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A Review of the Principal Questions in Richard Price's Moral Intuitionism

Andrew Nesseler

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Supervisor: Dr. Tristan Nash

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Contents

Abstract: Richard Price (1723-1791) was a Welsh philosopher who defended, among other views, what contemporary philosophers would label as "intuitionism." Adherence to this metaethical theory assumes, at minimum, the following: *1*) Moral claims can be true stance-independently, or, in other words, morality exists independently of our whims, beliefs, or desires, *2*) There are moral truths that can be discovered through some rationalist capacity (be it "intuition" or "the understanding"), and *3*) Morality includes some form of irreducibly moral properties (that is, moral concepts such as good cannot be reduced to or be identical with natural properties).

Here, I explore Price's defense of intuitionism by drawing from his most complete work on moral philosophy, *A Review of the Principal Questions in Morals* (1758), while primarily using the third edition (1787). Additionally, along with other secondary sources, I will rely on the commentaries of Price as found in W.D. Hudson's (1967, 1970) work. This examination of Price's intuitionism will take place over four sections.

The first section will briefly cover Price's philosophical influences. Specifically, I have in mind the influence of Plato, Ralph Cudworth, and René Descartes. However, I also note how Price differs from Plato and Cudworth, as well as how Price may still face difficulties associated with their views. Noting Price's influences will give a fuller picture of the intuitionism he defends (as well as later intuitionists).

In the second section, I turn to the debate between Price's intuitionism and Francis Hutcheson's moral sense theory (also known as sentimentalism). After dealing with the relation between virtue and satisfaction, I turn toward the ostensible problem of moral motivation for intuitionists. Contemporary evaluations of Price's position have held that it does not adequately deal with the Humean account of moral motivation. To help amend this, I will look at some contemporary responses to the Humean.

The third section examines the epistemology separating Price and his anti-intuitionist interlocutors. Specifically, I turn to the rationalist epistemology underlying Price's view and contrast it with empiricism. One of the more obvious cases, I believe, comes from J.L. Mackie, who makes explicit reference to Price's metaethics in the 1977 publication *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. For example, Mackie (1977, p. 39) engages with Price's view as "an important counter to the argument from queerness," with Price arguing that empiricism has severe inadequacies—namely, by precluding important non-moral truths by discounting rationalism. I argue that Mackie and empiricists at large have not overcome Price's counter.

The fourth section looks at Price's intuitionism in comparison to contemporary developments of the theory. First, I compare Price's normative view to other intuitionists, such as G.E. Moore and W.D. Ross—with Moore showing the possible normative differences the theory can produce, while Ross shows its enduring deontological side as implied in Price's work. Then, referencing the intuitionists of today, I will turn to contemporary philosophers such as Michael Huemer and Robert Audi. The comparison between Price and these philosophers will be, in part, explored through the ways in which ethical intuitionism is defended and its concepts defined.

Lastly, I will conclude by noting Price's continued relevance in metaethics and philosophy at large. Throughout, I will have aimed to establish that this relevancy extends from his commentary on subjectivism to moral epistemology and, taken as a whole, intuitionism as a still important and enduring view.

A Review of the Principal Questions in Richard Price's Moral Intuitionism

1. The Influence of Price

Richard Price (1723-1791) was a Welsh philosopher who, along with his contemporaries such as Thomas Reid and Joseph Butler, "held non-naturalist views . . . [that] moral judgements can be objectively true, are not derivable from non-moral judgements, and are known by the same faculty of reason that knows mathematical truths" (Hurka 2014, p. 269). That said, Price was a diverse thinker whose reach went beyond metaethics alone, as Price was also "a Unitarian minister who earned renown as a mathematician and notoriety as a political radical" (Hudson 1967, p. 2). For an example of his political activities, Price wrote popular pamphlets in favor of America's independence, which led to direct and positive correspondences between Price and figures such as Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin (Cone 1948, p. 736).

Additionally, as a bridge between moral philosophy and political action, the advocacy of Price here might not be coincidental, as Price's "political thought was an extension of his moral philosophy since for him the power to act as a self-determining agent was the test of all liberty" (Cone 1948, p. 730). On Price's concept of liberty specifically, Gregory Molivas (1997, p. 106) notes that the common observation among commentators of Price is that his later political arguments are "indebted to his earlier philosophical work and notably his *Review of the Principal Questions in Morals*." Surprisingly, too, is the political influence Plato possibly had on Price's work, which goes beyond the more obvious influence Plato had on Price's metaethics and moral epistemology, as I will touch upon later. On Plato's political influence, Louise Hickman (2011, p. 393) notes that while "Plato's political philosophy is often thought to be antidemocratic and intolerant," one could argue that a connection exists to Price's political thought, as it is "grounded in a Platonic conception of the self and freedom."

Clearly, then, Price's contributions go beyond pure abstractions, but my focus here is

concerned with Price's metaethics and his thought in moral epistemology as outlined above. To do so, I will explore some of Price's philosophical influences, which should allow one to better trace the lineage of ethical intuitionism from Price's time to his predecessors and, as I aim to establish later, to contemporary intuitionists. To best cover Price's metaethics, I will draw heavily from his *Review of the Principal Questions in Morals* in particular, which W.D. Hudson (1967, p. 2) cites as "probably the best statement of the case for rational intuitionism which has ever been written." With this brief introduction to Price, one should gain a better appreciation for both the scope of his work and the foundation from which it is partially built.

1.1 *The Philosophical Influence of Plato and Cudworth*

For two of the primary philosophical influences of Price, one could make the connection to both Plato and the seventeenth century philosopher Ralph Cudworth. The influence of Plato should be unsurprising, as Plato could be described as "the father of rationalism" (Cottingham 1984, p. 13). Further still, Plato has been claimed to have "exhibited certain intuitionist traits" (Kaspar 2012, p. 28). Granted, other philosophers have claimed that "few would hold that Plato is an ethical intuitionist" (Smythe & Evans 2007, p. 233). For Cudworth, however, W.D. Hudson (1970, p. 12) goes so far as to say that "Price was indebted to Ralph Cudworth for all the leading ideas of his epistemology," with special attention given to Cudworth's *Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality*. In one explicit case, Price (1787, pp. 20-21) cites Cudworth's *Treatise* in a footnote when articulating the distinction between sense and reason—arguing that sense may perceive, for example, only black ink strokes on paper, but it is the intellect that perceives, among other things, connection, dependencies, and correspondences that give meaning to the characters that the sense perceives.

For Hudson the influences of Price are traced through a direct lineage from Plato to Cudworth to Price. This, as Hudson (1970, p. 13) states, can be noted from Price's early

arguments for the superiority of reason over the senses, as "[Price] proceeds to attempt by means of certain 'observations', drawn from Cudworth and, through him, from Plato's 'Theaetetus'." The closeness of these influences appears confirmed by Price (1787, p. 13) himself, as, shortly after citing Cudworth's *Treatise,* Price cites Plato's *Theaetetus* in the following footnote for "most of [the] observations concerning the difference between sense and knowledge" that Price attempts to explicate, with immediate mention of Cudworth's *Treatise* as offering similar insight as Plato.

One of the prime similarities between Price, Cudworth, and Plato may be found in the epistemic priority of reason over the senses—roughly seen as representing the rationalist tradition. However, it is unclear if each philosopher has the same degree of distrust in the capability of the senses, especially when it comes to acquiring knowledge. Sarah Hutton (1996, p. xxii), for example, argues that Cudworth could not be straightforwardly considered an anti-empiricist, as Cudworth ". . . acknowledges the adequacy of the senses for providing knowledge of the external world and of the body" in addition to creating hypotheses. Plato, however, seemingly precludes empirical knowledge, as "Plato regards knowledge as (a) infallibility and (b) concerned with 'eternal reality'" (Cottingham 1984, p. 20). Then we have Price (1787, p. 19), who seemingly limits the senses to "[presenting] *particular* forms to the mind; but cannot rise to any *general* ideas." The role of the senses for Price (1974/1787, p. 17), then, is to perceive particular forms, but it is reason that has the final say as it "judges" and "contradicts their decisions." In short, Price (1787, p. 19) summarizes the hierarchy of the senses and reason as "Sense sees only the *outside* of things, reason acquaints itself with their *natures.*"

Where Cudworth and Plato unite, and where Price's view is not forward with endorsing, is the use of the concept of *anamnesis.* According to *anamnesis,* "knowing involves recollection" (Hutton 1996, p. xxii). The view's best-known association is that of Plato (2002, p. 71), with

Socrates stating in passages 81d-e of the *Meno* that, as our immortal souls have seen all in this world and beyond, "searching and learning are, as a whole, recollection." *Anamnesis*, however, may also be considered a "theory of inference, and it rests on the intentional relations which the Forms bear to one another" (Allen 1959, p. 167). Cudworth seemingly embraces this inferential aspect of *anamnesis* for his epistemology, with his treatment of such knowledge as being strictly deductive, given that as "the mind . . . *descends* towards particulars . . . the mind perceives not the external appearance of things but the relational constants which reveal their immutable essences" (Hutton 1996, pp. xxii-xxiii).

Strangely enough, this parallel between Plato and Cudworth appears to address a gap in Price's epistemology, even though I have, so far, primarily focused on how pervasive their influence has been. Most notably, when covering an argument of Price's against nominalism, Hudson (1970, p. 34) argues that Price mysteriously connects a "general idea" to "particular instances of it." Perhaps, then, when accounting for knowledge of universals, Price could have done well to adopt the inference implicit in Plato and Cudworth's use of *anamnesis*. Otherwise, Price's attempt to answer the mystery may be overshadowed by his empiricist interlocuters, such as David Hume and George Berkeley.

