Enlightenment and Dissent

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Editorial

This year sees the completion of the fourth issue of the journal under its present title and in its present format. In itself this would not perhaps be a sufficient reason for editorial comment were it not for the fact that we have now reached a stage where the subscriptions we receive each year are sufficient to cover the annual basic costs of printing the journal. Four years ago we ventured to change from the photographed typescript of *The Price-Priestley Newsletter* to the present format. When we did so we were conscious that there would be some element of financial risk. The risk was perhaps greater than we then thought it would be, as 1982 did not prove to be a good year in which to start a new journal. Retrenchment was in the air, and librarians, especially those administering University libraries, had come to show a greater interest in economics than in further calls upon much taxed resources. That we have come through this difficult period and entered into one of relative financial calm is due in no small measure to the generous support we have received from the Trustees of the Sir David Hughes Parry Fund at The University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, the Trustees of the Hibbert Trust, the Trustees of the British Academy, the Philosophy Department at Duke University and Professor W. Bernard Peach. Without their timely assistance it is doubtful whether we would have survived. To all these benefactors and to all our subscribers we wish to convey our appreciation of their kindness and our warmest gratitude. One very welcome consequence of this improvement in our financial position is that we are able — for this year at least, and, we hope, for next year also — to maintain our rates of subscription at last year's levels both for individuals and for institutions.

In future issues we hope to include more books reviews, concentrating more upon detailed assessments rather than upon short notices and upon review articles or review essays covering two or more works on similar or overlapping themes. We should welcome suggestions from our readers as to what themes could be covered along these lines.

M.H.F.
D.O.T.

The Revd. William Chambers, D.D. (c.1724-1777)' *G. M. Ditchfield*

> Last Thursday died, of an Apoplectic Fit, universally regretted by all who knew him, the Rev. Dr. Chambers, Rector of Achurch in this County: In whom were united the affectionate Husband, the tender Father, and the sincere Friend; and whose Life was truly Christian.
>
> *Northampton Mercury,* Monday 8 September 1777.

The death of William Chambers on 4 September 1777 was mourned far beyond the border of his adopted county. Outside his immediate family no one lamented his departure more than the Rev. Theophilus Lindsey. Immediately upon hearing the news he took prompt action, as he related to his friend William Tayleur:

> On Thursday evening [i.e. 11 September] I went to a Friend's near Sen'noak in Kent . . . my journey into Kent was in consequence of the loss of a most intimate and valuable friend, a friend also and bold advocate for truth and for every good design, Dr. Chambers of Achurch, Northamptonshire . . . Mrs. Lindsey and myself had spent some days with him immediately before our last coming to Town, and his aged mother, a most excellent person, being with her married daughter, Mrs. Sargent, at Halsted Place in Kent, it was requested of us to be the messengers of this sad event to his mother, an office not to be declined.'

Lindsey added that he had written a pseudonymous obituary of Chambers and sent it to the *St. James's Chronicle;* on its being refused there he despatched it to the *General Evening Post* and the *Gentleman's Magazine,* and in both of these publications it duly appeared.'

It is the purpose of this article to offer some account of an Anglican clergyman with whom Lindsey was on close personal terms, whom he regarded highly and whose death moved him to urgent activity and literary composition. It is further proposed to establish the authorship of, and reproduce, a previously unidentified piece of writing by Lindsey and to examine its purpose in the context of the stage which Lindsey's own career, and the Unitarianism with which he was associated, had reached in 1777.

Biographical information concerning William Chambers is all too scanty and is easily summarized. His acquaintance with Lindsey began at St. John's College, Cambridge, where they were contemporaries as undergraduates. Venn's *Alumni Cantabrigienses* records that he was born, and attended school, at Derby and that he was 'admitted pensioner' of the College at the age of eighteen on 5 March 1742 (Old Style). The date of his birth may thus be

tentatively supposed to be 1724. Lindsey himself had entered the College almost a year earlier, at the same age.[4] Chambers proceeded to the B.A. and M.A. degrees, was ordained deacon in June 1748 and priest five months later. From 1748 until his death he was Rector of Thorpe Achurch, Northamptonshire, in the diocese of Peterborough.'

In the absence of anything other than the most skeletal outline of Chamber's career from other sources, most of what is known about him comes from the pen of Lindsey. Herein lies much of the importance of the obituary of 1777. Why, it may be asked, did Lindsey rate Chambers so highly and commemorate him in print? The answer to this question is clear. Chambers, probably from an early date, shared Lindsey's growing dislike for the principle of clerical subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England and unease as to the Athanasian version of the doctrine of the Trinity embodied in the Anglican creed. Like Lindsey himself at Catterick, Chambers experimented in his parish with Unitarian variations upon the *Book of Common Prayer*, drawing inspiration from the legacy of Samuel Clarke. Hence Lindsey was able to locate him within a narrow but persistent tradition of Anglican clergymen with liberal theological sympathies and gave him honourable mention in *An Historical View of the State of the Unitarian Doctrine and Worship.* Referring to Chambers as 'my late most highly valued and beloved friend', he described his variations on the creed as follows:

> He omitted the *Gloria Patri, as* it is called, which so frequently recurs; and never repeated any part of the service, where Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit were addressed and invoked, being persuaded that the God and Father of all, was the only true God and object of worship . . . The only time that I had the happiness of being with him in the country, after my settlement in London, I attended public worship in his church on the Sunday with great satisfaction; for by the alterations he made in it, it was intirely conformable to the Scripture-model, and unitarian.[6]

In some circumstances such liberties might have provoked the kind of local complaint and episcopal disapproval which beset such like-minded clerics as the Rev. Edward Evanson of Tewkesbury in the mid-1770s.[7] Chambers, however, escaped such a fate and appears to have incurred no censure, let alone threat of deprivation. According to Thomas Belsham, admittedly a witness strongly disposed in his favour, Chambers owed this immunity to his own pastoral reputation and to the complaisance of his superior Bishop Hinchliffe of Peterborough, an old-fashioned Latitudinarian Whig.' But although Chambers did not resign his benefice he declined to renew his subscription to the Articles and Thorpe Achurch was his first and last ecclesiastical preferment. In this respect he followed the example of Lindsey's father-in-law Francis Blackburne, rather than that of Lindsey himself, although since he died within four years of Lindsey's secession from the Church of England, it is impossible to say whether, or for how long, he would have continued upon this course.

What is certain, however, is that Chambers provided Lindsey with succour and encouragement at the turning-point of the latter's career. In his Will, drawn up in 1771, he bequeathed £50 to Lindsey 'as a testimony of my Antient friendship and great regard for him'.[9] Lindsey resided for several weeks with Chambers at Achurch in December 1773 and January 1774, immediately after his resignation from Catterick and before his settlement at Essex Street Chapel. '° Chambers, moreover, had been a promoter of the Feathers Tavern petition of 1772 (and of its renewal two years later) for relaxation of the rules of clerical subscription. He joined Lindsey, Priestley and Richard Price in attending the debate in the House of Commons on the Clerical Petition on 5 May 1774; two months earlier he and Lindsey had dined with Price at Stoke Newington." During the last few years of his life, then, Chambers not only served as a source of support to Lindsey at a difficult time, but was also moving in the most prominent circles of Rational Dissent. These events were fresh in Lindsey's mind when he composed the obituary in 1777 and he drew upon it subsequently for his briefer account of Chambers in the *Historical View*, which itself provided Belsham with information about Chambers for his *Memoirs* of Lindsey. [12] The obituary was thus Lindsey's first (and fullest) piece of writing about Chambers, and its purpose was closely related to the current state of his own fortunes. Lindsey clearly hoped to use the example of Chambers as evidence that his views were shared, albeit on a limited scale, within the Church of England; to reinforce his *Apology* for resignation;" to maintain the impetus started by this and similar statements; [14] to promote his own interpretation of the subscription controversy, re-stating the Feathers Tavern case after its parliamentary rebuff and to justify his own purpose at a time when his longer term success at Essex Street Chapel was by no means assured. Seen in this context, the hagiographical tone of the obituary of Chambers becomes easier to explain. So, too, does Lindsey's wish to place the essay in a London newspaper and magazine, with the object of reaching as wide an audience as possible.

Although Chambers was awarded the degree of D.D. by Cambridge University in 1762," there is no indication that he completed any work for publication. Moreover in his Will he requested that Lindsey should look over all his papers and 'burn all my Sermons as they can only be of use in my own small parish and are too negligently wrote in general to be of use or do me Credit hereafter' .[16] However, the Library of Manchester College, Oxford, holds three manuscript sermons by Chambers which, since they seem to be the only surviving direct evidence (other than his Will) of his own thoughts, are of some interest. The first, on the text 1 Peter 3. 13, is endorsed with the places and dates which record nineteen occasions upon which it was preached at Tichmarsh, Pilton, Clapton and Wadenhoe. The second, entitled 'Education of Children Pt. 1st' and dated 20 September 1772, stresses the duties of parents, the duty of prayer, and the opposite extremes for parents of excessive harshness on the one hand and 'too great fondness and indiscrete indulgence' on the other. But it is in the third sermon, 'Sermon ye 2d, on Education.

Achurch Sept. 26, 1772' that one seems to hear the authentic voice of Lindsey's friend. In the context of a discussion of the need to instil into children a sense of duty to God, Chambers distinguished firmly between real moral obligation and mere outward ceremony:

> What a sad thing it is, & how wrong when indifferent things are as much insisted upon as the most important moral duties. So the Jews made it a point of Religion always to wash their hands before eating; the Papists make it a sin to eat meat during Lent & on all Fridays in the year, without a dispensation and allowance from their Priest. The Quakers lay great stress on their way of dress, & a particular Mode of Speech. And other Dissenters, & we of the Church have had our absurd peculiarities of this sort, tho' of late somewhat come off from them."

These words were written in the same year as the first presentation of the Feathers Tavern petition, and their significance is easily appreciated.

There are suggestions that Chambers was a man of some wealth and high family connection. According to Venn, his father was 'Esquire' and the obituary printed here refers to his having been on the Grand Tour. In his Will he bequeathed extensive landed property in Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Surrey and the West Riding of Yorkshire.' Lindsey threw out a hint that 'a noble Earl, his relation' offered him a 'considerable preferment' in London, which his theological scruples led him to decline." Such a possibility may be taken seriously, since his cousin was Brownlow Cecil, styled Lord Burghley, and from 1754 ninth Earl of Exeter. The family link began in 1724 when the eighth Earl of Exeter had married Hannah Sophia Chambers, aunt of William Chambers and his father's sister.' The ninth Earl, born in 1725, entered St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1744 and his career there overlapped with that of Chambers. They were obviously friends as well as relations.' The Earls of Exeter owned the advowson of the Rectory of Achurch and it was no coincidence that William Chambers was appointed to that living at the age of twenty four."

In addition Chambers had at least four sisters, one of whom married John Sargent M.P., the owner of Halsted Place, Kent, where Lindsey brought the news of the death of Chambers in 1777.[24] Another sister married the professional soldier Major-General William Deane." Two unmarried sisters resided at Morden, Surrey, where their cousin, the London merchant Christopher Chambers, provided them with what Belsham described as a 'country house'.[26] In the latter part of his life Lindsey frequently passed the summer months at this rural retreat and it was there that he composed much of his *Conversations on the Divine Government* in 1802.[27] William Chambers himself left a widow, who died in 1809, two sons and a daughter.' In Northamptonshire he and his family clearly enjoyed considerable local esteem.[29]

William Chambers was one of a group of liberal Anglican clergymen, mainly Cambridge educated, who formed views on the Trinity similar to Lindsey's own and who helped to stimulate that intellectual climate which encouraged the emergence of Unitarianism as an organized denomination, as distinct from a rather diffuse way of thought, towards the end of the eighteenth century. Their practical contribution consisted not only of moral and financial support to Lindsey's pioneering endeavours at Essex Street Chapel but also of the promotion of a distinctive and recognizably Unitarian liturgy. This liturgy helped to codify the worship of Unitarianism and to strengthen its sense of identity. Although the main strength of Unitarianism, in numerical terms, was drawn from those sections of Old Dissent, notably English Presbyterianism and General Baptism, which moved away from Calvinism in the eighteenth century, there was also an important group of Anglican sympathizers who, though small in number, were well connected and exerted considerable intellectual influence. They fell into two categories; those, like Lindsey, William Robertson, John Disney and Edward Evanson, who formally seceded from the Church of England, and those, mainly of an earlier generation, like Joseph Wasse, John Jones and Francis Blackburne, who did not. Chambers belonged to the latter category," but both had much to offer. The more that its known about individual members of this group (especially the more obscure ones like Chambers, who do not feature in the *Dictionary of national biography)* the more our perception of the group itself will be heightened." The more that is known about the group, the more our understanding of the nature of late eighteenth century Unitarianism is likely to be enhanced.

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Appendix: Theophilus Lindsey's obituary of William Chambers, General Evening Post, 21-23 October 1777.

Note: Lindsey identified his authorship of this essay in a letter to William Tayleur on 16 September 1777:

> As soon as I was informed of our beloved friend's death, I sent last week a brief testimony to his worth, under the signature of Plutarch, to the *St. James's Chronicle,* but whether it has yet been inserted I do not know."

On 8 November he despatched a copy of the obituary to the same correspondent, adding:

> The inclosed was sent by me to the *St. James's Chronicle* soon after the excellent Soul's decease — but refused there — after a long time it got into the *General Evening* — I hope to get it into the *Gentleman's Magazine* —for the sake of the latter part."

