is actually a result of corporeal organization. This scientific explanation of the uniform, material composition of man accords with scripture, Priestley claimed, because scripture says that the whole man becomes extinct at death and that the whole man will be resurrected, but scripture is silent on the subject of the immateriality of the human soul. It accords as well with the Unitarian doctrine of the mere humanity of Christ and the unity of

[44] Priestley, *Disquisitions*, v (intro.); 8; 29-43; 173-94.

God, for it demonstrates that Christ could not have existed before his birth and apart from his body and that it was his body that was resurrected when he died.[45]

To explain the operation of the material human mind, Priestley turned to David Hartley's *Observations on man* (1749). In the essays that introduce his abridgment of the *Observations*, Priestley argued that all of the operations of the human mind, which are modifications of matter or affections of a material substance, can be reduced to and explained by sensation, vibration, and the association of ideas. Simple ideas are the effects of sense impressions transmitted to and sustained in the mind by vibrations of the nervous system and brain. New thoughts, and complex and abstract ideas such as moral ideas, are the effects of the association of ideas within the mind. In fact, Priestley argued, the mental phenomena of memory, judgment, passion, and will and the power of muscular motion are all the effects of the association of ideas. The operation of the mind is simple because it is entirely a material operation. It is complex because it involves many processes at once. And, of course, the operation of one mind varies from that of another because different initial sensations arise in individuals who are in different external circumstances.[46]

In *The doctrine of philosophical necessity illustrated* Priestley argued that liberty and necessity are consistent. He acknowledged that an individual may be conscious of having freedom, which is, indeed, a power of doing as he wills or pleases. But he denied that an individual has a power of beginning motion, that is, of acting, without there being some motive or view of things that arises in his mind and that determines his deliberation and resolve, his judgment and will, and, therefore, his action. In fact, he argued, this determination of action follows an invariable law of nature. For, there can never be an effect without a cause. And the theory that explains the material mind according to the principles of sensation, vibration, and the association of ideas explains that here the cause is, in the first instance, the appearance of external things

[45] *Disquisitions*, iv (intro.); 44-52; 61-72; 194-205.

[46] Priestley, *Hartley's theory of the human mind* (2nd edn. London, 1790), ix-li. See also *Disquisitions*, 111-126.

that affect the mind as sensations, and, after this, the judgment and will that form through the association of ideas. Human liberty is not something less for its also being necessity. Moral freedom and action are actually possible for an individual only when his views of punishments and rewards become the motives in his mind that determine his will. Moreover, Priestley argued, not only did God constitute the human mind and form as matter, but the doctrine of philosophical necessity alone accords with the scriptural account of his foreknowledge and omniscience.[47]

Richard Price and Joseph Priestley did not have a good historical grasp of Plato. They did not have a comprehensive and systematic view of his dialogues and philosophy. In fact, they followed the Hellenistic pagan Platonist Alcinous and the Hellenistic Christian Platonists, Clement of Alexandria and Origen, in understanding Plato principally as a theologian who held that the divine first principle is mind. Yet each took Plato as his point of departure and engaged him seriously in a complex effort to recover early Christian doctrine, reconcile it with reason, and explain human nature, mind, and morals in terms of science and philosophy. This was as much the case for Priestley, who found Plato unintelligible and regarded him as the key factor in the corruption of Christianity, as for Price, who approached him with considerable insight and appreciation and considered him an ally. They understood quite well that Plato and Platonism were central to their disagreements with each other about human nature and the divine. They reflect and illustrate, in their concerns, lineage, and work, the principal elements that make up the Platonic strain in eighteenth-century British thought.

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[47] Joseph Priestley, *The doctrine of philosophical necessity illustrated* (2nd edn., Birmingham, 1782), 1-108; 115-26; 164-83. See also *Disquisitions*, 136-37; Priestley and Price, *Discourse*, 145-55; 171-73; 286-96

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