Yet, Price's reluctance to explicitly endorse *anamnesis* could show awareness (perhaps only implicitly) of the difficulties with its inclusion in a rationalist epistemology. Namely, there is an arguable incoherence in a rationalism that also adopts Plato's theory of *anamnesis*, and the problem stems from it taking aboard an empiricist assumption. As Jerrold Katz (1998/2000, p. 15) argues, "What is bad about [*anamnesis*] is that it buys into the core empiricist notion that all our knowledge ultimately derives from acquaintance." The acquaintance Katz is most troubled by here is that of one's knowledge of abstract objects, which, according to Plato's concept of *anamnesis*, would rely on our souls having been acquainted with them at some point in their

existence, and yet, in our current state, we may now struggle to recollect this acquaintanceship.

Price, however, does not entirely avoid this problem of acquaintance for rationalism, even if he fails to explicitly endorse *anamnesis*, as reason was explicitly held to be superior to the senses for being able to be *acquainted* with the nature of things (Price 1787, p. 19). Still, Price could articulate his view that we can know self-evident truths through an apprehension called intuition (Hudson 1970, p. 43). Such phrasing may be enough to bypass the use of acquaintanceship a rationalist may find troubling. That is, it may help alleviate some of the worries that Katz raises, but I do not believe it accomplishes this entirely. To see why, the problem mirrors the alleged classical Platonism of Kurt Gödel that is seen as problematic by Katz (1998/2000, p. 15), as Gödel's view seemingly adopts the incoherent rationalism that relies on acquaintance of the abstract. Still, Katz (1998/2000, p. 15) entertains the possibility that Gödel really adopts a less objectionable "noncausal form of apprehension," which one could interpret Price as doing with his framing of intuition (this, however, is still seen as objectionable by Katz for being a vague account of what, exactly, intuition is supposed to be).

1.2 Cartesian Intuition

While this section may be less broad than the last, the influence of Descartes on Price's project should not be underestimated. In fact, to further connect Price and Cudworth beyond their description as Platonists, Hudson (1967, p. 24) raises the potential for them owing an even greater intellectual debt to Descartes, with Price being a prime example considering his endorsement of the role of Cartesian intuition in adjudicating "moral agreements and disagreements between ideas." Yet, weighing the degree of influence that either Plato or Descartes had on Price and his intuitionist peers may not give exact results, as the epistemology of Plato and Descartes can be, at times, hard to separate. For example, Lex Newman (2005, p. 189) ascribes to Descartes "two underlying rationalist themes: the doctrine related to the

inferiority of the senses and the doctrine related to the superiority of the intellect," which, broad as it is, aligns well with Price and Cudworth.

Continuing the connection between Plato and Descartes, Newman (2005) draws a parallel between Descartes' conception of the natural light with that of Plato's allegory of the cave. For Plato, the inferiority of the senses can be demonstrated as they merely perceive the "shadows on the wall of a poorly lit cave" which remain in flux, while "the intellect reveals to fully real beings illuminated by bright sunshine" (Newman 2005, p. 189). As for Descartes, the intellect is best represented by clear and distinct ideas, and, in keeping with Plato's invoking of light as a basis of knowledge, it is the natural light for Descartes that holds an important place in his epistemology. In other words, "Descartes' references to the intellect are suggestive of the vision enjoyed by supra-cave sunbathers" (Newman 2005, p. 189).

Returning to Plato, the extreme importance of this metaphorical light is displayed in the idea or form of the good. As A.E. Taylor (1922/1960, p. 58) explains,

> . . . in the sensible world, the sun has a double function. It is the source of the light by which the eye beholds both the sun itself and everything else; it is also the source of heat, the cause of growth and vitality. So, in the world of concepts, the 'good' is at once the source of knowledge and illumination to the knowing mind, and the source of reality and being to the objects of its knowledge. And all the time, just as the sun is not itself light or growth, so the 'good' is not itself Being or Truth, but the transcendent source of both.

Of course, it may be difficult to perfectly align Descartes or Price with such explicit Platonism. For Descartes specifically, I believe the closest he comes to the grand scope of Plato above may come from his account of the ordering and governance of the universe. This is seen in his metaphysics, wherein it "is usually described as dualistic . . . [dividing] the universe into two mutually exclusive realms, spirit and matter" (Eaton 1927/1955, p. xxi). However, as Ralph Eaton (1927/1955, p. xxi) continues to explain, this summary of Descartes' metaphysics is somewhat restrictive, as there is a "third realm" that is distinct from both spirit and matter. Further still and echoing the role of the form of the good under Plato's metaphysics, this third

realm is the "Divine Being . . . who creates and sustains the realms of spirit and matter" (Eaton 1927/1955, p. xxi).

As for the influence of Descartes' epistemology upon Price's metaethics, Hudson links clear and distinct ideas to the claims Price argues that the understanding is capable of grasping. For some examples, candidates for Price include logical, mathematical, and moral truths, and the high status of such knowledge "cannot logically have any grounds for doubting [because] that what self-evidently appears to be the case really is the case" (Hudson 1967, p. 25). On self-evidence, however, Hudson (1967, p. 25) notes that the distinction, so far, has not been "clearly drawn . . . between the psychological and logical senses of 'self-evident,'" and the basis of this appears to be found in the analytic nature of, say, logical truths as opposed to questions of moral obligation. That aside, the knowledge that Price is attempting to account for here is easily aligned with the rationalist tradition, with Cartesian intuition being directed at knowledge that is "non-sensory, general, and unchanging or eternal" as opposed to the "inhabitants of the temporal world in flux" (Nelson 2005, p. 4).

2. Price's Intuitionism, Hutcheson's Sentimentalism, and Moral Motivation

Perhaps the most prominent metaethical opposition that Price devotes time to targeting is the position of his contemporary Francis Hutcheson. Specifically, Price is interested in refuting Hutcheson's moral sense theory (also known as sentimentalism). As we will see, Price's intuitionism and Hutcheson's sentimentalism are at odds with each other for numerous reasons. These reasons, I believe, mirror some of the debate being had by contemporary realists and subjectivists. Throughout this section, I aim to address this debate between intuitionism and sentimentalism over two distinct issues. First, distinguishing between some of the core claims of each view, and this begins with distinguishing how satisfaction relates to uses of the moral sense as opposed to the understanding. Second, and continuing the delineation between the two, I turn

toward the issue of moral motivation when considering the opposing views of Hutcheson and Price. Specifically, I consider the Humean account of moral motivation and contemporary intuitionist responses to it.

2.1 Distinguishing Between Moral Sense and Intuition: Satisfaction in Relation to Virtue

Despite the antagonism between sentimentalism and intuitionism, Hudson (1970, p. 2) argues early in his analysis of Price that "the issue between Price and Hutcheson seems to be nothing more than a dispute about words . . ." when it comes to answering what, exactly, is the source of our perception of right and wrong. For Hutcheson, this source is the moral sense, whereas for Price it is the understanding. To add to the confusion, Reid's view, which was earlier described as positing many of the tenets of Price's intuitionism, makes references to a moral sense while maintaining an analogy between this moral sense and the external senses, such as sight and touch (Broadie 2018, p. 168). At first glance, Hutcheson's concept of the moral sense and Price's concept of the understanding are in alignment, since, as Hudson (1970, p. 2) diagnoses it, both may comfortably posit that "our moral judgments are formed immediately, apart from any reflexion upon the consequences of actions . . . [and] in the exercise of our moral faculty, we can experience the highest forms of satisfaction."

In other words, this cohesion between Price and Hutcheson stems, in part, from *1*) the non-inferential nature of some moral judgments and *2*) the connection between moral judgments and one's related feelings. The first, I believe, is an uncontroversial parallel between the two. Whether our judgment is born out of an emotional reaction or intellectual apprehension, we can grant a lack of inferences for either. In fact, when outlining the distinctive characteristics of intuitions, Robert Audi (2004/2005, p. 33) argues that "an intuition must be non-inferential, in the sense that the intuited proposition in question is not . . . believed on the basis of a premise." The second, however, deserves a bit more explanation, as one may conclude that Price's use of

the understanding, and how moral judgement is intertwined with satisfaction, has more in common with an anti-realist position as opposed to a robustly realist position such as intuitionism.

The solution is found within Price's concept of virtue. First, it should be noted that Price distinguishes himself further from Hutcheson when arguing over the scope of virtue. For Hutcheson, his view has been described as "benevolence-monism," in which virtuousness rests on "approval of the motive to promote the welfare of humanity in general" (Gill 2014, p. 8)– focusing virtue into a singular end. Meanwhile, Price (1787/1974, pp. 218-219) sees virtue as multi-faceted, and in supporting this view he positively cites Joseph Butler's position (Hudson 1970, p. 95). In fact, Price (1787/1974, p. 219) declares Butler's illustrations to be "clear and decisive," and so much so that Price finds it difficult to imagine how an interlocutor would begin to respond. Hutcheson's view, as defective as Price may have believed it to be, was in response to Thomas Hobbes' "conception of human nature as essentially materialistic, deterministic, and egoistic" (Hudson 1967, p. 3). Of course, Price and other intuitionists would similarly reject Hobbes' view of human nature, as they believed the grounds of virtuous acts go beyond mere egoism, but they would also reject Hutcheson's account for offering too restrictive of a view as he placed the locus of virtue in benevolence.

However, beyond citing Butler, Price advances his own arguments against grounding virtue in benevolence alone. For example, Price argues that promises remain binding regardless of their relation to the production of benevolence or "good upon the whole to society" (Hudson 1970, p. 96). Promise-keeping, as Price argues, does not fail to be binding even if no society is cognizant of its benefits, or even if no one will recall the act of promise-keeping after its fulfillment (Hudson 1970, p. 97). As Michael Gill (2014, p. 10) states, Price's arguments attempt "to stress the multiplist character of morality," since a more simplistic view, such as Hutcheson's

benevolence-monism or Hobbes' egoism, is left with the awkward task of "[attributing] to agents exceedingly complicated calculations about what will produce the greatest good for all of humanity." Such criticism was, funnily enough, used by Hutcheson when attacking Hobbes' egoism, but it is Price that "[turned] Hutcheson's own weapons against him" (Gill 2014, p. 10)—showing another way in which Price and Hutcheson agree while also reaching different positions.