The obituary is printed here in exactly the form in which it appeared in the issue of the *General Evening Post for* 21-23 October 1777. In the absence of Lindsey's original manuscript, this is the fullest available version. The only other known surviving version was published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* two months later[34] and shows signs of editorial pruning: in particular the opening paragraph is severely truncated, with the quotation from Edward Young completely omitted.

Historians and biographers alike have long been aware of the critical problems involved in the interpretation of hagiographical forms of evidence. It is not unusual for the subjects of obituaries to be presented as paragons of virtue. At least one of his contemporary readers felt it necessary to chide Lindsey for his adoption of this approach. Two weeks after the obituary appeared, the *General Evening Post* published a letter from `Modesti Sr,' complaining that it was written by 'too partial a hand'." Claiming a personal acquaintance with Chambers and allowing that the encomium was fully merited, the writer nonetheless argued that its high-flown praise would, in some circles, appear exaggerated and render the portrayal of Chambers less credible. 'Characters of the dead, though delineated by the hand of Gratitude and however just they may be,' wrote 'Modest?, 'when they approach so near to perfection, will not fail to excite the envy of a jealous, distant multitude —ever curious to find out and expose the foibles and failings which surround them'. There is no evidence that Lindsey responded to, or even saw, this comment on his biographical efforts.

To the Editor of the *General Evening Post.*

Sir,

It is a public benefit, that characters of eminent worth, who have served God and man nobly in their day, should not go down, undistinguished and unnoticed, with the common herd, but be held up for imitation to the survivors and those that come after them. In this list is to be placed the late William Chambers, D.D., Rector of Achurch, Northamptonshire, of whom the world was deprived a few weeks since, by a sudden stroke of an apoplexy, which at once laid waste the fabric of the fairest mind, and destroyed all sense and motion.

`How many die as sudden; not as safe'!

YOUNG.'

The principles of piety and virtue, which had been instilled by a careful private education, he improved at Cambridge, by the culture and good discipline of the place, by conversing with the monuments of the wise and good of ancient and later times, and by well-chosen friendships and

connexions, virtue's best subsidiary aid in that prime of life. There he stored his mind with the seeds of each useful science, and imbibed those sentiments of a just, impartial liberty, and of reverence of the civil and religious rights of men, for which that seminary of our youth was *then* singularly famous, and which in him took vigorous root, and bore fruit.

These advantages (the first that were to be had in his native country) he was enabled to perfect by travel abroad in Flanders, Holland, France and Italy: and by viewing this larger scene of men and things, his mind was proportionably opened to form a truer estimate of both: and he had a further opportunity of gratifying his inextinguishable thirst after knowledge, especially of the great Creator and his works, and of whatever might adorn human life, and benefit mankind. From nature, strengthened by habit, he was moulded into such a temper of kindness and benevolence, that it was his chief delight to be useful to others, and to do good; for which he was in one respect qualifed above many. For he was endowed with a peculiar turn for medical knowledge, which he diligently cultivated by the preliminary studies of anatomy, chemistry &c, by making himself master of the wise experience of the most eminent writers in the profession, and in visiting hospitals at home and abroad. And he possessed, in a great degree, that happy sagacity in the discovery of diseases which denominates excellency in the art, so that his friends valued his judgment exceedingly, and profited by it in many dangerous cases; and to the poor at his gate, or visiting them in their wretched cabins, he freely dispensed the blessing of health and long life; unable, alas! by his healing art, to save himself from the fatal blow.

There was a constant serenity and chearfulness in his countenance, and gaiety and pleasantry in his conversation, which shewed that all was calm and easy within, and might well befit a mind so pure and unspotted. But in the midst of so many accomplishments and excellencies, no one could ever perceive that he thought himself possessed of any: for a vain or conceited word never fell from him. Yet he was one of warm affections, zealous and fearless in the cause of truth and virtue, and never to be tempted by any mean compliances, to give up the one, or countenance any known deviations from the other. And if his temper rose at any time to an undue warmth, it was in the defence of the christian revelation, being penetrated with the fullest conviction of its truth, and that it was heaven's last, best gift to promote the virtue and happiness of mankind. Having a clear comprehension of the strong evidence of facts, on which this divine religion stands, and the admirable simplicity of its doctrines, he taught them with equal plainness and perspicuity, and a deep concern for the proficiency of those that were under his pastoral care. And the times called him forth to give proof both of his knowledge, and of the sincerity and integrity of his christian profession. For when some of the best friends to the church established, combined in a respectful application to the legislature for a

relief from subscription to the 39 Articles, which few could understand or believe, and which no human authority was competent to impose, Dr. Chambers took an early and active part in this righteous design, and interested many in its favour. And though no present success resulted from it, or from the learned and excellent Mr. Wollaston's subsequent call and address to the Bishops,' our deceased friend rejoiced to see the nation's eye opened to perceive the absolute necessity of a reformation in this and various other respects. He never repeated his subscriptions after persuasion of the wrongfulness of them, and a few years past, on this account, declined the taking of what was supposed to be a very lucrative preferment in London, and which he was very much solicited to accept.

He had a soul above all craft and dissimulation, and held in equal abhorrence the pious frauds of some of the ancient fathers of the church in complying with the reigning superstition or the loose casuistry of the moderns, viz. that in public establishments of religion there is no harm in speculative insincerity, and conformity to practices which you disapprove and condemn. And therefore, when his scruples on certain points had risen so high that he could not, without self-condemnation, conform to those parts of the church-liturgy, in which prayer is addressed to Jesus, and to the Holy Spirit as a divine person distinct from God; being persuaded that there was but one God, the Father of all, who alone could hear their prayers; for some of the last years of his life he abridged the public service, and omitted all those invocations of Christ, and all those passages which implied worship of any but the Almighty Father; and he was firmly determined within himself to abide the penal consequences of legal authority, rather than destroy his inward peace, and violate his conscience. *Sic mihi contingat vivere, sicque mori.*

PLUTARCH.

October 9, 1777.

I I am grateful to Dr. Williams's Library, London, Manchester College, Oxford and the John Rylands University Library of Manchester for permission to consult and quote from documents in their possession.

[2] Theophilus Lindsey to William Tayleur, 16 Sept. 1777; Correspondence of Theophilus Lindsey, John Rylands University Library of Manchester.

[3] Lindsey to Tayleur, 16 Sept. and 8 Nov. 1777.

[4] J.A. Venn, *Alumni cantabrigienses: Part I: from the earliest times to 1751* (Cambridge, 1922), I, 319.

Ibid., I, 319 and III, 87. It is known that Lindsey was born in 1723. The brief summaries of the career of William Chambers in R.F. Scott (ed.), *Admissions to the College of St. John the Evangelist in the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge 1903) and Henry Isham Longden (ed.) *Northamptonshire and Rutland clergy from 1500 (15* vols., Northampton, 1938-43) add hardly anything to the account in Venn.

[6] Theophilus Lindsey, *An historical view of the state of the unitarian doctrine and worship, from the Reformation to our own times. With some account of the obstructions which it has met with at different periods* (London, 1783), 489-490.

[7] Like Chambers, Evanson adapted the Liturgy to accommodate his own anti-Trinitarian notions. Although an attempt to prosecute him in the church courts failed, he resigned as Vicar of Tewkesbury in 1778. See entry for Edward Evanson in the *Dictionary of national biography.*

[8] *Thomas Belsham, Memoirs of the late Reverend Theophilus Lindsey* (Centenary edition, London, 1873), 53n. Lindsey believed that Chambers would have 'submitted to the extremity of the law, had it been put into execution against him', *Historical view*, 490.

[9] Will of William Chambers, Public Record Office Prob.11/1046/393 (microfilm). The Will is dated 10 May 1771 and was proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury on 9 October, 1778. It will be cited hereafter as 'Will of William Chambers'. Further bequests included £50 to Rev. Francis Blackburne, and 'All my Manuscripts concerning Physic and all my English Medicinal Book', together with the sum of £20, to Lindsey's wife.

[10] Lindsey to William Turner of Wakefield, 19 Dec. 1773 and 5 Jan. 1774; Dr. Williams's Library MSS. 12.44.

11 Lindsey to William Turner of Wakefield, 5 May and 17 Mar. 1774.

[12] Belsham, *Lindsey*, 53n.

[13] *The apology of Theophilus Lindsey M.A. on resigning the Vicarage of Catterick, Yorkshire* (London, 1774).

[14] For instance, two months before Lindsey's obituary of Chambers appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (December 1777) the same periodical had published Henry Maty's 'Reasons for separating from the established church'; *Gentleman's Magazine*, 47 (1777), 466-68.

[18] Venn, I, 319.

[16] Will of William Chambers.

[17] Manuscript sermons of William Chambers, Manchester College, Oxford. **I** am grateful to Mrs. Barbara Smith, the College's Library Executive, for making these documents available to me. The sermons were presented to Manchester College in 1897 by the Rev. Francis Poynton, Rector of Kelston, Somerset. He inherited them from his grandmother, who was the youngest daughter of Francis Blackburne and half-sister of Mrs. Lindsey. The probability is that before his death Chambers had given them to Lindsey. Their provenance is discussed in letters from Francis Poynton to Mr. Pearson of Manchester College, Oct. and 2 Nov. 1897, M.C.O. MSS.

[18] Venn, I, 319.

[19] Will of William Chambers. This property included a 'farm and estate' and a 'Water Corn mill' at Stapleford, Notts. In addition to smaller bequests, Chambers bequeathed £1000 to his wife, £500 to his daughter and £100, together, with a life interest in a further sum of £1000, to his widowed mother, who survived him.

20 Lindsey, *Historical view*, 489.

[21] G.E.C., ***The*** *complete peerage*, ed. Vicary Gibbs, *et. al.* (13 vols., London, 1910-40), V. 220-21. Hannah Sophia Chambers was daughter of Thomas Chambers, whom G.E.C. describes as 'citizen and merchant of London and Derby' and who was grandfather of William Chambers.

[22] Indications of the closeness of the family connection are evident in the fact that the eldest son of William was christened William Cecil Chambers *(vide* Will of William Chambers) and that **the** younger brother of the ninth Earl of Exeter was christened Thomas Chambers Cecil, G.E.C., V. 220-21.

[23] *Victoria county history*, Northamptonshire, III, 137. The appointment was made in 1748, during the lifetime of the eighth Earl of Exeter, who was uncle by marriage to William Chambers. He died in 1754; his son, subsequently the ninth Earl, was M.P. for Rutland, 1747-54. Cf. Romney Sedgwick, *The history of Parliament. The House of Commons 1715-1754*, 2 vols. (London, 1970), I, 539.

[24] This was Rosamund Chambers (d. 1792). Sargent was M.P. for Midhurst, 1754-61, and West Looe, 1765-8, as well as a Director of the Bank of England. See Sir Lewis Namier and John Brooke, *The history of Parliament. The House of Commons 1754-1790*, 3 vols. (London, 1964), III, 404-5. Sargent's son of the same name, who was M.P. for Seaford, 1790-3, Queensborough, 1794-1802, and Bodmin, 1802-6, was hence a nephew of William Chambers. Lindsey was on friendly terms with both Sargent senior and junior.

[25] Elizabeth Chambers, named as the wife of General Deane in the Will of William Chambers. Deane died in August 1775. *Gentleman's Magazine*, 45 (1775), 407.

[26] Belsham, *Lindsey*, 53n.; Christopher Chambers was named as an executor by the Will of William Chambers.

[27] Belsham, *Lindsey*, 265-66; Lindsey, *Conversations on the divine government; shewing that every thing is from God, and for good, to all* (London, 1802), title page; the work is dedicated to Sophia and Frances Chambers.

zs Belsham, *Lindsey*, 53n.; *Gentleman's Magazine*, 79 (1809), Pt. ii, 1175; Will of William Chambers.

[29] For instance Chambers was a trustee of a family settlement of the Leete family of Thrapston (1774); Leete VIII/26-27, Northamptonshire Record Office, Delapre Abbey, Northampton. I owe this reference to the Deputy Chief Archivist of Northamptonshire, Rachel Watson.

30 Walter Wilson, *The history and antiquities of dissenting churches . . . in London, Westminster and Southwark*, 4 vols, (London, 1808-14), III, 479-80, mistakenly includes Chambers in a list of Unitarian sympathizers who actually resigned from the Church of England.

[31] Hardly any histories of English Unitarianism mention Chambers. A rare exception is Alexander Gordon, *Heads of english unitarian history* (London, 1895), 41.

[32] Lindsey to Tayleur, 16 Sept. 1777; John Rylands Library. The pseudonym 'Plutarch' was presumably chosen because of its biographical associations.

[33] Lindsey to Tayleur, 8 Nov. 1777; the enclosure has not survived. The reference to 'the latter part' illustrates Lindsey's anxiety to exploit the propaganda value of Chambers's stance on the subscription controversy.

[34] *Gentleman's Magazine*, 47 (1777), 565-66, under the heading 'Character of the late Dr. Wm. Chambers' and signed 'Plutarch'. The authorship of the essay is not identified in the heroic work of James M. Kuist, *The Nichols file of the Gentleman's Magazine. Attributions of authorship and other documentation in editorial papers at the Folger Library* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1982).

[35] *General Evening Post*, 4-6 Nov. 1777.

[36] 'Not ev'n PHILANDER had bespoke his Shroud
Nor had he Cause, a Warning was deny'd;
How many fall as sudden, not as safe!
As sudden, tho' for Years admonish't home'.
Edward Young, 'The Complaint: or Night Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality, Night the First', lines 382-385.

[37] Francis Wollaston, *An address to the clergy of the Church of England in particular, and to all christians in general, humbly proposing an application to the . . . bishops, or through their means to the legislature, for such relief in the matter of subscription as in their judgements they shall see proper* (London, 1772).

Human nature and the foundation of ethics'

W. Bernard Peach

The concept of human nature played a fundamental role in theories of the British Moralists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries about the moral justification of actions, attitudes, or judgments. It is plausible to describe this period in general as one in which one dominant theme was: Let us look closely, and more closely, at human nature in order that we may come to understand better the good, the right, and the obligatory.

Thus, Hobbes found human nature to be appetitive, competitive, combative, and egoistic. He also found it to be rational. With these characteristics of human nature as his foundations he argued, in part, as follows: We all have desires. Our aim in doing anything is to satisfy these. What does so is considered good. Reason enables us to see that good will be maximized and evil minimized under stable and peaceful social conditions. It is right, therefore, to follow the laws of nature which, summarized, tell each person not to do unto another what he would not want done to himself. Such rational self-interest, then, provides the basis for agreement among citizens to abide by the rule of a sovereign instituted by such an agreement, having the power necessary to make it more painful to break than to keep this, and other, agreements which are made obligatory by issuing from such an established power.

We may question the accuracy and final adequacy of this summary interpretation of Hobbes' views on the relation of human nature and morality. It was some such understanding, however, held by his opponents, that led to the clamour of their banging on his steel helmet, and set independent moral philosophy in Great Britain on its way in the 17th and 18th centuries.

He had two main groups of opponents. One emphasized the rational side of human nature and aimed, mainly, at refuting his subjectivism and voluntarism, although they were also concerned to refute his theory of self-love. This group includes Henry More, Ralph Cudworth, Richard Cumberland, Samuel Clarke, and William Wollaston. Another group emphasized the affective, emotional, passional side of human nature and aimed, mainly, at refuting his theory of self-love. This group includes Lord Shaftesbury, Francis Hutcheson, and Joseph Butler.

In this initial phase, it would be correct to say, generally, that the two groups were united in their opposition to Hobbes. It was only later, with the hindsight of history, that we came to divide them into 'The School of Reason' and 'The School of Sentiment'. The exact nature of this turn in the history of

ethics in the 18th century is complex and controversial. Nevertheless, it can be said with reasonable accuracy that the views of the first group were developed by John Balguy, Richard Price and Thomas Reid; and those of the second by Francis Hutcheson, John Gay, David Hartley, David Hume, Adam Smith, and Jeremy Bentham. We can trace the views of the first group, with a gap after Price, through Henry Sidgwick, (in a way) to G.E. Moore, H.A. Prichard, E.F. Carritt, C.D. Broad and W.D. Ross; and the second through James and John Stuart Mill to John Dewey, A. J. Ayer, and C.L. Stevenson. The British Moralists, then, hold a significant place in the history of the development of Anglo-American moral philosophy.

I shall offer an analytical interpretation of the views of several of them with attention to historical development, and to their views on human nature and its significance for the foundation of morals. This constitutes the main body of the paper, roughly half. In a shorter, second part, I shall consider some of the analyses of the foundations of morals that are explicit and implicit in the British Moralists, and note some of the complexities. In an even shorter final part I shall compare David Hume and Richard Price on one restricted point on the foundations of morals, namely, the roles of reason and sentiment in moral distinctions, and suggest that they are not really so far apart, after all. In light of this I shall suggest, tentatively and only in outline, that a study of the British Moralists provides some of the rudiments of a general theory of justification.

I

The response to Hobbes from the first wave of the rationalists had two main lines. One was the claim that moral distinctions could not be based on arbitrary will; the other that not all actions are motivated by self-interest. Ralph Cudworth, for example, held that moral good and evil could not be arbitrary because it is universally true that things are what they are by nature. It follows, he says, that no person, no matter how powerful, can make things good, or right, or obligatory, by command. Indeed, God Himself cannot; for then to affirm that it is obligatory to obey God's commands would simply mean that God commands obedience to God's commands. Morality, he concludes, is eternal and immutable, independent of human nature. Knowledge of morality is achieved, however, by the rational capacities of human nature. As such, it is a participation in God's nature; and this direct contact with the source of universal love is the means of release from the bondage of exclusive self-love.'

Henry More, a colleague of Cudworth at Christ's College in Cambridge, provides some detail of this moral knowledge in twenty-three `noemata moralia'. They are offered as the basic principles in our knowledge of what is good, better and best, although they also include positive and negative

prescriptive versions of the Golden Rule. They are, he says 'immediately and irresistibly true, need no proof' and serve the function in morality that 'first undeniable axioms serve in mathematics'. These rational capacities of human nature are, fortunately, augmented, according to More, by the `Boniform Faculty' which provides the foundation for action free from the passions, for example, from self-love; that is, together, reason and the Boniform Faculty provide the foundation for virtuous actions.'

This suggestion that morality is founded, at least in part, on human nature, received extensive development in Richard Cumberland, also a 'Cambridge man', as an undergraduate. His major work was *Philosophical inquiry into the laws of nature wherein the essence, the principal heads, the order and publication, and the obligation of these laws are deduced from the nature of things, wherein also the principles of Mr. Hobbes philosophy both in a state of nature and of civil society are examined into and refuted,'* a title that tells almost the whole story. He holds, in contrast, as well as in opposition to Hobbes, that there is one law of nature, not sixteen. It may take different forms, as a factual statement, a command or imperative, or a gerundive form as an ascription of obligation. A summary version would read as follows: `Benevolence, an active concern for the welfare of others, is the best means of achieving happiness and perfection, in the social group and in its individual members; benevolence is commanded; everyone ought to be benevolent'. He apparently considers the statement, the command, and ascription of obligation 'equivalent', simply different ways of expressing the one law of nature. As such, it is, he says, the foundation of morals in the sense that from it, along with other information, religious, social, economic, political, historical, biological, and physiological, particular moral judgments can be reached and, in certain circumstances, even moral optatives, imperatives, or commands. Regarded as true *a priori*, known by reason, Cumberland's preferred method, he finds its source in the divine nature. Yet most of his arguments to 'establish' the law are *a posteriori*. The arguments are many, varied, and long. One, in particular, perhaps typifies his view of one of the ways in which human nature enters into morality. The active life, the life that includes a good diet, good exercise, and bodily vitality, is, he says, a good life, not merely instrumentally but intrinsically, in the pleasures it contains. This metaphysical, theological, and hedonistic justification of jogging hardly seems a powerful element in a theory of the foundation of morals. But Cumberland uses it as part of an intriguing argument in opposition to exclusive self-love: The pleasures of the active mind and body are our pleasures. One of the pleasures of the active mind is thinking consistently. When we combine these pleasures we see that it is wrong to regard our own pleasures differently from the pleasures of others who have the same human nature. He writes, 'As 'tis a perfection of the human mind to form like judgements, so it is to entertain like affections concerning like things. To have contrary judgements of like things implies a contradiction, and is a kind of madness, and, in speculation, is shunned as a disease of the mind. In practice

it argues as great an imperfection, and is a direct contradiction, in cases perfectly alike, to have different judgements and different volitions according as myself or another is concerned' .[5]

Cumberland concludes that the good, the right, and the obligatory are inherent in the nature of things and not creations of desire or will, as he understood Hobbes to hold. God's understanding is the source of the law of nature. And our human nature is so organized that morality consists in performing benevolent actions for the well-being of the system and its members.

The rationalistic elements in his predecessors were given a more rigid form by Samuel Clarke. He was more specific in identifying the foundations of morals as 'the nature of things', the relation between an act that is morally right and these foundations, namely, fitness; and in insisting that knowledge of fitness is *a priori.* In developing the latter point he appeals to an analogy with mathematics: 'That from . . . different relations of different things there necessarily arises an agreement or disagreement of some things with others, or a fitness or unfitness of the application of different things or different relations one to another, is likewise as plain as that there is any such thing as proportion in Geometry or Arithmetick . . .[6] For example, that God should govern according to law, for the universal good of all; that people should endeavour to promote universal good rather than destruction. In fact, he maintains, these absolute fitnesses are so 'plain and self-evident' that anyone who doubts them must be either stupid or perverse.'

This first wave of response to Hobbes emphasizing the rationalistic side of human nature is generally thought to have reached its crest in William Wollaston. Several commentators, both contemporary with him, and subsequently, have understood his theory to be that moral rightness is the same as truth and moral wrongness the same as falsity, because of his principle that no act that 'interferes' with a true proposition can be right. Hutcheson chides him, asking whether it be virtue to say at Christmas that the mornings are sharp. Hume pokes fun at him for implying that it is all right to engage in liberties with my neighbour's wife as long as the blinds are pulled, since this would prevent the communication to an observer of the falsehood that she is my own wife. More seriously, he asks for the foundations of the moral turpitude of lying or denying truth whether this be by actions, as Wollaston's system allows, or by words.'

It is possible, however to interpret Wollaston's extreme rationalism as an adjunct to a theory that everyone aims at happiness, that happiness and the means to it are good, that the pursuit of happiness is therefore a duty, and that the way to perform one's duty is to follow reason, which is to practise truth. It would appear that one of his purposes is to sharpen Clarke's mathematical

analogy between truth and morality. So he defines a true proposition as one that expresses things as they are; and adds the postulate that propositions may be affirmed or denied by actions as well as words. The analogy then takes the following form: Acting as if *p* were true when *not-p* is true, or conversely, is related to morality as believing that *p* is true when *not-p* is true, or conversely, is related to abstract (logical or mathematical) theory. On this interpretation the analogy is designed to serve an enlivening or hortatory function on the grounds that reasons for thinking rightly are the same as reasons for acting rightly. But many of his statements do seem to support the opinion that rationalism had reached its peak in an identification of morality with truth. For example, `. . . it is manifest that there is as certainly moral good and evil as there is true and false; and that there is as natural and immutable a difference between them as between these, the difference being at bottom the same thing' .[9]

In the meantime another wave of moral philosophy was developing, in opposition to Hobbes, with its foundations in the appetitive, passional or emotional side of human nature. Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury, is usually given credit as the first in this line, although a reasonable case might be made for giving some of the credit to Cumberland. An empirical-inductive study shows, according to Shaftesbury, that people are naturally social in nature and that there is a sympathy or unity of feeling in the social system that harmonizes with reflective self-concern. Affections, he holds, are naturally good when they are in balance, in the individual and in the system. Moral good is a 'reflex' approbation, love, or affection for natural good.

Conduct conducive to the harmony of the individual or the system, or both, is, accordingly, virtuous. There is an obligation to such conduct in so far as it is possible and in so far as there is good reason for it. The best reason is that such conduct is what it is, namely, virtuous. To this extent Shaftesbury agrees with the rationalists. There are other reasons as well, however. He appeals to the aesthetic analogy, for example, to argue that we have as good reason to appreciate and approve social and individual harmony as we have to appreciate and approve beauty and proportion in works of art. He also appeals to reason and the mathematical analogy in offering a proof, by summary induction, that all and only vicious acts are against the agent's interest. The implied conversion of the conclusion, that all and only virtuous acts are in the agent's interest, is complementary to his moral theory and in accordance with his general view of motivation that people have both self-interest and other-interest and that these do not, or need not, conflict.

Francis Hutcheson explicitly set out to develop the suggestions concerning the moral sense in Shaftesbury and to show, in opposition to Hobbes and Mandeville, that benevolent acts do occur. His method, is, basically, to

observe the human scene and to generalize from examples. A typical case, in support of both his main doctrines, is that we, the citizens of Great Britain, approve of the burgomasters who remained in their own country to resist tyranny even though the result of their success has been a decrease in our own trade. We do not approve in the same way of those who fled their country at a time of need and came to ours, even though, as a result, our own trade has improved. On the basis of this and many other examples, he concludes that the occasions on which moral judgments are made are occasions on which there is an approval of acts or attitudes that are benevolent in motive or beneficent in tendency, or a disapproval of those that are malevolent in motive or maleficent in tendency. These pleasures and pains of approval and disapproval are, Hutcheson says, new simple ideas and, consequently, given his empiricism, they must be experienced by an appropriate sense, namely, the moral sense. Benevolence, then, is the foundation of morals: controversies are settled by appeal to it; without approval or disapproval by the moral sense we would not be able to make moral distinctions (in his language 'there would be no perception of virtue and vice'), we can deduce other moral ideas from it, and it provides a way of life that is ultimately desirable.

Joseph Butler had serious doubts that benevolence is the whole of virtue, although he certainly considered it an important part of human nature. And with regard to the opposition to Hobbes, so characteristic of the development of this phase of British ethics, he is widely considered to have formulated the `classical refutation of egoism', at least in part, by portraying the role of benevolence as a part of his system of human nature and morality.

The universe, Butler tell us, is arranged in an orderly way by an intelligent and powerful creator. People can understand this if they examine things carefully. It is clear he says, that God has some way of life in mind for his creatures and has designed them accordingly. An examination of human nature will reveal, therefore, not only what people are and do, but what they are designed by God to be and do and, therefore, ought to do.

Human nature, Butler finds, is a hierarchy of three levels. On the elemental level are passions, appetites, impulses, feelings or affections such as anger, hunger and sexual desire. These particular affections aim at some specific thing or state of affairs; for example, the object of hunger is the eating of food. On first, or early occurrences, the affections are spontaneous, not the result of reason or volition, although these may function after a certain amount of learning occurs; for example, after learning that the eating of food usually results in pleasurable sensations or the alleviating of painful ones. Even though affections are non-cognitive goads to action, their results contribute to the interest or pleasure of others as well as ourselves, for example, the sexual affection. So we can see that we are designed and organized to act in the interest of others as well as of ourselves.