On virtue, however, Price and Hutcheson may be united in each associating it with the sense of satisfaction that Hudson mentioned earlier. This is not to say satisfaction and virtue should be conflated under Price's view, or that virtue is necessarily reducible to this satisfaction. As Hudson (1967, p. 8) notes, Butler and Price were keen to argue that "such satisfaction must be distinguished from the object of desire." Henry Sidgwick (1902, p. 224) is careful to make the distinction for Price's view as well, describing the dynamic as "the emotional element of the moral consciousness . . . is henceforth distinctly recognised as accompanying the intellectual intuition, though it is carefully subordinated to it." That said, both Price and Hutcheson are in agreement that virtue is an integral part of rational agents. For Price, it is a "necessary consequence" of possessing a moral faculty that recognizes moral obligations and is "bound to do as they direct" (Aiken 1954, p. 391). Further, Price views the happiness of the individual as hinging on "choosing a life of virtue over one of vice" as self-approbation and self-reproach greatly influence one's happiness (Crisp 2018, p. 254). Hutcheson, on the other hand, viewed the nature of a rational agent as instinctively benevolent, which was later criticized by intuitionists since, while they agree benevolence is within the nature of rational agents, it is also "natural to man . . . *because* it is *rational*" (Hudson 1967, p. 7).

Further, and as will be noted in section three, Price and other intuitionists want to avoid any equivocation between moral judgments and accompanying feelings so as to avoid endorsing

moral anti-realism. Michael Huemer (2005/2008, p. 45) notes how emotivist theories may use the accompanying emotions often attached to moral judgments in favor of anti-realism. However, the connection between the two is seemingly tenuous, as Huemer (2005/2008, pp. 45-47) considers at least five arguments against the emotivist account of moral beliefs.

To briefly sum up Huemer's arguments, the first is that other issues are not exempt from passionate disputes, which includes those of theology, politics, and non-moral domains of philosophy, such as epistemology. Second, it is not necessarily the case that there is perfect symmetry between the strength of emotions and those of the morality of an act. For example, Huemer (2005/2008, p. 45) argues that he may consider both the theft of his stereo and "Emperor Nero's execution of Octavia in 62 A.D." as both wrong, but the latter is clearly and more seriously wrong—even if it brings forth little emotion due to its far-removed relation to a twenty-first century American. For the third, an emotivist account struggles to differentiate between our confidence and the seriousness which we ascribe to moral claims—that is, one could plausibly entertain a certain act as seriously wrong but remain undecided on the matter and, therefore, fail to have the correspondingly strong emotional response. Fourth, there are moral principles which may struggle to elicit an emotional response, regardless of one's approval or disapproval of these principles. Huemer (2005/2008, p. 46) considers the golden rule as a possible candidate, with endorsement of such principle seemingly failing to be emotionally charged. Fifth and lastly, our moral judgments are not exempt from scrutiny or careful argumentation, just as we may follow reasons for our non-moral beliefs. The argumentation found within moral philosophy is unlike, say, "how [one] would come to be afraid of heights." (Huemer 2005/2008, p. 47).

2.2 The Understanding and Moral Motivation

In attempt to solve some of the above difficulty, the early intuitionists cited the "moral faculty [as having] three functions . . . perception of moral properties; approbation or disapprobation; and motivation, or excitement to action" (Hudson 1967, p. 9). The veracity of intuition aside, Hudson (1967, p. 9) acknowledges the first two as uncontroversial claims of ethical intuitionism but raises doubts about the ability for intuitions to be sufficient for moral motivation. Further, there is the Humean account of moral motivation that threatens to undercut the realism of the intuitionism defended by Price and company. As Terence Cuneo (2008, p. 21) states it plainly, "Hume bequeathed to rational intuitionists a problem concerning moral judgment and the will – a problem of sufficient severity that it is still cited as one of the major reasons why intuitionism is untenable." This section, then, will be devoted to moral motivation in relation to intuitionism.

In explaining the Humean argument against intuitionism based on moral motivation, Huemer (2005/2008, p. 157) summarizes its conclusion as "moral claims do not merely report objective facts; they must contain some subjective or non-cognitive element." Even pithier, Russ Shafer-Landau (2003/2005, p. 121) sums it up as "necessarily, moral judgements motivate" while "Beliefs don't." As Huemer explicates the argument, the conclusion follows from *1*) motivation cannot be separated from desire, *2*) beliefs and desires may be independent of each other such that "it is possible to believe any given objective fact obtains, while lacking any given desire" (Huemer 2005/2008, p. 156), and *3*) "moral attitudes . . . entail the presence of motives for action" (Huemer 2005/2008, p. 157). On the above premises, Cuneo (2008, p. 24) believes that "intuitionists such as Richard Price" accepted the third premise as well as a "necessary connection between moral conviction and motivation."

When considering the criticisms of Price's view in particular, Hudson (1970, p. 64) states

that “Price did not offer a satisfactory account of the logical connexion between moral judgement and action.” In attempting to diagnose the problem with Price’s view, Hudson relies on an implicit distinction found within the use of “right.” As Hudson argues, there may be two uses of the term at work here. For the first, we have in mind an act which “conforms to a rule or principle . . . which fits the given kind of situation” (Hudson 1970, p. 65). For the second, it is more appropriately a non-moral use of the term, as it indicates that the “purpose of the person for whom the act is said to be right” aligns with the “effects of conformity to this rule of principle” (Hudson 1970, p. 65). The former, moral use seems straightforward. In illustrating the distinction between the two, Hudson (1970, p. 65) uses the example of a rich man who is on trial for severely injuring a poor man. As a result of his injuries, the poor man requires an expensive surgery that the rich man wishes to pay, and the continued suffering of the poor man will weigh heavily on the rich man and cause him great anguish.

After seeking advice, the rich man receives conflicting suggestions on whether he should pay for the poor man’s medical treatment or not. His lawyer advises him against it. Meanwhile, both his doctor and priest advise him to pay for the poor man’s treatment. Most importantly, however, is that each act in accordance with respect “to a certain principle” (Hudson 1970, p. 65). For example, the priest and doctor, while they may agree on prescribing the same act, differ in their “reference to a certain principle . . . deemed appropriate to the given situation” (Hudson 1970, p. 65). For the priest, it is “Christian ethics,” while the doctor relies on “principles of medical science” (Hudson 1970, p. 65). The lawyer, however, disagrees with the former two prescriptions, and would advise the rich man to not pay for the poor man’s medical treatment due to “principles of legal procedure,” as the assumption is that the rich man does not want to lose his legal battle (Hudson 1970, p. 65).

This aside, and if we agree with Hudson (1970) and Cuneo (2008) that Price’s view does

not necessarily give a satisfactory answer to the Humean's challenge concerning moral motivation, then we can turn toward other intuitionist responses. For this, I will use the work of contemporary intuitionists, such as Russ Shafer-Landau, Terence Cuneo, and Michael Huemer. Throughout the development of their arguments, we may see an overlap that suggests a way in which Price's intuitionism could be complemented by contemporary defenses of intuitionism.

Starting with Shafer-Landau's view, it largely rests on rejecting two premises of the Humean account. First, Shafer-Landau (2003/2005, p. 121) argues against what he refers to as "motivational judgement internalism" since "amoralism is a genuine possibility: one may sincerely endorse the rightness of an action without thereby being motivated to perform it." That is, we may entertain that one could judge an act as right, and yet motivation may fail to be a necessary part of this judgment. As for the second Humean premise, Shafer-Landau rejects the Humean claim that beliefs are motivationally inert and must, instead, invoke desires in some way to motivate.

In arguing against this premise, Shafer-Landau (2003/2005, p. 122) raises two anti-Humean views in response, which he terms the Kantian interpretation and the Rossian interpretation. For the former, Shafer-Landau (2003/2005, p. 122) defines the Kantian interpretation as needing "no desires or affective states in a given case to produce motivation, the belief being all that is needed to get one going." For the latter and perhaps less radical form of anti-Humeanism, the Rossian interpretation holds that beliefs may be capable of "[generating] what are sometimes called . . . 'derived' desires . . . which, together with the evaluative beliefs, are sufficient to motivate" (Shafer-Landau 2003/2005, p. 122). As for deciding between the two anti-Humean interpretations, Shafer-Landau (2003/2005, pp. 122-123) does not necessarily support one over the other, but notes that both are sufficient to counter the Humean's account, as they similarly complement our "phenomenology of motivational experience."

Returning to Terence Cuneo (2007/2010, p. 93), in defending what he deems the "parity premise" (that is, moral facts and epistemic facts fall together if the former is nonexistent), one argument used aims to show that "epistemic realism is also at odds with the Humean theory of motivation." In other words, the Humean account rules out moral realism, but it does so at the cost of relegating many epistemic facts to a sort of subjectivism. Cuneo argues that the supposed intrinsically motivating element of moral facts, as posited by the Humean, is seemingly present with epistemic facts for similar reasons. As an example, Cuneo (2007/2010, p. 93) asks ones to entertain "the fact *that Sam rationally ought to engage in a certain plan of inquiry* because it is by far more reliable than rival plans of inquiry." Just as there is an arguable magnetism found within moral claims, as put forth by the Humean, then, Cuneo (2007/2010, p. 93) concludes, "then [epistemic facts] would seem to have a motivational magnetism similar to that of moral facts."