At the next level, these two tendencies, to help ourselves and to help others, operate in a more general way as rational principles of self-interest and benevolence. They are directed toward the general welfare of the agent and others, although the satisfaction of various particular affections is the means of achieving these more general ends. On this level, actions in accordance with the principles of self-interest and benevolence proceed on the basis of information, consideration of alternative courses of action and deliberate choice, not from mere spontaneous particular affections, although these remain the original 'springs of action'.

Self-love is stronger than benevolence, according to Butler; but it is not that we love ourselves too much but others not enough. So our benevolence needs to be developed rather than our self-love weakened. As with Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, Butler believes that behaviour based on the two principles will coincide, almost completely. When, on rare occasions, they do not, conscience, the supreme moral authority, enters. Its functions are various and presented in language that seems deliberately ambiguous. It seems to expand — as Hutcheson's moral sense does — into the whole person in a moral context. Butler speaks of conscience as moral reason, or divine reason and considers it either 'a sentiment of the understanding or a perception of the heart, or, which seems the truth, as including both' .[1°] He recognizes that a person may reject its directives, but holds that if they were followed we would never fail to be virtuous.

At this point in the development of British moral philosophy a significant shift becomes apparent. Up to this point, that is, from Henry More's *Enchiridion ethicum* in 1667 to Hutcheson's *Inquiry* in 1725 and Butler's *Sermons* in 1726, the British Moralists were allies in opposition to Hobbes. It was not until the controversies of 1725 through 1729, with Burnet and Balguy on the rational side, and Hutcheson on the sentimental, that the conflict implicit within this opposition to Hobbes became apparent.

In 1725, shortly after the publication of Hutcheson's *Inquiry concerning the original of our ideas of virtue or moral good,* Gilbert Burnet, the Younger, wrote a letter to the *London journal* criticizing Hutcheson for not providing the 'true and solid foundation' of virtue, giving credit to Cumberland, Clarke and Wollaston for his own, namely the one proposition, 'That virtue or moral goodness is founded on truth'." He expands this in the manner of his rationalistic predecessors. The fundamental principle of morals is: It is best that all should be happy, a principle that is self-evident and, hence, founded on reason. He adds, more estoppingly than Clarke, that if what is self-evident to him is not so to another, they cannot argue, 'but must part' .[12]

Hutcheson first replied in letters to the *London journal* in 1725 but formulated his full answer in *Illustrations on the moral sense* in 1728. The

shift is clear: Hobbes and the egoistic theory drop out of consideration almost entirely after a glancing blow in the Introduction. Wollaston, Clarke, and especially Burnet, are discussed at length, however, with the main emphasis on the weakness and inadequacy of their claims for reason. In opposition, Hutcheson makes the important distinction, following Grotius, between exciting reasons and justifying reasons. An exciting reason is some truth that motivates the agent to do something. Why does a luxurious man pursue wealth? Because wealth is useful to purchase pleasure. A justifying reason is some truth that engages our considered approbation. The reason for hazarding life in a just war is that it tends to preserve our honest countrymen or evidences public spirit. The former, Hutcheson says, presuppose instincts and affections, the latter the moral sense. Besides being the foundation of morals in providing for the ultimate justification of particular actions by its approval of benevolence, the moral sense expands in Hutcheson's theory: It is the necessary condition for answering the question 'Why was it right for some one to do what he did?' and for making the transition from descriptive to normative terminology. It is also the necessary condition for making moral distinctions, for taking the moral point of view, for explaining the meaning of our moral ideas, and for formulating moral rules.

Hutcheson was also challenged by John Balguy in a book entitled *The foundation of moral goodness* that appeared in 1728.[13] Balguy readily agreed that the affections were aids to reason, but denied that they could be the foundations of morals. It is degrading to human nature, he said, to take one of its less noble parts as the foundations of one of its highest accomplishments. He grants that the mathematical analogy is only an analogy and, thus, that we cannot regard a reason for believing, to be exactly the same as a reason for acting. He moderates Wollaston, accordingly, by proposing that we speak of a 'counteraction' of reason rather than of a 'contradiction' when actions fail to conform to the nature of things and that, for the sake of clarity, we return to the language of good, right, obligatory when speaking of actions rather than using the language of truth and falsity.

Nevertheless, our knowledge in moral matters is, or can be, as certain as our knowledge in mathematics. So he offers a deduction of the obligation to return gratitude for bounty even though he considers it to be self-evident. In the course of the deduction, he argues that actions for which good reasons can be given are reasonable or else no action is. As to why we ought to do what is reasonable, he maintains that 'as moral agents, we are either obliged to this or nothing'.[14] These variations on the themes of rationalism were presented in *The foundations of moral goodness*, part II, which appeared in 1729 in response to forty questions put to Balguy by Lord Darcy, a follower of Hutcheson.

In the light of these arguments, it would seem appropriate to modify Balguy's official designation of the foundation of morals from 'the nature of things' to 'the nature of active rational things'. For it seems clear that the locus of moral values for Balguy is in the concept of a being whose nature is to act in accordance with standards that are required by rationality.

I I

Balguy also contributes the beginning of an analysis of the foundation of morals. We may mean, he says, what morals consist in, or the original of moral ideas, or the reason why some act is approved from the moral point of view. More literally, although more figuratively within the language of morals, we may mean what morals 'flows from' or 'rests on'.

Balguy was one of the first to step back and take a look at the concept that had become the central issue in the controversies that were now surfacing between the school of reason and the school of sentiment. His analysis remained implicit, however, in his exchanges with Hutcheson and Lord Darcy. The first explicit and self-conscious recognition of the need for analysis and clarification of the concept — that I know of — occurred in an exchange between Mrs. Catherine (Trotter) Cockburn and the Reverend Dr. Thomas Sharp in 1745.

Mrs. Cockburn, in reply to some questions put to her by Sharp, said that she did not find any ambiguity in the phrase 'the foundation of moral virtue' or any misunderstanding because it was not explained. She had always meant by it, 'the ground on which moral virtue solely arises, or, that without which there would be no such thing'. Furthermore, she asserted, all writers on the subject meant the same thing."

Sharp begged to demur. Is there one or more than one ground? If only one, then nothing else can count. What then becomes of the respect for reason and the necessity of freedom in moral agents? Even Samuel Clarke himself distinguished two senses, the foundation of a thesis (proposition) as the support of it or the orderly introduction to it. Therefore, Sharp argued, either `foundation' is ambiguous or there is more than one foundation of virtue, or both.

To clarify the ambiguity, he distinguished two main senses, with sub-categories. First there is the literal sense of 'foundation' namely, 'ground or bottom whereon a building is erected or any heavy body rests or stands, as upon its proper basis'. Second, there is the metaphorical sense which divides into 'more' and 'less proper'. The more proper sense applies to such things as (a) kingdoms, empires, or cities, and signifies the first establishment. For (b) hospitals, colleges, and lecture series, it signifies the settlement of a revenue for support; with regard to (c) history, poetry, and drama, it signifies the subject, groundwork or plot; in (d) reasoning and argument, the postulates or

first principles laid down to be argued from. In the less proper metaphorical sense, 'foundation' means the 'root or source from which anything has its rise and beginning, or springs, or is deduced'. In this sense, it applies to (a) first occasions and introductions considered as origins, to (b) motives, inducements and the like considered as the springs of actions and to (c) designs and ends considered as the occasions for, or the motives to, actions. Sharp concludes that both 'principle' and 'foundation' in their metaphorical uses are as ambiguous as 'cause', for, he says, 'there is scarce anything that can be called a cause which may not be called in some sense or other a principle or a foundation, having as near a relation and the same kind of relation, to that which is built upon it, or is deducible from it, as cause hath to its effect' .[16]

This is one passage from an extensive literature on the foundations of morals during this period of some twenty years following the Hutcheson-Burnet-Balguy turn. Something like half-a-dozen books explicitly using the term 'foundation' in the title appeared, and something like a dozen or so more dealing with the 'original', the 'ground', the 'principle', the 'systems', the `elements', or the fundamental 'nature' of morality. If we limit our attention to the two main figures in this period (or perhaps I should say the main figure and one of the most interesting at the next level) David Hume and Richard Price, we find Hume formulating the question about foundations in the *Treatise*, in 1740, in his usual terms: . . . as perceptions resolve themselves into two main kinds, namely, impressions and ideas, this distinction gives rise to a question with which we shall open up our present enquiry concerning morals, whether 'tis by means of our ideas or impressions we distinguish betwixt vice and virtue, and pronounce an action blameable or praiseworthy' .[17]

In the *Enquiry concerning the principles of morals*, eight years later, he reformulates it to take explicit account of the extensive controversy I have just outlined: 'There has been a controversy started of late . . . worth examination, concerning the general foundation of morals, whether they be derived from reason or from sentiment: whether we attain knowledge of them by a chain of argument and induction, or by an immediate feeling and finer internal sense; whether like all sound judgments of truth and falsehood, they should be the same to every being; or whether, like the perception of beauty and deformity they be founded entirely on the particular fabric and constitution of the human species'.'

The most careful and extensive analysis of the concept of the foundation of morals, in the area of what the Reverend Dr. Thomas Sharp calls the 'less proper metaphorical sense' which seems to be the sense most relevant to morals, is provided by Richard Price, writing in 1758. 'How is it possible', he asks, 'that we should agree in determining what the foundation of virtue is when we annex different meanings to the term 'foundation', and therefore

have different ideas of the nature and design of the question'?' When we ask what the foundation of virtue is, we may mean (1) 'What is the true account or reason that such and such actions are right'?' He admits two accounts, and apparently only two: first, that right is a species of sensation, like taste or colour, and therefore denotes nothing absolutely true of the actions to which we apply it; second, that it denotes a real character of actions or something true of them, and thus that no other account is to be given why actions are right than that the natures of things are what they are — as Cudworth and Clarke had said.

We may mean, (2), 'What are the primary principles and heads of virtue, or the considerations implying obligation in particular cases and rendering particular actions right'?' In this sense, according to Price, there will be as many foundations of virtue as there are first principles of it. If someone were to say that the reason it is right to promote our own good is that it is true that we ought to promote our own good (because of the nature of things), this would signal agreement about the foundations of virtue in the first sense and difference only in this second sense, that is, about the subject-matter of morality.

Or, we may mean, (3), 'What are the motives and reasons that lead us to virtue and support the practice of it in the world'?[22] Those who regard the will of God, self-interest, the reason of things, and the moral sense, distinct and yet coincident motives to virtue are using the term 'foundation' in this sense. Price agrees that these things 'carry us to virtue', that is, motivate us to do what is morally right. But, he insists, if we keep to the first sense, only the last two, that is, the reason of things or the moral sense, can be candidates for the foundation of virtue.

In the first sense, Price is concerned with what might be called an epistemological-ontological sense of 'foundation', a concern for the reasons why actions are, or are judged to be, virtuous and the metaphysical implications of this; in the second, with what might be called the material or subject-matter sense of foundations, what acts, or kinds of acts, are virtuous or morally right; in the third, with a psychological-motivational sense, what motivates us to do what is virtuous.

As we review this sweep of the British Moralists, then, we find a considerable complexity in the concept of the foundations of morals, much of it implicit. A sample of the meanings, made somewhat more explicit, from the first wave, from Cudworth through Wollaston, would include these: 'what enables us to knpw morality', 'what motivates us to act morally', 'what moral conclusions can be derived from', 'what moral propositions can be deduced from', 'what implies (with additional data) particular moral judgments', 'what morality consists in', 'what makes us subject to moral obligation',

`what guarantees the truth of true moral propositions', 'what makes a morally right act a morally right act', 'what we all desire', and 'the best way to get what we all desire'. A sample of things offered *as* the foundations of morals would include: reason, the nature of things; the Boniform Faculty, 23 noemata; the law of nature, the combination of self-concern and consistency; fitness, absolute fitness, fitness to a situation; happiness, the best way to be happy; the practice of truth, logical consistency, truth, and acting according to truth.

From the early members of the school of sentiment we may add the meanings: 'the original of the ideas of', 'what justifies an action', 'what morals emerge from' and, again, 'what morals consist in'. Some of the referents of these meanings are: 'the harmony within an individual', 'the harmony within the system of things', 'the harmony of the individual and the system of things', 'reflex love or approbation of natural good', 'the qualified approvals of the moral sense', 'benevolence', 'nature', 'human nature', and `conscience'. And I leave unmentioned the more explicit meanings and referents from Balguy, Sharp, Hume and Price.

More schematically, a sample of meanings could run as follows: x is the foundation of y if *xis:* the necessary condition of y; the sufficient condition of y; or the necessary and sufficient condition of y. Further, *x* is the foundation of y if *x* explains y; justifies y; is a character or structure common to all cases of y; is the essential property of y; is the reason for the approval of y; causes the approval of y; is the criterion for identifying y; provides a rule for acting in accordance with y; or is temporally prior toy and y is derived from *x.* Finally, *xis* the foundation of y if: y can be reduced to *x;* y can be derived from *x;* y can be deduced from *x;* y can be inferred from x; or y follows from *x.* I believe that comes to a total, quite by accident, of *seventeen.*

There are others as well, but this seems sufficient to bear out the Reverend Dr. Thomas Sharp's suggestion that 'there is some ambiguity in the phrase: "foundation of morals". I might note, in passing, that recent philosophers who have found the search for the foundation of morals frustrating might add these complexities to their reasons for frustration. [23] It would seem to be an undertaking of considerable difficulty without a fairly careful delineation of what is being sought. Even then, one would not expect it to be easy.

III

We may, as suggested earlier, take David Hume and Richard Price as the culmination of this phase of the British Moralists in their respective lines. I shall therefore consider their treatment of the foundation of morals, even though it must be brief and restricted.

I would like to analyse the theories of Hume and Price, to isolate their treatment of the foundation of morals, interpret their roles in the theories and then subject both theories to critical evaluation. That would be *more* than another paper in itself. In fact, it would take a book. So I shall settle for a more limited approach. They both approach the problem of the foundation of morals from the standpoint that, morally, we are always in the middle of things. Accordingly, their questions noted earlier, may be summarized as follows: Given that we do in fact make moral distinctions, is this to be accounted for by reason or sentiment?

Despite his strictures against reason, I think Hume accepts it as a necessary condition in the account of moral distinctions and morality; and despite *his* strictures against experience and sentiment, I think that Price accepts *them* as necessary conditions in the account of moral distinctions and morality, at least in one sense. The basis for my interpretation of Hume is the role that general rules play in his account of moral distinctions and the breadth of the functions of reason that this requires. The basis for my interpretation of Price is the role experience and sentiment play in his doctrines of 'practical virtue' and 'the heads of virtue', and, again, the breadth of the functions of reason — even of rational intuition — that this requires.

Briefly, I interpret Hume on the foundation of morals in this way: Reason, understood *narrowly* in the sense of rational intuition of necessary truths, demonstrative reasoning to true conclusions from true premises, *or* as quantifiable or causal empirical information, cannot in itself account for moral distinctions or morality. For example, calculations of quantity and number can tell us what our taxes are, but it is not part of that calculation that we ought to pay; or, on the basis of observation, causal inference, and information from the Surgeon-General, we may conclude that smoking is harmful to health, but it is not included in those observations or inferences that we ought to warn others of this danger or even that we ought to cease and desist ourselves.

Positively and constructively, as I interpret Hume, if we do conclude or decide that we ought to pay our debts or to warn others of danger, then something more than the purely cogitative side of human nature is at work. Basically, these moral distinctions, these 'perceptions of virtue' to use Hutcheson's phrase, require, in addition to the factual or theoretical knowledge described, feelings of approval (or disapproval).

They cannot be mere personal or idiosyncratic attitudes of approval, however, but require further functions of reason to qualify as *moral* approval (or disapproval), the acts approved (or disapproved) to qualify as virtues (or vices), and the agents approved (or disapproved) to qualify as virtuous (or vicious). As I read Hume, the approvals are subject to modification, control, or even correction by the operations of reason understood *broadly* in a sense

that includes imagination, experience, habit, and custom. Hume never sets out explicitly the 'principles' or 'rules' that this broad kind of reason brings to bear on the approvals and disapprovals that are fundamental to moral distinctions and morality, as he does the rules by which to judge whether causes really are causes; but I think they would probably take some such form as this: (1) Neglect accidental spatio-temporal relations. (2) Take a general and impartial view. (3) Acquire as extensive relevant knowledge as possible. (4) Pay attention most particularly to the motives and character of the people involved.'

Hume's deep and extensive concern with human nature and his analysis of it in relation to morality, then, lead him to the conclusion that both sentiment and reason are necessary to account for moral distinctions and morality. His good friend and critic, Richard Price, held, officially, that reason by itself is not only necessary, but sufficient, to account for moral distinctions and morality. Approaching the issue in the ontological sense of foundations, he argues that rightness is a simple idea, shown to be so because it is indefinable; that it originates in the understanding, in common with a variety of other simple ideas such as cause and effect, necessity, and identity; that it is a real property of actions, not reducible to anything non-ethical; and that judgments that an act is right, if true, are necessarily true, and are known to reason in the form of rational intuition.

When he comes to his second sense, however, that is, 'What are the primary principles and heads of virtue, or the considerations implying obligation in particular cases and rendering particular actions right?' there is a significant modification.

He draws a distinction between *abstract* or *absolute* virtue and *practical* or *relative* virtue. The first is 'a quality of the external action or event. It denotes what an action is, considered independently of the sense of the agent . . The second 'has a necessary relation to, and dependence upon the opinion of the agent concerning his actions. It signifies what he ought to do, upon supposition of his having such and such sentiments'." He lists six heads of virtue, indicating that he does not consider the list complete: (1) Duty to God, (2) to ourselves, (3) to others, (4) gratitude, (5) veracity, and (6) justice.[26]

He wants to hold, even in this context, that these duties are known by intuition. But he allows that intuition may be more or less clear, more or less likely and may have degrees. In short, intuition, in this context, is corrigible. [27]

It may be possible to absolve Price of inconsistency in his views on intuition, or at least to reduce the apparent inconsistency. Professor A.S. Cua has pointed out that there are several senses of 'intuition' used by philosophers, by Price in particular, and that criticism of one sense does not

always, or necessarily, apply to others.' Or, it may be possible to interpret Price's claims to intuitive certainty as claims to defeasible necessity; or, that he claims intuitive certainty for moral principles and admits corrigibility in the application of them to particular situations or, we may have to interpret his claims to intuitive certainty as 'crucial adoptions' at certain points in the development of his theory. In any case, it seems to me dubious that in an interpretation of Price such fallibility and corrigibility can be restricted to purely empirical or factual matters, although this seems to have been his intent. Consider: there are, as noted, a number of heads of virtue or duty, and Price admits that we may be mistaken about which one applies in a given case. Also, he points out, they may sometimes conflict with one another, so we may be mistaken about their relative importance and thus make a mistake about what we ought to do. I conclude, then, that intuition may be fallible, within the realm of ethics itself, not merely in the factual or empirical realm. Price's response to this situation, as I interpret him, is that we must make use of all the ways of knowing, (he identifies feeling, experience, probability, induction, and deduction, as well as intuition) in the hope that in the end the intuition of our duty in a particular situation will be clear, perfect, and not in need of correction.

One of the things he *is* quite sure about in his discussion of the heads of virtue and their significance for practical virtue is that no one of them has authority over the others in all cases. In particular, and in opposition to Hutcheson, the principle of benevolence does not overrule all others; certainly not in the form, 'The moral sense approves benevolence' and not even in the form 'Benevolence is virtuous'. If it did, and here Price appeals to Butler, and could have appealed to Sharp, we would never, in our moral judgments, take account of anything else. But we *do* take account of other considerations, according to Price, than whether they are benevolent or not; he instances reverence to God, prudence, gratitude, veracity, and justice, to mention only those he lists explicitly. For example, if a party of rebels surrendered on terms and were then treated as if they had been suppressed by force, this would be generally, and justifiably, disapproved of on the moral grounds of breaking a promise, a violation of the duty to veracity, though it did not contribute to public ill.[29] Price sees no particular difficulty in such cases once it is recognized that there are several principles of intrinsic rectitude.

The difficult cases are those in which we are faced with a conflict between the principles themselves; for example, where I must break a solemn promise in order to relieve great pain. The resolution, in so far as it is possible, as I read Price, calls for the same kind of procedure — the application of all our capacities to the relevant context as fully and extensively as circumstances permit. The principle and the outcome will depend on the context; one principle may be relevant and applicable in one context, another in another. One instance will have to do, drawn from Price himself. In 1776, when he

wrote *Observations on the nature of civil liberty, the principles of government and the justice and policy of the war with America,* in favour of the cause of the American colonies against Great Britain, 'civil liberty' was, as he saw the situation, the leading moral principle: It is right that a civil society should govern itself. Self-government is properly the consideration that should determine what ought to be done, by the colonies together, the colonists individually, and of course, in Price's interpretation, by Great Britain as well.

In 1784, however, when he wrote *Observations on the importance of the American Revolution and the means of making it a benefit to the world* the situation and problems were significantly different; so the leading principle was correspondingly different. The value of civil liberty is still high, of course, but it was no longer the issue. Freedom, in thought, speech, and religion were also high values and with regard to them Price judged that too little civil authority is better than too much; but with regard to the need for social stability, the development of strength at home and respect abroad, and as the basis for recommending greater powers for Congress, he judged that restraint and control by civil authority is less evil than anarchy, and the risk of the abuse of power less evil than the risk of internal wars.' (Parenthetically, it is a note of some philosophical, as well as historical, interest, that Price frequently quotes both Hume and Hutcheson in support of his social and political views.)

I have presented this interpretation of Price on the foundations of morals at some greater length than on Hume because he is less well known and because the usual classifications emphasize the differences between them. I would certainly not want to deny the great differences thereare on many points, for example, about the foundations of morals in Price's first sense (see above (p. 22) and about the role of reason and sentiment in the perception of the rectitude of the heads of virtue. There are, however, some notable similarities that indicate an appeal to aspects of human nature that go well beyond any simple interpretation of 'reason or sentiment' when we move into the area of justification.

Price is quite ready to say, with qualifications, that an agent is justified in doing what he thinks is right. I shall speak of this opinion of the agent as `conscience', as Price does, in a sense that is, I believe, quite widely understood and accepted.' The minimal necessary conditions for such practical virtue, according to Price, are freedom, intelligence, and consciousness of rectitude.' *(Review,* 181-4). He speaks of the latter more specifically as the rule and end of an agent who acts virtuously. I suggest this implies that he accepts a rule comparable to Hume's fourth, that an approval justifying the ascription of moral goodness to the agent must, among other things, take into account his motives and character. Hume and Price differ here about the foundations of morals in Price's second sense, namely, the subject-matter of virtue. Hume would say the most important thing is a

disposition to act for the well-being of others, Price would say the most important thing is a disposition to do what is right because it is right. In distinguishing morally justified and unjustified sentiments, erroneous and enlightened conscience, then, I suggest both Hume and Price accept the rule, `pay attention most particularly to the motives and character of the people involved'. (See above, p. 25.) Presumably Price was particularly pleased with a passage in the Declaration of Independence in the concluding paragraph, `We, therefore the representatives of the United states of America in General Congress assembled, appealing to the supreme judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do in the name, and by the authority of the good people of these colonies, solemnly publish and declare that these United colonies are and of right ought to be free and independant states . . . The dispositional nature of such practical virtue is apparent in various passages in the *Review,* for example, pp. 184-6, 192, 199. It is perhaps made most explicit however, in Section I of *Additional observations on the nature and value of civil liberty and the war with America* . . . . . the mere performance of virtuous actions is not what denominates an agent virtuous, but the temper and habits from whence they spring, or that inward constitution and right balance of the affections which secure the practice of virtue, produce stability of conduct, and constitute a character'.[33]

I shall not discuss Hume's other three general rules in detail although it is interesting to find significant similarities in philosophers who are traditionally considered radically different. My point is that such similarities emerge when in the process of the justification of moral sentiment and of individual conscience they make more and more inclusive appeals to human nature. The breadth of this appeal has been recognized in recent studies of Hume, less so in the case of Price. Yet at one point *in Additional observations,* part II, section 2, he says, after recounting issues between England and the colonies, 'All this is the necessary consequence of the principles by which human nature is governed' .[34]

It is clear that Price would accept Hume's rule to gain as extensive relevant knowledge as possible. It is evident in theoretical form in the *Review,* pp. 179 and 180-4, and in its application throughout *Observations on the nature of civil liberty,* perhaps most conspicuously in part II, section 3.[35] The injunction to impartiality is also evident throughout Price's writings, perhaps most explicitly *at Review,* pp. 171-6 and 219-220, and in his discussion of education in *Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution.'* In fact, if we take Price on candour as the counterpart of Hume on impartiality it is plausible to suggest that there is a more complex and deeper commitment to impartiality in the justification of the individual conscience in Price than there is to impartiality in the justification of moral sentiments in Hume." The acceptance of a rule to abstract from accidental spatio-temporal circumstances is implicit in Price's writing, even in his political pamphlets. The circumstances he enumerates concerning England and the colonies from

1750 to 1776 are not limited in their significance to that period. They are circumstances that justify the conclusion that King and Parliament are tyrannical. They are, therefore, circumstances that justify the decision to rebel.

If we shift our language of justification from general rules to the qualification of the enlightened conscience we can add that, according to Price, the justified conscience is the conscience of a person who has approached his decision with humility and patience, has not accepted standard opinions uncritically and has made serious efforts to improve his moral character and perceptiveness."

This comparison raises and leaves unanswered many questions. One of them concerns the relation between practical virtue and absolute virtue. This is an issue that deserves extensive discussion; here, I can only suggest one point that extends the comparison I have been pursuing. Price needs a distinction of this kind in order to have the theoretical framework required to make a plausible distinction between the erroneous conscience and an enlightened conscience. If individual conscience is corrigible, as it is clear Price holds it to be, there must be standards in terms of which a corrected conscience can be identified. Similarly, if individual approvals are corrigible, as it is clear Hume holds them to be, there must be standards in terms of which a corrected approval can be identified. I suggest that Price's concept of absolute virtue provides the former as Hume's concept of the impartial spectator provides the latter, although I think the former probably contains more problems than the latter. I also suggest that, in the end, Price does not hold that the correcting is effected by reason alone in the form of rational intuition any more than Hume holds that the correcting is effected by sentiment alone. The matter is more complex than their initial formulations of the foundations of morals would indicate. Hume appeals beyond sentiment to reason, rules, dispositions, attitudes and corrected attitudes, the language of morals and its trans-personal nature, society, history, taste and the standards of taste, and more. Price appeals beyond reason to dispositions, rules, beliefs and corrected beliefs, facts and their moral significance, temper and habits, inward constitution and right balance of affections, stability of conduct, character, and more. It's not only that the practically virtuous person, P, must have these dispositions, it is that the person making the moral judgment that P is practically virtuous must, in order to judge correctly, have these dispositions.