This, however, is not to necessarily concede that desire is inextricably linked to such facts, as one could use the above anti-Humean interpretations as described by Shafer-Landau above. While the following is about moral claims, one could imagine it as applying to some epistemic claims as well. That is, Shafer-Landau (2003/2005, p. 123) considers two separate cases. First, we can imagine instances in which we feel compelled to act, even though no desire is readily apparent. As Shafer-Landau (2003/2005, p. 123) puts it, one may have the experience, after carrying out a moral act, of "'I saw that it needed to be done . . . I don't recall wanting anything at all at the moment.'" A similar experience may be found in being compelled to accept a conclusion, even absent any particular driving desire to do so. We may simply follow the premises. For the second, Shafer-Landau (2003/2005, p. 123) considers a stronger case, in which "a desire *is* present, but as a countervailing force to be overcome by an evaluative belief." For the epistemic parity of this, one could imagine having a strong desire to believe one's relative is

innocent of a serious crime, but overwhelming evidence may compel one to counteract this desire.

Finally, Michael Huemer (2003/2005, pp. 161-162) argues against the Humean account by delineating between four kinds of motivation: appetites, emotions, prudence, and impartial reasons. Morality, Huemer (2003/2005, p. 163) states, falls under "a species of impartial reasons." In giving an example, Huemer (2003/2005, pp. 164-165) considers "a judge who has been offered a bribe to acquit a criminal," with the judge ultimately rejecting the bribe for moral reasons, even though accepting it would "best promote his interests, satisfy his desires, and increase his enjoyment." As Huemer (2003/2005, p. 165) argues, when making sense of the judge's motivations, the Humean must say that "the judge *wants* the criminal to be punished more than he wants the [bribe]." However, it seems plausible that the judge would, of course, have a stronger desire for the bribe, but could choose to follow some moral principle regardless. And if the Humean wishes to consider any motivation a matter of desire (in a broad sense of the term), then "the core Humean thesis that motives for action require desires amounts to no more than the following tautology, with which even the staunchest rationalist will agree: Motives for action require motives for action" (Huemer 2003/2005, p. 165).

3. Price's Rationalism and the Undercurrent of Empiricism within Anti-Realism

In the preface to the first edition of *Language, Truth, and Logic*, A.J. Ayer (1936/1952, p. 31) states that the "views which are put forward in this treatise derive from the doctrines of Betrand Russell and Wittgenstein, which are themselves the logical outcome of the empiricism of Berkeley and David Hume." One of the views famously espoused by Ayer in the above treatise is the moral anti-realist view known as emotivism, which is seen in Ayer's (1936/1952, p. 112) pronouncement that "ethical judgments are mere expressions of feeling . . . [there is] no sense in asking whether any such [ethical] system is true." Similarly, Jesse Prinz (2007, p. vii), in

defending moral relativism, states that he "[owes] a tremendous debt to Hume," and while Prinz does not directly trace a metaethical view to empiricism alone in the following, he does attribute to Hume's anti-realist theory of moral concepts as being "unified by Hume's allegiance to empiricism." However, if such views may be, as Ayer himself states, a logical outcome of empiricism, then I believe a main point of contention between realists and anti-realists can, generally, be traced back to the epistemological differences found between the two.

Specifically, realists of Price's brand tend to accept some rationalist commitments, while anti-realists often accept, whether implicitly or explicitly, some form of empiricism. Of course, there are exceptions to this characterization of the dispute. For example, Baruch Spinoza has been traditionally classified as a rationalist, but one may also interpret him as a moral anti-realist—perhaps of the constructivist variety (Jarrett 2014). Exceptions to this alignment aside, Price seems cognizant of this pairing in the dispute, given that, early on in his *Review*, he sets out to refute the empiricism of John Locke to, I believe, avoid a potential undermining of the moral epistemology of ethical intuitionism.

Throughout this section, I will explore the dispute between rationalists and empiricists in three parts. First, I will turn to Price's arguments against Locke's empiricism. Second, I examine the more contemporary empiricist response to Price as found in the metaethics of J.L. Mackie, in which disagreement is taken as a refutation of objective morality. Third and lastly, I believe Price's arguments against empiricism reveal a weakness in contemporary rejections of intuitionism, as they often assume, without adequately defending, an epistemological starting point that has little room to accommodate intuitionism.

3.1 The Senses and Reflection in Locke's Empiricism

In Price's *Review*, the empiricism of John Locke receives a decent amount of attention, and it is introduced shortly after Hutcheson's moral sense theory. Specifically, each makes an

appearance in the first chapter, with Hutcheson in section one and Locke in section two. On Locke's empiricism, Price is concerned with refuting its core claim that the origin of our ideas resides in either sensation or reflection. The motivation for refuting this doctrine of Locke's empiricism resides in Price's (1787/1974, p. 15) belief that "it will be impossible to derive some of the most important of our ideas from them," and clearly Price seems to have the claims of morality in mind here. After noting the difficulty in knowing what, exactly, Locke meant by sensation and reflection, Price (1787/1974, p. 15) defines sensation as "the effects arising from the impressions made on our minds by external objects," whereas reflection is "the notice the mind takes on its own operations." John Dunn (1984, p. 77) seemingly confirms the definitions Price is operating under, and further says of Locke's epistemology that "the acquisition and recombination of simple ideas, furnished by the individual senses or by reflection" is an "unconvincing" account of all knowledge.

While Price is beginning to set the stage for as to why Locke's empiricism is at odds with intuitionism, it should be noted that, so far, Locke's concepts of sensation and reflection seem to have less issues with accommodating Hutcheson's moral sense theory. For sensation, it could be said that pain or pleasure and disgust or satisfaction could be known through the senses, so Hutcheson's concept of moral sense could welcome these feelings. Price, too, could easily accept that our senses are able to perceive such sensations, but his view would importantly distinguish between these feelings simply arising during "our perceptions of virtue and vice" as opposed to being the mere effects "of that perception" of vicious or virtuous acts (Hudson 1970, p. 52). Conflating the two, or failing to account for the latter, is, as Price diagnoses it, "responsible for the mistaken theory that the moral faculty is sense" (Hudson 1970, p. 52).

Beyond sensation, however, Locke's empiricism also employs reflection, which I take to also be compatible with Hutcheson's moral sense theory. As noted earlier, Hutcheson believes

feelings of benevolence (as opposed to mere self-interest) are instinctive. By our nature, we are compelled toward a benevolent disposition. This, it seems to me, capable of being known according to reflection, as this aspect of Locke's epistemology is a matter of our own perception of internal states of the mind. Hutcheson's case against Hobbes' egoism appears to rely on such reflective process, as we may fail to see, upon reflection, that egoism offers a complete picture of our moral motivations.

Returning to Price, Hudson (1970, pp. 11-12) articulates a fundamental incompatibility between Price's intuitionism and Locke's empiricism as resting in Locke's stated limitations of the understanding, in that it may reconfigure existing ideas, but it cannot discover new ideas. As Price (1787, p. 16) himself states, "Nor does it appear . . . that [Locke] thought we had any faculty different from sensation and reflection which could give rise to any *simple* ideas; or that was capable of more than compounding, dividing, abstracting, or enlarging ideas previously in the mind." Price's resistance to Locke's restrictive epistemology and this conception of the understanding seems straightforward, since, if the understanding is relegated to only analyzing, combining, or manipulating ideas gained from the senses or reflection, then there is no room for it to discover moral truths which rest outside either the senses or reflection.

Prinz (2007, p. xii) reiterates this point, too, as "[moral] concepts seem especially problematic for the empiricist" since the senses cannot directly interact with *sui generis* morality or non-natural properties. Extending the point further, Joel Marks (2013, pp. 84-85) claims that the unique problem for the intuitionist rests in that "we have neither located [a special sense] organ nor conceived any mechanism of moral intuition that would be analogous to sensory perception . . . we would need to postulate . . . [a] ghostly intuition-organ." On this issue, Kaspar (2012, p. 33) states that the "charge of being committed to a 'mysterious faculty' is a main reason for the widespread contempt ethicists felt for intuitionism."

3.2 J.L. Mackie's Error Theory and the Argument from Relativity

One of the most prominent contemporary moral anti-realist positions comes from J.L. Mackie, who defended what has been called moral error theory. At the start of *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong,* Mackie (1977/1990, p. 15) is upfront with his thesis that "There are no objective values." Still, further would need to be said about the view to differentiate it from simply rehashing subjectivism or emotivism, both of which would also deny objective values. Perhaps adding to the confusion, too, is that Mackie (1977/1999) says that the term "moral scepticism" is also an appropriate term for error theory. However, this seems to me an ambiguous and perhaps misleading label. Erik Kassenberg (2021, p. 313) argues that the argument from queerness—a primary argument of Mackie and other error theorist—would only lead one to "suspending judgment on the existence of ethical facts." What I propose, then, is that moral skepticism could simply mean we do not or cannot have moral knowledge, as opposed to the, I think, quite anti-skeptical claim of such strong metaethical knowledge (that is, the position that there are no objective moral values). Yet, as Mackie (1977/1999, p. 17) himself states, "what I have called moral scepticism is a negative doctrine, not a positive one: it says what there isn't, not what there is." That is, even though it may be a negative doctrine, Mackie and other proponents of the theory are making a claim to knowledge, specifically of the metaethical kind.

However, I would also say that Mackie is making many claims that are far less modest than simply asserting only negative claims, and I will argue that error theorists at large do so from assumptions of empiricism that remain relatively untouched by a self-professed skepticism. Mackie (1977/1999, p. 18) seemingly grants as much, noting that "this account will have to include some positive suggestions about how values fail to be objective . . . But this will be a development of [the moral skeptic's] theory, not its core: its core is the negation." As I will argue, I believe its core is more appropriately identified by its empiricism, which I take to be far

from an uncontroversial epistemic view and one that is saddled with positive claims that need defense.