Someone might ask whether in this comparison I have assimilated an extended Price to an extended Hume or the other way round. It seems to me arguable. For many of the same reasons, it seems arguable whether to refer to the dispositions that denominate an agent virtuous as 'rational desires', with Price, or as 'calm passions', with Hume (granted that there are finer distinctions to be made). Perhaps they should be called attitudes, with its

implications of a synthesis of cognitive and noncognitive factors. Whatever the taxonomic resolution of these issues, it seems to me to be a point of some philosophical significance, if I am right, that in Hume and Price, who may be regarded as culminating figures in radically opposed lines of development in moral philosophy, it is possible to find a kind of convergence by noting the broadening of the aspects of human nature they take into account in their theories of justification. There is an apt paraphrase for this, although, as with most summary statements, it is a simplification: The sentiments, without reason, are morally blind; reason, without taking the sentiments into account, is morally empty.

I V

We have seen that the attempt of the British Moralists to locate the role played by human nature in the foundation of morals led not only to a multiplicity of theories and oppositions but also to an examination of the concept of the foundation of morals itself. I have attempted, after tracing a historical segment of these developments, to make more explicit the variety of senses of 'foundation' implicit in these theories. I have also suggested that despite many deep difference there are some significant similarities in Hume and Price. I have supported this by pointing out that the foundational, and initially narrow, roles of reason and sentiment are broadened and enriched by a wider appeal to human nature in their theories of justification, by noting similarities in the general rules implicit in Hume's justification of moral approval and in Price's justification of conscience, and by noting the dispositional nature of practical virtue in Price.

Further, more far reaching implications concerning foundations and justification emerge from this survey and comparison, although I can only make some suggestions here. As we look back over the complexities of the topic in the British Moralists the message is clear that any attempt to formulate the foundations of morals in a single principle will probably fail. It is not only that the concept of the foundations of morals contains within itself complexities beyond the capacities of a single principle to provide. Whatever is capable of constituting the foundation of morals must also serve a variety of functions of justification similarly beyond the scope of any single principle. The two complexities are of course closely related, for it may not be possible to identify the foundations of morals without including the variety of justifying functions that must be served.

Some suggestions in the direction of accommodating these complexities can be derived from the way in which a synthesis of divergent theories of justification appears when we look at the *application* of principles provided by Hume and Price. Not only do we find a synthesis of epistemological, psychological and ethical principles; we also find an implicit reference to a

context of application. This is particularly evident in Price when one or another moral principle emerges as the one most fundamental, relevant, and applicable in a given context.' Recent studies in Hume also emphasize his recognition that broad moral, political, economic, and religious contexts, viewed historically, must be taken into account in any satisfactory theory of justified belief.[40]

I suggest that in a study of the British Moralists and their views on human nature, foundations of morals, and justification we can find the rudiments of a theory of the ethics of belief. This is a concept that, from time to time, has been much maligned in philosophical discussion but one that, properly understood, provides, I think, the basis for a theory of justification that can apply not only to epistemological and ethical contexts but if it can be shown that several fundamental principles have coherent relationships in a variety of contexts, points the way to a general theory of justification that can provide answers to questions of justification wherever they may arise.

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[1] Revised version of a paper delivered at the Catholic University of America, Friday, November 14, 1980 as part of the Smith-Counahan Memorial Lectures, Morality and Human Nature.
[2] *Treatise concerning eternal and immutable morality* (London, 1731). Bk. I, chs. 1 and 2.
[3] *Enchiridion ethicum*, the english translation of 1690, (New York, The Facsimile Text Society, 1930), 20ff.
De legibus naturae disquisitio philosophica (London, 1672). English translation by J. Maxwell, (London, 1727).
[8] Ibid., ch. V, sect. vi, par. 5.
[6] *A discourse concerning the unchangeable obligations of natural religion* (London, 1706), proposition I, part I.
[7] Ibid.
[8] *A treatise of human nature*, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge and P.H. Nidditch (Oxford, Clarendon, 1978), 461-462n.
[9] *The religion of nature delineated*, ed. Stanley Tweyman (Delmar, New York, Scholars Facsimiles and Reprints, 1974), 32-33.
[10] *Dissertation II, of the nature of virtue* (London, 1736).
[11] Francis Hutcheson, *Illustrations on the moral sense*, ed. Bernard Peach (Cambridge, Mass., Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 200.
12 Ibid., 238.
[13] Included in *A collection of tracts moral and theological* by John Balguy (London, printed for J. Pemberton, 1734).
[14] Ibid., 117.
15 *Works* (London, J. and P. Knapton, 1751), 356.
[16] Ibid., 392.
[17] *Treatise*, 456.
[18] *An enquiry concerning the principles of morals*, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge and P.N. Nidditch (Oxford, Clarendon, 1975), 170.
[19] *A review of the principal questions in morals*, ed. D.D. Raphael, (Oxford, Clarendon, 1948), 233.
20 Ibid.
[21] Ibid., 234.
[22] Ibid., 235.
[23] For example, 'A crisis in Moral Philosophy: Why is the Search for the Foundations of Ethics so Frustrating?' Alasdair Maclntyre, *The foundations of ethics in its relationship to science*, Vol. IV, *Knowing and valuing, the search for common roots*, ed. H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr. and Daniel Callahan, The Hastings Center, Institute of Society, Ethics and the Life Sciences (Hastings-on-Hudson, New York, 1980), 18-35.
[24] See Hume's discussion of the origin of the natural virtues and vices, *Treatise*, bk. III, part III, sect. 1, 574-592, especially 581-87; also, *Enquiry*, *'Of* the general Principles of Morals', 169-175, and Appendix I, 'Concerning Moral Sentiment', 285-294, especially 289-290. Compare 'General Rules and the Moral Sentiments in Hume's Treatise', T.K. Hearn, *Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 30, no. 1, Sept. 1976, 57-72. esp. 61.
[25] *Review, 177.*
[26] Ibid., 138-164.
[27] Ibid., 98-100.
[28] *Reason and virtue, a study in the ethics of Richard Price*, Antonio S. Cua (Athens, Ohio, Ohio University Press, 1966), 163-182.
[29] *Review*, 133.
[30] See *Richard Price and the ethical foundations of the American Revolution*, ed. Bernard Peach (Durham, N.C., Duke University Press, 1979), 33-37. (Cited as Peach, *Foundations).*
[31] For a perceptive treatment of Price on conscience see D.O. Thomas, *The honest mind*, (Oxford, Clarendon, 1977), 87-111.
[32] *Review*, 181-4.
[33] Peach, *Foundations*, 142.
[34] *Foundations*, 172.
[35] *Foundations*, 96-102.

[36] *Foundations*, 201-216.
[37] *Review*, 10, 198, 219.
[38] See D.O. Thomas, *The honest mind*, 92, 94, 101.
[39] See *Review*, 138-164; and *Observations on civil liberty*, part I, and *Observations on the importance of the American Revolution*, sects. 1-8, *(in Foundations*, 67-81, 136-174, 181-207).
[40] Livingston, D.W. and King, J.T., eds., *Hume, a reevaluation*, (New York, 1976), esp. 213-238, 296-320; Norton, D.F., *David Hume, common-sense moralist, sceptical metaphysician*, (Princeton, N.J., 1982); Livingston, D.W., *Hume's philosophy of common life* (Chicago, 1984).

U

Rational Religion and Political Radicalism in the 1790s

Mark Philp

Debates on the 1790s are orchestrated around a central theme: why, it is asked, was there no revolution in Britain to match that in France? The theme recurs throughout the literature on the period — usually in the form of identifying the ways in which the democratic movements were crushed by Pitt's repressive measures, or in arguments about why it is anachronistic to expect that there could have been a revolution. In such discussions, small sects of theologically (if not divinely) inspired liberal men and women tend to receive rather cursory treatment. In so far as Rational Dissenters are seen as playing a role it is a very subordinate one. Their contribution is relegated to the early stages of the radical movements, and little reference is made to them after the end of 1792, when the London Revolution Society collapses with little or no trace, and when the artisan-based London Corresponding Society moves to the centre of the extra-parliamentary stage, and so absorbs our attention with the possibilities of working class insurrection.

Some of this is doubtless warranted. As an identifiable, coordinated and active political group, the hey-day of Rational Dissent is largely prior to the major events of the 1790s. Their contributions to the movements for political and ecclesiastical reform prior to the 1790s are well documented: their involvement in the early days of the Society for Constitutional Information and Wyvill's County Association;' their moves against Subscription in the 1770s, their organization to secure the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1787, 1789 and 1790;[2] and their involvement in the London Revolution Society, established to celebrate the Glorious Revolution of 1688, but quickly bent to the purpose of welcoming developments in France (through their correspondence with the National Assembly and with local Jacobin Clubs) and to demanding reforms in the franchise and the removal of the burdens placed on Dissenters at home.' Furthermore, it is generally recognized that there is some renewal of Rational Dissent activity in the revitalized Society for Constitutional Information, and to a lesser degree in the Whig Association for the Friends of the People.' But, although there is some activity, both in the form of correspondence and in the consumption of liberal quantities of food and drink at the various reform dinners, Rational Dissent in this period always looks like a political force on the decline. It plays little or no role in the emerging London Corresponding Society, nor in the Society for Constitutional Information's attempts to disseminate Painite literature throughout the country and across class boundaries. Indeed, an impression of a more general decline is given credence by the death, retirement or emigration of many of its better known leaders in the 1790s (Price, Kippis, Lindsey, Priestley), and by the collapse of the Dissenting Academies which had for so long provided both a fertile breeding ground for rationalist theology and a major source of intellectual stimulation throughout the natural, moral and pneumatological sciences.' By 1794, with the break-up of the Society for Constitutional Information following the Treason Trials, with the wave of

prosecutions for sedition, conspiracy, and treason which had involved a number of Dissenters largely at an end, and with political attention focusing on the prospects of outright conflict between the London Corresponding Society and the government, Rational Dissent seems beyond the pale of political significance. [6]

In this paper I argue that the narrative of Rational Dissent's decline needs to be considerably more nuanced than the above account suggests, and that its impact on radicalism is much greater than is generally supposed. I also suggest that its withdrawal from political activity is far from unequivocal, and that, in so far as it declines as a force, this is related to its involvement with the radicalism of the decade. In the process I shall need to indicate briefly an alternative view of this radicalism. I begin by offering a brief characterization of Rational Dissent.

Rational Dissent refers to an increasingly rationalist and heretical version of Presbyterianism.' Ecclesiastically, they were, like their forbears, closer to Anglicanism than many of the other Dissenting sects. Although they condemned all civil establishments of religion as corrupting the free formation of Christian belief, and although they attacked the alliance between church and state and the church's hierarchical structure and financial system, they were temperamentally close to the moderate clergy of the Church of England. They wanted an educated ministry, and they 'proposed a church like respect for the decorum of public worship' and for 'a settled religious framework and orderly procedures' .[8] Theologically they were less orthodox. They took their stand on the sufficiency of scripture and reason. Religion was a science: 'just as the book of nature had yielded her secrets to mathematics (so) scripture, the book of revelation, would yield hers to reason' .[9] Using their God-given reason to interpret the scriptures, the Rational Dissenters came to reject the orthodox doctrines of the Trinity, original sin and atonement. They also rejected predestinarianism and the view that salvation could only be achieved through an experience of faith, defined in essentially non-rational terms. Salvation was achieved through the pursuit of truth — or God's light — and by our subjection of the potentially rational will to this truth. Religious truths, like the truths of nature, were essentially communicable — *contra* Sandeman, one man could persuade another to become a Christian;[19] just as one could prove to another that there was a substance called phlogiston!

Although the Rational Dissenters' emphasis on rational persuasion now seems rather optimistic, it is central to an understanding of their place in the political movements of the 1790s. They believed that the 18th century was a period of enlightenment, but they meant something rather different from what we normally associate with the phrase. For Rational Dissenters it was enlightenment in that the corruption of doctrine and practice forced on the Christian church by the papal anti-christ, and by the post-reformation

alliances between church and state, was under threat. Not only was religious diversity more fully tolerated in practice (although the penal statutes remained), but America provided an example of religious freedom and the free pursuit of religious truth which other European nations seemed to wish to emulate. It was also felt that the advances being made in other areas of truth indicated that religious inquiry would also make progress and that we would eventually see the establishment of an uncorrupted Christian doctrine. For Rational Dissenters natural science and religious science, or pneumatology, were seen in terms of reason gradually uncovering God's rational will, either as expressed in nature or in the revelation of scripture." In line with this belief Rational Dissenters stressed three other points. Although there were disagreements between Rational Dissenters and other religious sects — and, indeed, within Rational Dissent — they retained an unshakeable commitment to the defence of the individual's exercise of his/her private judgement in matters of religious belief. Some claimed it as a right, others argued that the full exercise of private judgement was a duty owed to God — with which no one could justly interfere (although, if each has this duty, then each also has a duty to respect all others' pursuit of this duty; thus each has a duty-based right. Every human thus has a right to fulfil his or her obligations to God). The doctrine of the right and duty of private judgement gave rise among many Dissenters to a conception of virtue which placed a special emphasis on candour' — a rigorously honest examination of one's conscience, a commitment to act according to its dictates, and an obligation to act and speak with complete honesty in one's dealings with others. On this view, discussion and debate with others becomes a fundamental requirement. Only by so doing could one fully satisfy the requirements of candour and thus assist in the furthering of truth. Debate thus becomes tantamount to a public confession of faith; and Rational Dissent becomes a movement populated with independent agents who rigorously search their consciences, fully exercise their God-given reason, express their beliefs with true candour, and form a community of discussants aiming solely for the furtherance of God's truth.