As for the point of subjectivism and emotivism, Mackie defines his divergence from these views on the following points: *1*) while Mackie (1977/1999, pp. 17-18) also considers "subjectivism" as a possible alternative label for his view, he shies away from the traditional subjectivist's semantic claim of moral good as simply meaning mere personal approval, and *2*) error theorists, unlike non-cognitivists, want to preserve the truth-aptness of statements concerning objective morality—the error theorist just happens to conclude that any statement describing an objectively moral state of affairs is always false. This stems from Mackie's analysis of how we use moral language, in that "Mackie held that non-cognitivist and naturalist analyses fail in various respects to give adequate reconstructions of ordinary moral discourse" (Olson 2014, p. 80). Further, David Kaspar (2012, p. 76) sums up the dispute as "Moral nihilists and nonnaturalists disagree about the existence of moral properties," but both camps agree on the uniqueness of morality. Error theory, then, is placed in a unique position in relation to moral intuitionism. Unlike other moral anti-realist views, it accepts intuitionism's core claims that morality is *sui generis* and not reducible to natural properties or mental states—so, both views accept the non-natural framing of morality—in addition to both accepting metaethical cognitivism. Where error theory and intuitionism importantly diverge is the scope of true moral statements (error theory accepts none, while intuitionism accepts some) and the epistemic weight of intuitions in, at minimum, moral epistemology.

Until now, I have only described some of the core features of error theory and how it delineates itself from other metaethical views. Two of the most important arguments that Mackie puts forward for the view, however, have been neglected so far, and it is these arguments which I will now turn toward. The arguments in question are what Mackie labels as the argument from

relativity and the argument from queerness. While the two hold prominence within Mackie's case against moral realism at large and intuitionism in particular, I believe that the primary value of such arguments is the example they serve, as they exemplify the line of thought of many moral anti-realist arguments. I do not, however, think that the above arguments of Mackie pose a significant threat to the intuitionism of Price. I will begin with the argument from relativity, which I take to be the stronger of the two. For the argument from queerness, I will give it more attention in the last section, as I argue it is emblematic of the problem the moral anti-realist faces when raising arguments against moral realism in which the anti-realist relies on unexamined empiricist (as well as naturalist) assumptions.

Returning to the former argument, Mackie (1977/1999, p. 36) states that the argument from relativity rests in the "well-known variation in moral codes from one society to another and from one period to another, and also the differences in moral beliefs between different groups and classes within a complex community." The diversity of such conflicting moral beliefs is, as Mackie acknowledges, a descriptive claim, and one we may label as "descriptive relativism." That is, it may be an empirical fact that communities and individuals disagree on what is moral. This, however, is distinct from an explicit endorsement of metaethical relativism or, as Mackie (1977/1999, p. 36) calls it, "second order subjectivism." Even so, Mackie (1977/1999, p. 36) allows for the possibility that such observation may "indirectly support" his metaethics, and the case is made by drawing attention to the disparity between vast disagreement in scientific fields in comparison to ethical beliefs.

Mackie (1977/1999, p. 36) acknowledges that disagreement is rampant in fields of inquiry that we would otherwise grant have some objectivity, but the pertinent difference in internal disagreements between fields such as, say, history as opposed to ethics is that of the basis of such disagreement. The foundation of this disparity, as Mackie (1977/1999, p. 36)

argues, is explained by the missteps in scientific fields in their faulty "speculative inferences or explanatory hypotheses based on inadequate evidence." Ethics, as the error theorist will maintain, is not open to such charitable explanation. Instead, Mackie (1977/1999, p. 36) posits that moral disagreements are best explained by the conventions ingrained by one's environment, and any "moral heretics [or] moral reformers" who challenge such conventions are, more or less, applying pre-existing conventions with a strive toward consistency.

An example of such moral reformers may be seen in the rise of animal ethicists around the time of Peter Singer's 1975 publication of *Animal Liberation*. While there certainly were philosophers who were inquiring into the topic prior to Singer's work, it is safe to say that *Animal Liberation* sparked a wave of moral reformers who advocated for radically different treatment of non-human animals. Namely, those inspired by Singer's work will often argue for vastly better treatment of the animals currently being used in food production. Such treatment may entail either greatly improving the living conditions of these animals or, in more extreme cases, ending practices such as factory farming. Going further, the view entailed by Tom Regan's 1983 publication *The Case for Animal Rights* explicitly calls for much more radical change, in which the use of animals in food production and experimentation should be completely abolished.

To preserve the claim that moral beliefs largely rest on conventions, Mackie would argue that such philosophers are merely arguing from prior conventions while applying consistency to arrive at arguably novel moral beliefs concerning animal treatment. For Singer, it may stem from the principles of utilitarianism, whereas Regan relies on the deontological tradition. However, we do not have to speculate too hard about Mackie's account of such ethical views, as Mackie (1977/1990, pp. 193-195) addresses the animal issue in a section entitled "Extensions of morality." It is here that Mackie (1977/1990, p. 194) argues for his conception of morality after

repudiating objective morality, and this section in particular begins with a rejection of morality as being mere contractarianism, as such contractarian theories struggle to account for "first of human beings who through mental or physical defects are never, at any time in their lives, independent active participants in the cooperation, competition, and conflict of normal life, and secondly of non-human animals." After all, contractarian conceptions of morality often rely on "a cooperative scheme that involves . . . all competent human or rational agents" (Darwall 2003, p. 3). Granted, while Mackie (1977/1990, p. 194) believes that the "core of morality" is articulated by contractarian considerations, he also makes room for a "humane disposition [as] a vital part of the core of morality," with such disposition leading to what Mackie calls "gratuitous extensions" of morality that may grant some moral consideration for cognitively-impaired humans or non-human animals.

Returning to the initial question, however, is whether Mackie successfully gives an alternative account of moral disagreement (or moral reformers) when compared to the intuitionist. After all, Mackie admits that disagreement and the variety of conflicting beliefs that exists within scientific fields does not necessarily count against the claim to objectivity from, for example, physics. However, at this point I do not wish to devote any time to questioning Mackie's proposed distinction between scientific and moral inquiry. Rather, I think the intuitionist could entertain Mackie's distinction between the fields and still not concede the objectivity of morality. That is, Mackie's account, even if true, does not secure the conclusion he is after, and so we may reject the inference of the argument from relativity.

As stated earlier, Mackie is cognizant of the possible counter in which disagreement is found within fields we would consider to be paradigmatically objective (e.g., physics or biology). The important distinction, Mackie contends, is how conflicting judgments are formed in each field. For science, it is less of a cause for concern, whereas the disputes of ethics, the

error theorist argues, confuse one's conventions (among other things) with describing non-existent moral facts. The counter that is absent from Mackie's response, however, is the vast disagreement found within philosophy or, more specifically, metaethics. To safeguard the argument from relativity, defenders of it are met with two challenges. First, whether the proposed distinction that was raised for scientific fields safeguards philosophy at large or metaethics in particular from the same conclusion that apparently befalls ethics. Second, without an appropriate distinction, the error theorist's use of the argument from relativity is in danger of being self-defeating.

On the first charge, I believe this option is precluded by the very character of moral philosophy. That is, if the error theorist were to argue that philosophy or metaethics retain some objectivity as they, like scientific fields, err due to faulty inferences or incorrect assumptions, whereas morality is a matter of conflicting conventions, then one must ask why this does not equally apply to moral philosophy as a discipline. After all, the arguments in moral philosophy, whether they be for certain normative theories or specific claims of applied ethics, move similarly to those within philosophy at large (such as in epistemology) as well as those in metaethics, which is the very field Mackie's arguments for error theory belong. Russ Shafer-Landau (2003/2005, p. 220), argues similarly by observing that "Disputes within ethics seem structurally to be quite similar to those within philosophy generally." The mistake error theorists make, then, would be to equivocate on the mere pronouncement of moral beliefs as opposed to the method of moral philosophy in defending and deriving moral beliefs and theories. The latter, in agreeing with Shafer-Landau's assessment, resembles other fields of philosophy, which the error theorist should not wish to fully give up—most especially metaethics itself.

This, then, leaves us with the second charge, which is that the error theorist is in danger of self-defeat. If the argument from relativity equally applies to the field of metaethics, as the

error theorist believes it applies to moral philosophy, then the reasons for accepting error theory are not objectively compelling. As Michael Huemer (2005/2008, p. 146) notes, ". . . if the argument from disagreement is sound, then it refutes itself, since many people do not agree with the argument from disagreement" and that the "argument would likewise refute any metaethical position, due to the nature of disagreement in metaethics." Returning to Shafer-Landau (2003/2005, p. 220), a similiar argument is offered, as arguments from disagreement "should lead us to an antirealism about all philosophical views." Shafer-Landau (2003/2005, p. 220) develops the point further, arguing that morality is not unique in its vast disagreements, as the "features that are used to generate a kind of scepticism about morality's status are shared by disagreements in all areas of philosophy," and areas such as "metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of language" feature disagreement just as entrenched as those within moral philosophy.

3.3 The Assumptions Underlying the Conflict Between Empiricism and Intuitionism

The primary arguments of Mackie's error theory, I believe, leads neatly to one of my main problems with many of the anti-realist responses to Price's intuitionism, and it is particularly showcased in Mackie's use of the argument from queerness. What I have in mind is, what I suspect to be, the potentially unexamined adoption and employment of empiricism used by Mackie and many other anti-realist rejections of intuitionism. David Kaspar (2012, p. 51) identifies the problem as, "Many reasons for dismissing intuitionism are based on the assumption that rationalism is not a viable epistemological stance. . . if intuitionism is right, the world, and how we know about it, must differ in material ways from how empiricists envision it." The resistance to intuitionism's epistemology is, in part, showcased by Mackie's argument from queerness, and I believe Price offers a counter to Mackie's empiricism—and, implicitly, a favorable case for intuitionism and rationalism—that has not been successfully defused by

empiricists.