It does not take a great deal of imagination to see that the demands for the full and free exercise of private judgement, etc., could and would be extended. What holds true for rational religion also holds true for science, morality and politics. Truth is single and uniform. It would be unthinkable to ascribe a rational providence in one area of life only. Furthermore, the singularity of truth, the view that it becomes progressively clearer and simpler, allowed many Rational Dissenters to take a highly optimistic view of humanity's future: 'The Rule of Life drawn from the practices and opinions of Mankind corrects and improves itself perpetually, till at last it determines solely for virtue and excludes all Kinds and degrees of Vice.'"

From these theological and philosophical commitments Rational Dissenters drew various practical political conclusions. Indeed, we should not underestimate the degree to which they disagreed amongst themselves; for example, in the campaigns against the Test and Corporation Acts in the last years of the 1780s, the lay representatives of the London Dissenting Deputies (and the London Rational Dissenting Ministers involved in the campaign) were considerably more moderate than many provincial Dissenting Ministers (compare, for example, William Smith, Andrew Kippis and Abraham Rees with the more vitriolic Priestley). Indeed, it was only after the failure of the third attempt to secure relief in 1790 that it became absolutely clear that it was impossible to separate the cause for relief from that of constitutional reform. Prior to then, following the collapse of reform hopes in 1785, it had seemed a well-advised tactical move to do so." While other Dissenting sects seem to have taken fright at this point and retreated from the public political arena, few of the leading Rational Dissenters did so. Priestley continued in his abrasive manner to raise the question of church and parliamentary reform, and many of those involved in the pamphlet debates over the Test and Corporation Acts also participated subsequently in the London Revolution Society and in the debate on France prompted by Burke's attack on Price's sermon on the 1688 revolution. Indeed, it was in large part the continued public activity of many of the leading lights of Rational Dissent that further prompted conservative campaigns for 'Church and King' — the most notable instance involving the destruction of Priestley's house by the Birmingham mob in 1791.

It would not be surprising to find Rational Dissent maintaining a low profile after this date, but this does not seem to happen. At least, it does not happen in London, where there were no instances of Church and King rioting, [15] and although the Reevite associations were active from the end of 1792 these were not necessarily as threatening a force as has generally been assumed. [16] Rational Dissent continued as a religious sect, controlling over half the Presbyterian chapels in London in 1796." And its ministers and congregations also continued with various forms of activity aimed at securing both relief and parliamentary reform. Or, at least, they did so *visibly* by participation in reform dinners and by involvement with the London Revolution Society until the end of 1792." But with the collapse of the Revolution Society is there any evidence that Rational Dissenters maintained their radicalism? And how are we to explain the stagnation of Rational Dissent at the end of the decade when other forms of Dissent, Congregationalists, Particular and New Connection Baptists and Methodists, attracted increasing numbers away from the Established Church?

The answers to these two questions are related, but we can only see this if we look for a more nuanced answer to the first question than is generally given. Counting the heads of Rational Dissenters in the radical organizations of the 1790s is just not an adequate way of grasping their continuing influence on the political events of the decade. Instead, we need to recognize three deeper points of contact between radicalism and Rational Dissent in this period.

At the first level it seems possible to argue that the tradition of thought derived from Rational Dissent sets the parameters of much of the radical ideology and many of the radicals' aspirations in the 1790s. Paine is traditionally held to be the major influence on the London Corresponding Society and on the radicalism of the lower orders. But it is Price whom Hardy reads first and who starts his radical aspirations, not Paine. And despite the mass circulation which the *Rights of Man* achieved it seems as if his republicanism was very much played down by his followers in the radical societies. [19] The radicalism of the 1790s is not simply Painite. It refers to the Lockeian view of the inalienable rights of man, but it also places an emphasis on the individual's liberty of conscience and the duties which individuals owe each other. Radicalism's debts are to both rights *and* duty-based conceptions of political society and moral life. The language of the rights and *duties* of private judgement and public discussion runs through the toasts of the reform dinners, and, one suspects, it formed a crucial part of the inheritance of those 26 original members of the London Corresponding Society who for five consecutive nights debated whether 'we, who are Tradesmen, Shopkeepers and mechanics [have] any right to seek to obtain parliamentary reform'.[2°] Clearly, Rational Dissent was not the sole source of the ideology of radicalism in the 1790s, but it was a major source. It was major because it provided both standard texts — such as Price and Priestley's works on liberty and the American revolution — and it provided an ongoing, live debate which fed the radical heritage — from the Subscription controversy, through the attempts to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts, to the defence of both the French Revolution and the Dissenters' political aspirations at the beginning of the 1790s. And it continued to feed radical debate throughout the last decade of the century with its attacks on the war with France.' Rational Dissenters, then, made a significant contribution to maintaining the critical traditions which provided radicalism with its intellectual ether. One indication of this is the reluctance of the London Corresponding Society to move to a view which threatened individual rights to dispose of property:

> Remember, I do not mean equality of property. This is totally impossible in the present state of human intellect and industry; and if once you could be seduced to attempt a system so wild and extravagant, you could only give to vandals and cut-throats an opportunity, by general pillage and assassination, of transferring all property into their own hands, and establishing a tyranny more intolerable than anything of which you now complain. The equality I mean, is the equality of rights.'

The radicals of the 1790s wanted equal rights and equal opportunities, and they were guided by the belief that a society of just men and women was a practical possibility. Their conception of justice and their conception of the future were deeply indebted to the Rational Dissenters' conception of true candour and the associated belief that reason and truth could solve most of the conflicts between human beings so long as these conflicts were not perpetuated by corrupt and abused political institutions.

There seems little doubt that the literature and traditions of Rational Dissent provided a significant portion of the theoretical and intellectual content of radicalism. But Rational Dissent did more than this. It also provided a medium for the communication of radical thought. It did this in two ways. Rational Dissent was a dominant force in the publications industry in the last three decades of the century.' Not only were radical pamphlets able to find printers, pretty much regardless of what they said, they were also usually able to latch on to a system of distribution which secured their dissemination. There is yet much work to be done on the publications industry of the last decades of the century, but what is already clear is that radical books and pamphlets were able to achieve geographically wide circulations across a wide section of the public. This is not all attributable to Dissent, yet we should recognize that publishers like Joseph Johnson, George Robinson, Benjamin Flowers, Richard Phillips, and so on, played a major part in maintaining the output of radical books, pamphlets, monthly magazines and reviews and newspapers. Johnson alone published almost half the radical contributions to the debate on France, and Johnson and Robinson together are responsible for about the same proportion of the literature against the war.[24] Rational Dissent also provided a medium in another sense. From their inception, the Society for Constitutional Information and Wyvill's County Association had attracted the support of leading Rational Dissenters — lay and otherwise — and throughout their chequered histories in disseminating radical ideas they had retained the support and sympathies of Rational Dissenters.

Rational Dissent can thus be seen as having provided some of the content of radicalism and part of the medium through which this content was communicated. This is not to say anything very contentious. But Rational Dissent also has a deeper role than these. Rational Dissent cannot be treated simply as a set of beliefs, nor can it be adequately analysed simply in terms of a collection of individuals who adhered to these beliefs. This atomistic form of analysis conceals more than it reveals when applied to the 1790s. I want to suggest that the key role of Rational Dissent lay in the role it played in providing a social substratum for radicalism. It was able to do this because it was a highly integrated and cohesive community. In my following comments I shall try to explicate this claim and indicate its significance for the radicalism of the period.

It is not only the fact that Rational Dissenters were involved in the early campaign for reform that makes them of general political significance in the 1790s. Nor is this simply a function of their intellectual commitments. If the content of Rational Dissent's theology, philosophy and political and moral theory was essentially rationalist, we should not underestimate the extent to which Rational Dissent congregations and communities were held together by less rational ties. When we look at Robbins's account of the Rational Dissenters of the 1770s" or at the social, intellectual, educational, familial, and entrepreneurial networks of those in the 1790s,[26] one cannot but be struck by the fact that they form a highly integrated community or sub-culture. Rational Dissenters formed a discursive community locked together by a host of overlapping familial, intellectual, social and emotional ties. And it was a community whose ideology reflected its practices: the prime virtue of a Dissenter was candour, his or her prime obligation was to engage in public debate and discussion on all pertinent theological, moral, and political issues, and their political activity was both a reflection of their group solidarity and an attempt to secure the political conditions for its continuation and advancement. I emphasize this community aspect of Rational Dissent because we need to see radicalism not simply as an ideology — i.e., as a set of abstract beliefs — but, much more crucially, as a social phenomenon. Their radical ideas were an outgrowth and expression of a set of social and religious practices. These beliefs were rooted in Rational Dissent's communities, and they both spread to and linked up with other liberal circles. In London and in other major towns Rational Dissenters linked up with professional groups, publishing circles, intellectual coteries, debating groups, literary salons, and so on. These circles were, it is true, largely dominated by the middling classes made up of professional and non-manual workers — but they also reached up to the more liberal aristocracy and down to the lower reaches of the skilled artisan classes. It is in such communities that radical ideas are rooted, and it is against the background of such communities that radicalism emerges to take the form of organized societies.

The radicalism of the lower orders needs to be seen in this context. Too much of the discussion on the 1790s seems to assume a less than deep connection between the religious and political affiliations of individuals and their personal identities. Yet it is precisely in this period that for an artisan to proclaim him/her self a radical might involve a fundamental change in his or her self-conception. Why else would five whole nights be spent in discussion of whether we as *artisans* have any right to seek parliamentary reform? The radicalism of Hardy and his friends was hard won — embracing radicalism involved embracing a new identity with a new set of horizons and costs. The spread of political associations amongst groups which had previously had no involvement with highly organized forms of political debate and activity cannot be *sui generis.* While artisan combinations, friendly societies and so on may have provided some guidelines for the new society, much artisan activity

must also have been stimulated by and shaped according to existing political, social, and religious organizations and expressed social, political and religious creeds. We cannot simply explain the rise of the London Corresponding Society by referring to class interest or the self-evidence of democratic beliefs. Democratic beliefs were far from self-evidently true in the 1790s and to understand the emergence of Hardy's association we must recognize the importance of the context of radical ideas and discussion which enabled people of Hardy's class to formulate their particular aspirations and come to see themselves as having a right to achieve those particular goals. This is why the Rational Dissenters' contributions to the literature and to its dissemination throughout the 1790s is crucial to understanding how the London Corresponding Society could develop. This is not to underestimate the importance of the Society and its artisan members. But we must also recognize that the Society also drew members from more middle class backgrounds, and that it also drew on the ideas, organizational principles, and also on the advice and support of this more middle class, intellectual community. On this view, the cornerstone of the radicalism of the 1790s, in London especially, but also in some of the major provincial towns, was the existence of a literate, critical, intellectual culture, rooted in dissenting congregations, coffee houses, publishing houses, literary salons, dinner parties, and the debating clubs of middle class society. Radicals were linked together by shared activities, debating societies, religious affiliations, familial ties, educational backgrounds, and so on, and it was to this culture that the newer, more artisan dominated societies referred, politically, intellectually and socially. On this view we cannot over-estimate the contribution of Rational Dissenters, since their social networks and intellectual commitments provided a significant portion of the backbone of this radical culture.

But why, then, does Rational Dissent stagnate as a religious movement in this period? Although highly complex questions of the causal conditions for religious belief are raised by this question I restrict myself to making a few suggestions.

When Unitarianism emerges as a religious force in the nineteenth century it has a rather different character from that of the Rational Dissent of the last half of the eighteenth century:

> The generous Arian-Arminian speculation of the eighteenth century Rational Dissenters did not perhaps lend itself to missionary endeavours: the new Unitarianism, biblical, dogmatic, deriving from Priestley (another ex-Independent) and relying heavily on Priestley's necessarian philosophy, was ideally suited to the purpose.'

Unitarianism after 1800 assumed a more aggressive, more evangelical style. But it did so, not simply so that it could more successfully compete with the evangelical creeds of the Calvinists or the Methodists. Rather, what we see is much more a collapse of the old order of Rational Dissent — and a collapse of its rationalism and its perfectibilist assumptions. And although the death, retirement and emigration of many of its leading members does have a role in explaining this change, there are also deeper reasons. In the 1780s Rational Dissent was a community united in ideas and political action. With the failure of attempts to secure reform and, subsequently, with the demise of the Revolution Society (which was ill-equipped to adapt to the outbreak of hostilities with France and to the newer developments in radical activity) Rational Dissent lost its political wing. It is too easily assumed that the absence of a specifically Dissenting political organization indicates the demise of the radicalism of Rational Dissent. In fact its members and its communities continue to provide much of the substratum for the radicalism of the 1790s. And their reforming energies were re-directed into other organizations (the Society for Constitutional Information) and other activities (protests against the war with France). But in the process, the once relatively close knit circles of Rational Dissent were opened up to become a part of this broader community of radicalism. Radicalism was thus considerably strengthened, but Rational Dissent was weakened. Within this radical community a high tolerance for heterodox political and religious opinions was a *sine qua non.* As a result of their contact with this culture many of the younger members of Rational Dissent — Godwin, Fawcett, Hazlitt and so on — moved from Arianism, Socinianism and Unitarianism to deism and, occasionally, atheism. While Dissenting congregations with Unitarian ministers seemed to have survived, they faced major problems when an incumbent minister died or retired because of the shortage of replacements. The Dissenting Academies, upon which Rational Dissent had relied for its highly educated ministry faced increasing problems. Indiscipline dogged the last thirty years of the Academies, and reached new heights in the short-lived College at Hackney, where it joined forces with the students' radical politics. In the face of such difficulties subscriptions proved hard to find and the institutions collapsed into debt and disorder.' By the end of the 18th Century little or nothing remained of the educational institutions in which Arianism, Socinianism, and Arminianism had flourished.