Before addressing Price's argument against empiricism, I wish to state plainly here the tenets of empiricism that place it in opposition to intuitionism. While I believe the case for empiricism and intuitionism's dispute was made clear with the exposition of Locke's epistemology and Katz's critique of *anamnesis,* one could also turn toward Hume and his significance. After all, as noted earlier, Mackie and other moral anti-realists were keen on citing Hume as influential for their own views. Highlighting the importance of Hume's work, Bruce Aune (1970, p. 40) states that "David Hume (1711-1776) is admired as the most distinguished ancestor of contemporary empiricism." In citing Hume directly, Aune (1970, p. 40) notes that experience and observation serve as the "scope and limits of human knowledge" and such position "could easily be the motto of all subsequent empiricisms."

This scope of knowledge may be what is implied in the argument from queerness, and it is this argument that Mackie (1977/1990, p. 38) considers to be "more important" and "more generally applicable" than the argument from relativity. In laying out the argument, Mackie (1977/1990, p. 38) states that it has "two parts, one metaphysical, the other epistemological." For the former, Mackie (1977/1990, p. 38) believes the most cogent interpretation of objective moral values is that of the intuitionist variety, and such "entities or qualities or relations [would be] of a very strange sort, utterly different from anything else in the universe." Likewise, this leaves such entities in the precarious position of having to be known by "some special faculty of moral perception or intuition, utterly different from our ordinary ways of knowing everything else" (Mackie 1977/1990, p. 38). Mackie, then, rejects objective morality for its purported non-naturalness as well as its dependence on intuition.

Since this section is devoted to the epistemological dispute between empiricists and rationalists, I will only briefly touch upon an obvious objection to Mackie's metaphysical use of

the argument from queerness. This will prove to be worthwhile, too, as the response to Mackie on metaphysical grounds mirrors that of the epistemological objection to the argument from queerness. Namely, when adopting a naturalistic framework, it is not clear that there are no troublesome entities which are presupposed by Mackie as being metaphysically unproblematic. For example, Paul Boghossian (2022, p. 18), when arguing against Mackie, brings up mathematics, consciousness, modality, and good reasons themselves as being a part of any "complete picture of the world," but these are entities which Mackie would have to discount (without a proper account under naturalism or empiricism) due to their alleged queerness.

This, in turn, is similar to Price's prescient argument against Mackie's queerness objection. In what Mackie (1977/1990, p. 39) considers the "best move" and "an important counter to the argument from queerness," Price argues that the "empiricism . . . of Hume and Locke" fails to account for our moral knowledge at the cost of also precluding "knowledge and even our ideas of essence, number, identity, diversity, solidity, inertia, substance, the necessary existence and infinite extension of time and space, necessity and possibility in general, power, and causation." Immediately following this explication of Price's argument, Mackie (1977/1990, p. 39) concedes that the "only adequate reply" would be to explain how these ideas can fit within an empiricist framework. While Mackie is optimistic about this project, it should be said that if no empiricist account is feasible, Mackie (1977/1990, p. 39) states that "they too should be included, along with objective values, among the targets of the argument from queerness."

With the epistemic side of the argument from queerness in view, Huemer (2005/2008, p. 111) notes that "Behind Mackie's distaste for intuition there no doubt lies some of the strong empiricist sentiment of twentieth-century philosophy," and, after suggesting there are strong arguments against empiricism, Huemer suggests that "the underlying motivation for the doctrine can only be assumed to be a prejudice." Or it may be that morality cannot fit, as Terence Cuneo

(2007/2010, p. 102) notes, the "background picture of what the world is like," which the error theorist seemingly limits to the scope of science and naturalism. The pressing questions for Mackie's argument from queerness, then, are twofold. First, there is worry as to why the intuitionist should accept the beginning framing of morality as "queer" when a naturalist or empiricist theory cannot be taken for granted. Second, one should give pause to the premise that the epistemic queerness of an entity supports the inference that it does not exist. On this point, Kassenberg (2021, p. 315) argues that "the inaccessibility of an entity need not be a reason to believe it does not exist." However, Price's challenge toward the error theorist on this matter remains, as the intuitionist maintains that intuition is inseparable from both moral and non-moral knowledge.

4. Price Among Contemporary Intuitionists

Without exaggeration, the arguments and views of Price have been prescient in anticipating the arguments of contemporary philosophers, as we saw in the case of Price's arguments against Hutcheson's subjectivist theory of ethics and Mackie's argument from queerness. Additionally, there is Price's use of what could be considered an early articulation of the open question argument and the naturalistic fallacy, which were later made popular by the twentieth century philosopher G.E. Moore when he defended moral non-naturalism and intuitionism. As J.L. Mackie (1980, p. 133) notes, "Like G.E. Moore, Price . . . rightly [insists] that it is one question to ask what things are good and quite another to ask what goodness itself is," with Mackie using the example of producing happiness, as we may argue that it is right to produce happiness, but this is distinct from saying "rightness" is merely "producing happiness." However, we should not necessarily ascribe to Price the first exploration of the naturalistic fallacy or use of the open question argument. Again, returning to Mackie (1980, p. 134), it can be said that "Price . . . uses what has come to be known, in relation to Moore's work, as the open

question argument; not that Price originated it: for example, Hutcheson uses it too."

The origin of these arguments aside, Mackie (1980, p. 54), when delineating realist camps, states that "a non-natural objectivism, an intuitionism . . . was explicitly adopted by . . . Price and Reid, and more recently by Moore, [Harold Arthur] Prichard, and Ross." In this final section, then, I wish to draw attention toward the other similarities between Price and contemporary intuitionists, with the earliest starting at the turn of the twentieth century. Throughout this section, we will see how the normative ethics of Price compare with those of G.E. Moore and W.D. Ross. Then, I will briefly detail the nature of intuition and in what way contemporary accounts are in agreement with Price.

4.1 The Normative Ethics of Price and W.D. Ross

As I will touch on later, Price and Moore raised similar lines of attack against moral naturalism and other reductionist metaethical theories, but it seems clear that they differed in what they believed to be the correct normative ethical theory. For Moore, he articulated a consequentialist view, whereas Price could be considered a deontologist. Moore's view, specifically, "is in far closer agreement with the utilitarians than with any other moral philosophers," as he based one's duty on the good it created when weighed against potential harms (Warnock 1960, p. 49). That said, Moore diverged from classical utilitarians, such as Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, on both the scope and nature of intrinsic value. As for the nature of intrinsic value, Moore (1903/1922, ch. 3) took umbrage with Mill and company for potentially committing the naturalistic fallacy, as hedonists of Mill's tradition have seemingly conflated the good with pleasure. Further, Moore (1903/1922, p. 53) maintained that Mill's error was earlier identified by intuitionist and fellow hedonist Henry Sidgwick, who "alone has clearly recognised that by 'good' we do mean something unanalysable."

Next, for the scope of intrinsic value, Bentham and "other traditional hedonists" have

famously held to a quantitative hedonism, in which pleasure simpliciter is intrinsically value, whereas Mill argued for a qualitative hedonism that importantly differentiated between "higher" intellectual pleasures as opposed to "lower" bodily pleasures (Edwards 1979, pp. 30-31). In a debate reminiscent of Price's critique of Hutcheson's benevolence-monism, Moore rejected the above hedonisms of classical utilitarianism as too restrictive. Instead, Moore advocates for a pluralistic view which includes experiences of friendship and aesthetic beauty, and, at the opposing end, places "love of what is ugly or bad; the hatred of what is beautiful or good; and the consciousness of pain" (Warnock 1960, p. 52) as all intrinsically bad.

Returning to Price, however, I suggested he is much closer to a deontological view as opposed to Moore's consequentialism. Similarly, Roger Crisp (2019, pp. 170-171) designates Price's view as a deontological pluralism, and the chief obligations or "heads of virtue" identified by Price are "piety, self-love, beneficence, gratitude, veracity, and justice." Shortly after, as well, Crisp (2019, p. 171) argues that Price would have been "well aware of the utilitarian view that morality is to be understood as consisting solely in a principle of impartial beneficence," but would reject it nonetheless—potentially for the reasons given earlier for Price's rejection of Hutcheson's benevolence-monism. This, in turn, would align him with another intuitionist and one who was a contemporary of Moore's time. That is, W.D. Ross defended intuitionism as both a metaethical theory and a normative one, with morality being a matter of having a plurality of duties, each with their own independent grounds and that could be intuitively known. This is distinct from Moore, who would ground our duties in the consequences, and such normative view would have been known and rejected by Ross.

So far, the plurality of duties Price considers for normative ethics have been given, but it may be asked how they compare to the deontological pluralism espoused by Ross. I believe the comparison is favorable. Susan Rae Peterson (1984, p. 537) makes the point explicitly, stating

that Price "anticipated . . . Ross's rationalism intuitionism" with his *Review* "more than [anticipating] Ross's 1930 *The Right and the Good."* That said, it should first be noted that Ross is differentiated from Price in the language invoked when discussing moral duties. As noted earlier, Price makes references to heads of virtue, whereas Ross makes use of prima facie duties.

Theories which utilize the prima facie, however, have not gone unscrutinized, with philosophers such as A.I. Melden (1983, p. 111) going as far as to claim that "the use of 'prima facie' not only serves no useful function . . . but also that the widespread use of this expression has been downright pernicious." However, as a more friendly exposition of the prima facie, Audi (2004/2005, p. 22) characterizes Ross's use of the concept "[makes] at least two points: positively, that each duty indicates a kind of moral reason for action and, negatively, that even when we acquire such a duty . . . the act in question need not be our final duty, since a competing duty . . . might override the original one." When objecting to the prima facie, it is the negative aspect which Melden (1983), for example, takes issue, as their flexibility potentially makes moral duties unable to guide one's actions. Yet, the point of the prima facie here, even when considering its negative aspect, is that the "Overridability of a prima facie duty does not imply that it ever lacks *moral weight*" (Audi 2004/2005, p. 22). In fact, the very nature of a prima facie duty is that it gives one moral reason to act in a certain way, but its inability to be a final duty always does not necessarily discount its moral weight. As Audi (2004/2005, pp. 23-24) states, the grounds of the prima facie entail a duty that is "*ineradicable but overridable*."

The overlap between Price and Ross on something akin to prima facie duties aside, I believe there is one more important similarity that further aligns the two. That is, while Moore famously argued for the indefinability and unique nature of goodness, it is Ross and Price who dealt with the indefinability of rightness. For Price, he raises an argument that has a resemblance to Moore's open question argument. In designating a name for the argument, Bernard Peach

(1954, p. 371) writes that “reference [to] Price's main argument for the indefinability of 'right' may be called the ‘continuous question argument.’" Peach (1954, pp. 371-372) goes on to cite Price’s argument that one acts absurdly by asking if it is right, for example, to obey a command if “right” merely means to obey. Similar to Moore’s open question argument, we may ask if pleasure is good, but it seems absurd to ask if pleasure is pleasure. Likewise, Price argues that it would be absurd to ask if obeying a command is to obey a command—meanwhile the question of what is right remains. That said, Henry David Aiken takes issue with Peach’s ultimate portrayal of Price on rightness. Specifically, Aiken believes Peach only grants a practical component to the simplicity of rightness as argued in Price’s metaethics, whereas Aiken (1954, p. 386) argues that Price “[held] that the practical ultimacy of right is a necessary consequence of its cognitive ultimacy which, in his view, involves a very definite theory of moral cognition . . .” with “the rationality of moral discourse [as] an even more salient feature of it than its practical urgency.”

As for Ross, he maintains the indefinability of rightness and seemingly wishes to distinguish his view further from Moore’s earlier metaethics on this point. That is, while Ross (1939/1949, p. 42) grants that Moore does not necessarily commit the naturalistic fallacy by defining “rightness” in terms of an action being optimific, Ross argues that we would still hesitate to conflate rightness with that which is optimific, as we could, for example, consider whether this truly captures the moral weight one has to keep a promise. That is, at one point Moore considered rightness to be definable (Warnock 1967/1974, p. 7). However, Ross (1939/1949, p. 42) later grants that Moore’s view on the matter matures, with Moore “[adopting] the view that tendency to produce the best consequences is not the essence of rightness but the ground of rightness.” For Ross’s (1939/1949, p. 43) own position, and the reasoning which leads him there, he states that “the more we think of the term ‘right’, the more convinced we are likely

to be that it is an indefinable term, and that when one attempts to define it one will either name something plainly different from it, or use a term which is a mere synonym of it."

4.2 The Nature of Intuition

While I have set out to examine Price's intuitionism and its accompanying epistemology, it could be said that the nature of an intuition itself has yet to be adequately explored. Even standard definitions of "intuitionism" may not entirely clear up the view, as Philip Wheelwright (1935, p. 141) states that the term is "derived from the Latin *intueor*, 'to look at,' 'to have direct (visual) acquaintance with.'" Additionally, there was a brief mention that an intuition, according to Audi (2004/2005), must be non-inferential, which Wheelwright (1935, p. 143) reinforces by noting that "the word *intuitive* expresses . . . [an] important characteristic—the directness of knowing." Similarly, intuitions were earlier likened to Cartesian philosophy and the rationalist tradition at large. Yet, one is still left wondering about the other components of intuition. Some philosophers have seemingly raised concerns over intuitionism on the charge of ambiguity alone—perhaps labeling intuitions as "an inexplicable hunch" (D.D. Raphael 1981, p. 43). Robert Paul Wolff (1970/1976, p. 104), for example, questions talk of the prima facie on the grounds of moral intuition being "opaque and impossible to explicate" to the point that "The intuitionist position . . . seems to me simply no position at all."

Complete skepticism and charges of mystification aside, I want to examine two prominent but distinct characterizations of intuition throughout this section. To help illustrate the diversity hinted at here, Robert Hanna (2013, p. 225) notes that some philosophers have identified intuitions as "non-inferential, sense perception-like, self-conscious sui generis propositional attitudes in which we are *appeared-to or presented-to intellectually*" while other philosophers define it as "spontaneous, unreflective, pre-theoretical conscious non-inferential . . . uncalibrated or untested judgments . . . about thought experiments and actual-world topics of

actual or possible concern." By exploring this relatively contemporary debate surrounding intuitions, I aim to show where Price's view of intuition may lean—either toward the account of intuitions as intellectual seemings or as pre-theoretical beliefs.

First, however, I think it is worth noting that the nature of intuition has attracted disputes that go beyond what I have hinted at above. For example, Herman Cappelen (2012, pp. 52-53) details the variety of accounts of intuition, with some claiming that an intuition "must be a necessary truth," must be accompanied by "a special feeling or phenomenology," must be infallible, and, finally, there are philosophers who have denied that any of these prior characteristics belong to intuitions. That is, we can find philosophers who would just as well attribute to intuitions a lack of necessity, an absence of a particular phenomenology, or grant that an intuition could be fallible. So, while my concern in this section will primarily be between intuition as either a perceptual state or a belief independent of theory, it should be noted that the debate surrounding the nature of intuition has a healthy amount of variety to it.

This diversity of debate aside, there is the skeptical account of intuition that attempts to make quick work of them. Namely, it reduces intuitions to a mere psychological experience, and it ascribes to them no weight in either the methodology of philosophy or as a means to acquire moral knowledge. Instead, intuitions would be more akin to prejudice, an unconscious bias, or mere feeling. In *Logical Positivism*, I believe A.J. Ayer (1959, p. 23) comes close to articulating such a view when stating that "the intuitionists themselves do not supply any foundation for moral judgments" to then conclude that "only on personal grounds . . . can [they] be entitled to put themselves forward as the guardians of virtue." Similarly, Richard Garner (1994, p. 40), in citing J.L. Mackie for support, seemingly claims that intuitions are best explained by "[learning] our lessons" which are based in "human feelings, needs, interests, and traditions." Joel Marks (2013, p. 119), in attempting to defend his moral anti-realism, says that the "*strength* of my

moral intuitions . . . reveals to me that they are fundamentally *feelings* rather than intimations of truth."

To reiterate the points made throughout section three, I would ask one to consider the underlying epistemological assumptions of the writers who boil intuitions down to a mere psychological state which remains epistemically suspect or inert. What, exactly, I would draw attention to is the status or analysis of intuitions—regardless of the object of the intuition—according to their view. For example, I believe the above philosophers could not as confidently state that our intuitions concerning, say, the law of non-contradiction are simply a matter of feelings. This is not to say, however, that no response is open to the thoroughgoing anti-intuitionist. And from what I gather, there are two prominent responses to such a challenge. The first is to importantly differentiate moral claims from logical claims so that anti-intuitionists (in the metaethical sense) may grant that "some simple ideas originate in the understanding, but resist the view that our moral ideas are among them" (Jonas Olson 2014b, p. 434). The second is to fully embrace the opposition to rationalism's underpinnings, with a complete denial of intuition as a justified means to gaining knowledge in any domain.

For the former, we can turn to the logical positivists of the early twentieth century. A.J. Ayer, for example, was a well-known champion of logical positivism at some point in his career, so I believe looking at the inner workings of positivism may give some insight into this position. Most importantly, there is logical positivism's treatment of the analytic and synthetic distinction. For the logical positivist, there is no concern with *a priori* knowledge when directed at analytic statements alone, such as "all bachelors are unmarried men." As the positivists would reason, this is merely a statement regarding definitions, and so no suspicious metaphysical assumptions must be made to justify it. What the logical positivist objects to, however, is when *a priori* claims are supposedly made about synthetic statements, or, in other words, statements about the

world. Instead, synthetic statements are relegated to observation.

Now, it might be expected that it would be the rationalist's job to refute the logical positivists on this issue. However, arguments against such a view have been made by a fellow and prominent empiricist. This leads to the latter view, in which *a priori* justification is rejected wholesale, and I believe the radical empiricism of W.V.O. Quine's pragmatism serves as a clear candidate. And, as hinted at, it lines up with the trajectory of empiricism after the logical positivists. Laurence BonJour (1998, p. 62) explains Quine's view as *a priori* justification (whether it reference analytic or synthetic claims) being "repudiated outright [for] empiricism . . . to be sustained." Why the *a priori* is in such a dire place under an extreme—and perhaps consistent—form of empiricism is due to Quine's attack on the distinction between the analytic and synthetic. David Kaspar (2012, p. 37) summarizes one of the primary thrusts of Quine's argument against the distinction as "any attempt to explain analyticity relies on notions that cannot explain it, and require explanation themselves, including synonymy, definition, interchangeability *salva veritate*, extensional agreement, artificial semantic rules, and, finally, analyticity." BonJour (1998) and Kaspar (2012) both seemingly agree that the arguments and position of Quine are the outcome of a more serious form of empiricism that attempts to refute the previously stated moderate empiricism of logical positivism. For the more consistent and thorough empiricist, it is, under Quine's direction, increasingly difficult to salvage the *a priori*.

As for the second objection to the "companions in guilt" argument, this was addressed in section three, in which Price raises this objection against empiricists such as Mackie. From what I gather, Mackie is correct that Price's objection is strong and merits a response from empiricists. Where I disagree with Mackie, however, is that empiricists have successfully met Price's challenge. This issue aside, I have considered intuitionism as a view that encompasses both epistemological, moral, and metaphysical claims, but the frequency by which intuitions are

invoked in contemporary philosophy may lead to some confusion, as it does not appear that any philosopher who utters the word “intuition” is necessarily committed to such a specific and contested set of views. As Audi (2004/2005, p. ix) notes, “Appeals to intuition in discussing moral questions have long been common—even if not always so described,” and such appeals may have been a recent turn in philosophical discourse. One proposed explanation for the supposed rise in the methodology of intuitions comes from Jaakko Hintikka (1999, p. 127), who claims that “Intuitions came into fashion in philosophy as a consequence of the popularity of Noam Chomsky's linguistics and its methodology.” In agreeing with this assessment as being a very accurate account of intuitionism’s contemporary increase in popularity, Robert Hanna (2013, p. 225) argues that the dispute between intuitionists on the nature of intuition—that is, whether it be a pre-theoretical belief or an intellectual appearance—follows from the “post-early-60s Chomskyan bandwagon.”

Leaving aside the contemporary trend of intuitionist methodology, the debate surrounding the nature of intuition returns me to my initial question concerning Price’s view. Specifically, whether Price considers intuitions as a matter of intellectual seemings or something akin to pre-theoretical beliefs. On this issue, I argue Price fits within the former camp, and my belief rests on Price’s terminology and the role intuition plays in his epistemology. First, there is Price’s prominent use of “the understanding.” While it may be easy to conflate the understanding and intuition as one and the same concept, Price explicitly states that there are “two acts of the understanding, ‘intuition’ and ‘deduction,’” (Hudson 1970, p. 12) and the intuitionist’s project is clearly focused on the former. Besides, even if deductions were to enter the picture, intuitionists such as Price would gladly maintain that “deduction ultimately rests on intuition, and so for Price all knowledge of necessary truths fundamentally derives from intuition” (Wedgwood 2024, p. 616).

The position that Price views intuitions as pre-theoretical beliefs seems undermined by what, exactly, the function intuitions serve. For Price, "intuitions of necessary truths" allows one to "derive many of our 'ideas,'" and such ideas range from moral truths to metaphysical relations (Wedgwood 2024, p. 616). The conception of "ideas" that Price is operating under is that of simple ideas, and these are to be contrasted with complex ideas that Locke "compounded from simple ideas by combination, comparison or abstraction" (Hudson 1970, p. 12). The problem for the pre-theoretical beliefs interpretation of Price's account of intuitions, then, would be that of positing simple ideas as arising from such beliefs. However, this seems to be redundant, or, at the very least, it raises some conceptual concerns. For example, one may wonder how, exactly, one's pre-theoretical belief concerning causation would come prior to the simple ideas inherent in causation.

As a result, it would be safe to conclude alongside Ralph Wedgwood (2024, p. 617) that "In short, it seems that, for Price, an intuition is a conscious mental event in which a proposition strikes one as true, in a way that simultaneously involves both judging and knowing that proposition to be true." While Price's view of intuition is certainly still maintained by contemporary intuitionists, it is worth noting that differing accounts of intuition exist as well. Robert Audi (2004/2005, p. 34), for example, states that, "Intuitions are typically beliefs, including cases of knowing," and such account of intuitions should not be confused with mere "intuitive inclinations." On the other hand, however, is Michael Huemer's (2005/2008, p. 10) definition of intuitions, which plainly claims that, "Intuitions, in my sense, are a sort of mental state or experience, distinct from and normally prior to belief, that we often have when thinking about certain sorts of propositions, including some moral propositions." This recurring aspect of intuitionism helps show the prescience of Price's position within metaethics.

Lastly, I believe it is worth showcasing the parallel between H.A. Prichard and Price's

statements concerning the role of intuition in moral philosophy. Specifically, both Prichard and Price make it clear that there will be facts which unabashedly cannot be discerned through argument. G.J. Warnock (1967/1974, p. 11) characterizes this flavor of intuitionism as being somewhat "fanatical" as compared to the more "etiolated" work of Ross; however, contrary to anti-rationalist critiques of intuitionism, I believe this plainly stated part of their epistemology is something to be admired, as it highlights (and offers a counter to) the assumed view that moral beliefs necessarily require an argument. Kaspar (2012, p. 29) describes Prichard as the "first prominent twentieth-century intuitionist," with Prichard's article "Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?" being "considered a classic statement of intuitionism." In this article, Prichard (1912/1995, p. 37) begins by noting the possible frustration students of moral philosophy may feel toward the field, with Prichard diagnosing the problem as being embedded in the "Theory of Knowledge." By the end of Prichard's (1912/1995, p. 47) treatment of the issue, he concludes that seeking proofs for our moral obligations will always lead to discontent, as "all attempts to attain [such knowledge] are doomed to failure because they rest on a mistake, the mistake of supposing the possibility of proving what can only be apprehended directly by an act of moral thinking."

As for Price's version of the above, he notes that intuition serves this role in our knowledge of moral truths and more. Specifically, Price (1787/1974, p. 30) begins making the case with a metaphysical principle concerning cause and effect, arguing that "The necessity of a cause of whatever events arise is an essential principle, a primary perception of the understanding; nothing being more palpably absurd than the notion of a change which has been *derived* from nothing." Yet, one may ask what the rationalist would say to an interlocutor, such as Hume, who would deny that we intellectually perceive this principle, and, instead, ask for either further arguments to justify it or claim that the understanding is limited and unable to

grasp such principles. Starting with the latter, Price (1787/1974, p. 31) articulates a view that some contemporary philosophers might describe as the "companions in guilt" argument, stating that if one grants that we have "such a perception" but denies it as being grasped by the understanding, then they "should inform us why the same should not be asserted of all self-evident truth." That is, if we deny the self-evidence of this principle and its capacity to be understood through intuition, then we potentially undermine the self-evidence of, say, mathematical truths. The alternative, then, would align one closer to a radical empiricism.

Returning to Price's other reply, and one that closely aligns him with Prichard's earlier statement of intuitionism, is that of acknowledging that justification for the principle cannot rest on any argument, and, by extension, this perhaps applies to other self-evident truths as well. Price (1787/1974, p. 31) goes on to claim that "nothing can be done" for anyone who denies the above principle concerning causation, "besides referring him to common sense." Immediately following this, Price (1787/1974, p. 31) states that "If he cannot find there the perception I have mentioned, he is not farther to be argued with, for the subject will not admit of argument; there being nothing clearer than the point itself disputed to be brought to confirm it." Other intuitionists, however, have attempted to make less stringent the epistemology underlying self-evident truths. Robert Audi (2004/2005, p. 52), for example, agrees that self-evident truths can be known immediately through intuition, but also grants the possibility for self-evident truths to "also be known inferentially, say on the basis of a carefully constructed argument for it."

5. Conclusion

Throughout this exploration of Richard Price's philosophy and intuitionism at large, I have aimed to accomplish the following. First, I briefly introduced the life and influences of Richard Price. As one could see, Price as a thinker cannot so easily be pigeonholed into being a mere rationalist or intuitionist of a particular era in philosophy. Rather, Price's influence went

beyond the abstractions of philosophy alone, and such influence can be gleaned from his correspondences with important political figures such as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. The unpopularity (at least within his own country) of Price's advocacy of America's founding also shows the willingness of Price to voice his convictions. Further, while the political change advocated by Price may not necessarily be philosophy in a distilled form, it was noted that such advocacy was rooted in the moral philosophy of Price. The connection between Price's philosophy and advocacy is made even more interesting when considering the lineage and tradition of thought that Price represents. Namely, we looked at the rationalism of Plato and René Descartes, as well as the influence that Ralph Cudworth had upon Price.

Second, we saw how Price interacted with a primary interlocutor of his time, which was that of Francis Hutcheson and his moral sense theory. Here, we saw the primary contentions between the two, and how they importantly differ from each other. While both hold that the primary perception of morality is non-inferential, Hudson believes morality to be inextricably tied to sentiments while Price stresses the rationalist characteristic of intuition. Following this point, Price does not disagree with Hudson in that moral judgments and sentiments may coincide, but Price argues against the sentimentalist's conclusion that morality is merely a matter of feeling. Additionally, we looked at both the Humean account of moral motivation that attempts to undercut intuitionism as well as contemporary intuitionist responses to the Humean.

In the third section, I turned toward empiricism broadly, with specific attention given to Locke's epistemology and J.L. Mackie's arguments for moral error theory. In arguing against Locke's epistemology, I believe that Price showed awareness in the underlying dispute between intuitionists and anti-intuitionists. Namely, that the assumptions of empiricism strongly count against intuitionism, and, in response, Price sets forth to give a defense of a rationalist epistemology. Price also anticipates the objections from error theory, and, in Mackie's own

words, Price gives an important counter to such metaethical view and its empiricist bedrock.

For the fourth and final section, I touched upon the contemporary overlap and continued influence Price's thought sees among philosophers—from the early twentieth century work of W.D. Ross and G.E. Moore to the twenty-first century exposition of intuitionism as given by, for example, Robert Audi and Michael Huemer. Noted throughout this section is the staying power of the views and arguments of Price. For example, Price articulated a pluralistic deontological theory that predates that of Ross, and I believe Price's theory of intuition posits intuitions as intellectual seemings, which still sees popularity among contemporary intuitionists.

In closing, I hope one leaves with the impression of Price as an exemplary moral philosopher whose insight remains relevant. While the terminology of metaethics continues to change and expand, just as other fields of philosophy experience, the arguments and positions put forth by Price have a staying power that contemporary philosophers should consider. In considering Price's work and the familiar arguments that continue to endure, we potentially fulfill Ralph Cudworth's view of perennial philosophy, in that there is "a single timeless core of philosophical truth, which is the shared goal of both ancient and modern philosophical enquiry" (Hutton, 2021).

Lastly, while we saw contemporary developments and responses to Price's intuitionism, this, too, is in the spirit of Price's philosophy, as he willingly acknowledged the limitations people carry and welcomed the possibility of correction. Warning against the folly of dogmatism while also avoiding the pitfalls of skepticism, Price (1787/1974, p. 4) shows humility in the opening of the explication of his moral philosophy. As Price (1787/1974, pp. 4-5) notes in the introduction to *A Review of the Principal Questions in Morals,* he is "sensible that it has many defects; and conscious of his own liableness to the causes of blindness and error . . . The considerations he has offered on this important point have . . . satisfied his own mind; and this

has led him to hope they may be of some use in assisting the enquiries of others."

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