Furthermore, the destruction of radicalism by government repression in the last half of the 1790s found Dissenting communities ill-prepared. Having become more and more immersed in the broader critical and radical intellectual culture around radicalism, they were badly affected when this culture began to fragment as it was increasingly infiltrated by spies, its publishers prosecuted,' its journals harassed, and its leading intellectuals pilloried and vilified by the anti-Jacobin press. Those whose rationalism had led them beyond the emerging Unitarianism of the previous decade were left isolated and justly embittered, and those who had retained their belief became

increasingly insular, increasingly embroiled in the mysteries of biblical exegesis and the study of the prophecies.[30] And it is out of this latter, more reduced and more intellectually isolated and conservative group that the less rationalistic form of nineteenth century Unitarianism emerges.

Radicalism is thus both deeply indebted to Rational Dissent — to the intellectual traditions and sub-cultural networks which provide a significant part of the base for radical ideology and unity — and at the same time it is radicalism which undermines Rational Dissent once the political aspirations of the sect have to turn to broader, and more secularly based organizations in order to continue their political activity. And seeing Rational Dissent and the radicalism of the 1790s in this way allows us to grasp the conditions for the former's decline and the latter's brief flourishing in a way that the vast majority of other approaches do not.[31]

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1 Cf. C. Robbins, *The eighteenth century commonwealthman* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), ch. 9; and A. Goodwin, *The friends of liberty* (London, 1979), ch. 2; but see also, J.E. Bradley, 'Whigs and non-Conformists: 'Slumbering radicalism' in English politics, 1739-89', *Eighteenth century studies*, 9, no.1 (1975), 1-27.

2 G.M. Ditchfield, 'The parliamentary struggle over the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts: 1787-1790', *English historical review*, 89 (1974), 551-597; and M. Fitzpatrick, 'Toleration and truth', *Enlightenment and dissent*, 1 (1982), 3-31; Goodwin, op. cit., ch. 3.

3 Goodwin, op. cit., ch. 4.

4 R.W. Davis, *Dissent in politics 1780-1830* (London, 1971), 67-69.

M.R. Watts, *The Dissenters* (Oxford, 1978), 487-490; and H. McLachlan, *English education under the Test Acts* (Manchester, 1931).

6 This view is repeated in the two most recent works which deal with the radicalism of the 1790s: J. Ehrman, *The younger Pitt: the reluctant transition* (London, 1983); and R. Wells, *Insurrection: the British experience 1795-1803* (Trowbridge, Wilts., 1983).

7 Background works on Rational Dissent include, Fitzpatrick, op. cit.; O.M. Griffiths, *Religion and learning* (Cambridge, 1935; R.V. Holt, *The unitarian contribution to social progress in England* (London, 1938 and 1952); U. Henriques, *Religious toleration in England, 1787-1833* (London, 1961); and A.H. Lincoln, *Some political and social ideas of English dissent*, (Cambridge, 1938).

8 N.U. Murray, 'The influence of the French Revolution on the church of England and its rivals', University of Oxford, D. Phil. thesis, 1975, 133.

9 Fitzpatrick, op. cit., 11.

10 Sandeman combined a fierce hostility to doctrines of faith with a predestinarianism which seemed to take the form of arguing that receiving God's grace was tantamount to receiving reason.

11 'Pray to the God of truth to lead you into all truth, and may he give you understanding in all things'. J. Priestley, *An appeal to the serious and candid professors of Christianity* (London, 1791), 31 and passim.

12 D.O. Thomas, *The honest mind*, Oxford, 1977, 99-111.

13 D. Hartley, *Observations on man, his frame, his duty and his expectations* (London, 1791), II, 197, first published 1749.

14 Henriques, op. cit., ch. 3.

15 J. Stevenson, *Popular disturbances in England: 1700-1870* (London, 1979), 165;

16 D.E. Ginter, 'The loyalist movement of 1792 and British public opinion', *Historical journal*, IX, no. 2 (1966), 179-190.

17 *The Protestant Dissenters magazine*, III (Nov. 1796), 433-35.

18 Goodwin, op. cit., ch. 4.

19 Ibid., 176-77 and 311-331.

20 Ibid., 193.

21 J.E. Cookson, *The friends of peace: anti-war liberalism in England 1793-1815*, (Cambridge, 1982), ch. 1 and passim.

22 J. Thelwall, *Peaceful means and not tumultory violence the means of redressing national grievances* (London, 1795), 14.

23 Lincoln, op. cit., 36-37.

24 Cookson, op. cit., ch. 4.

25 Robbins, op. cit., ch. 9.

26 A significant proportion of these circles can be reconstructed from William Godwin's diaries for the period deposited as part of the Abinger manuscript collection, Bodleian Library, Oxford. See also Cookson, op. cit., ch. 1.

27 I. Sellers, 'Unitarians and social change: Part I. Varieties of radicalism, 1795-1815', *The Hibbert journal*, 61, no. 241, 1962-3, 16.

[28] M.R. Watts, op. cit., 488-89, ascribes part of the laxity of discipline to the free thinking of those teaching in the Academies, but also suggests that at Warrington, where the issuing of exhibitions to divinity students was discontinued as an economy measure in 1766, indiscipline increased as the number of divinity students declined. However, the evidence on Warrington's admissions does not support this claim [cf., I Parker, *Dissenting academies in England* (Cambridge, 1914), appendix V, 1601. What it does suggest is that turbulence is associated with an increasing rate of admissions for 'unspecified' courses of study. Whether this category simply represents classification problems in the academy, or whether it reflects a less than one hundred per cent commitment to a Dissenting education (or indeed an education of any kind) is simply not clear. However, it should be emphasized that although some colleges may have experienced problems associated with the admission of pupils from non-Dissenting families (so as to maintain numbers and income), it seems that when attempts were made to ensure orthodoxy on admission (William Godwin was turned down by Homerton for Sandemanianism, and Hackney was clearly established as a denominational school) this produced no better results.

[29] Cookson, op. cit., p.101, argues that the liberal press was not as cowed as is generally assumed; but he does recognize that 1798 was a particularly bad year for the press, and one suspects that he may well have over-estimated the degree of continuity between liberal publishers before and after 1798.

[30] Priestley in particular — see also Sellers, op. cit., 17, and C. Garrett, 'Joseph Priestley, the millenium, and the French Revolution', *Journal of the history of ideas*, 34, no.1 (1973), 425-46,

[31] My account of the social circles in which radicalism took root owes much to some suggestive comments made by: R. Porter, *English society in the eighteenth century* (Harmondsworth, 1982), 98, and 'The Enlightenment in England', in R. Porter and M. Teich (eds.) *The Enlightenment in national context* (Cambridge, 1981), 5-15; E.P. Thompson, 'The peculiarities of the English' in *The poverty of theory*, (London, 1978), 58-59; and R. Williams, *Problems in materialism and culture* (London, 1980), 158.

Utilitarianism and justice: a note on Bentham and Godwin

F. Rosen

Although Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and William Godwin (1756-1836) were contemporaries and shared numerous friends and acquaintances, there is no evidence that they actually met or corresponded.' In his biography of Godwin, Don Locke frequently juxtaposes the ideas of the two contemporaries but records no direct contact beyond Godwin sending Bentham (among others) a copy of his *Of population* when it appeared in 1820.[2] Bentham's published works contain only a few passing references to Godwin, the most substantial of which appears in the *Book of fallacies,* where Godwin is mentioned, together with Priestley and Condorcet, as having been unfairly maligned and dismissed by the use of the 'anti-rational fallacy': 'too good to be practicable'.'

With so few references to Godwin in Bentham's writings, even a brief discussion of Godwin's *Enquiry concerning political justice* is bound to be of interest.[4] This appears in the recently published 'Article on Utilitarianism', the essay Bentham wrote in 1829 as an account of the development of the principle of utility in response to Macaulay's attack on James Mill which had been published in the *Edinburgh Review.'* Bentham's essay was not considered suitable as a reply to Macaulay's polemical argument, and though it was consulted by Perronet Thompson for his reply to Macaulay in the *Westminster Review* of July 1829, it has only now been published in full as part of the new edition of Bentham's *Collected works.'* Bentham's reference to Godwin may be found in his critique of the use of justice as an all-embracing `ipsedixie principle in place of or in opposition to the greatest happiness principle:

> Of an act of insubordination, not to say rebellion or high treason, against the Sovereignty of this only legitimate all-ruling principle, an exemplification presents itself at this moment in the style and title assumed by Mr. Godwin's *Political justice:* and, if the memory of the writer of these pages has not deceived itself, some atonement has since been made for the offence by the imputations cast upon it by certain errors in matters of detail with which the work has been charged. Into the validity of these charges, it is neither our business nor our intention to make, in the present instance, an enquiry. What is more to the purpose and on that score, as well as in itself, if we do not deceive ourselves, more useful is to bring to view the relation which the import of the word 'justice' presents itself as bearing to the greatest happiness principle — an indication by which alone two useful operations can be performed, namely, in the manifestation a clear explanation of the import of the word, and manifestation made of the allegiance due from it.'

Taken out of context Bentham's meaning in this passage is not entirely clear. The 'act of insubordination' to which he referred was Godwin's adoption of a conception of justice which was not subordinate to the principle of utility. The 'atonement . . . for the offence' referred most probably to the revisions Godwin made in his account of justice in the two later editions of the work and in his reply to the later criticism of Dr. Samuel Parr.' If this interpretation is correct, Bentham's remarks are somewhat puzzling, because he would have known that the account of justice presented by Godwin was based on utilitarian principles. Indeed, it might be claimed that *Political justice* was the first utilitarian work specifically devoted to justice, and, at the minimum, the first major utilitarian discussion of justice since Hume's *Treatise.* Don Locke has written: 'Yet to us Godwin reveals himself merely as a classic Utilitarian, at one with Bentham and Mill in judging an action by its consequences, in identifying goodness with happiness and happiness with pleasure'.[9] Locke goes on to argue that it was Godwin's utilitarian account of justice which led to the public outcry over his example of the choice between saving the lives of a member of one's family and the famous Fenelon, author of *Telemachus,* if only one could be saved from a fire.

[10]

Bentham may have chosen Godwin's work for his example only because `justice' appeared in the title. But more probably Bentham was suggesting that the weakness of Godwin's book was that he had tried to give an utilitarian account of justice rather than to give justice a precise though subordinate place in an account of the principle of utility. For Bentham the main difference between Godwin's and his own approaches to justice lay in the way they conceived justice in relation to utility. For Godwin, the principle of utility was a means for explaining the meaning of justice which in turn was a concept embracing the whole of human conduct: for Bentham, justice was clearly a subordinate though distinct principle. Bentham was able to appreciate that the scope and complexity of the traditional notions associated with justice would render a coherent utilitarian account of justice highly difficult, if not impossible.

It is arguable that Godwin's difficulties with his account of justice lay with factors unrelated to his utilitarianism, and especially with the arguments and concepts he inherited from the Dissenting tradition." Nevertheless, from Bentham's perspective, at least, the very project of constructing an utilitarian account of justice was suspect. In the *Introduction to the principles of morals and legislation* he was content to deal with justice in a footnote as merely another way of expressing the principle of utility. [12] His early writing on civil law, where the conception of the ends of legislation, as security, subsistence, abundance and equality, was developed not only omitted justice but could also be regarded as a way of avoiding a distinct problem of justice. "Even material on justice written for *Deontology* in 1814 and 1819 tended to resolve the problems associated with the virtue of justice into what Bentham

conceived as the more basic virtues of probity and benevolence." Nevertheless, by the late 1820s, Bentham had run into a number of problems in his thought which may well have tempted him to re-consider his earlier tendency to minimize justice as a concept in his thought. The first of these problems arose in the field of civil law to which Bentham returned in the late 1820s as part of the great work of his last years, the *Pannomion* (complete code of laws). Although in the earlier *Traites,* he had developed an approach to civil law (which included the law of property) without much emphasis on justice, in his later writings (now converted to radicalism) he had to face the problem of how to implement radical reform and press for increasing equality, while still emphasizing individual security as the major goal of legislation. At this time he began to develop the 'disappointment-prevention principle' which, under the greatest happiness principle, emphasized the maintenance of established and vested rights to office, property, etc. except where full compensation was given in return for the reform." Where no vested rights existed, the reform could proceed without hindrance, as the person concerned could not claim 'disappointment' in this precise sense. In the 'Article on utilitarianism' Bentham acknowledged the importance of this principle as the `one all-comprehensive rule of civil justice' .[16] In several texts from 1830 onwards, including *Official aptitude maximized, expense minimized,* the Equity Dispatch Court material, and the unfinished `Pannomial fragments', Bentham used the principle to show how positive reform to minimize government expense and to enhance good government could take place without a threat to individual security raised by the general threat of confiscation of property." He developed principles which were designed, for example, to minimize the number of people affected by a proposed reform, to ensure the payment of full compensation in instances where vested rights were threatened so as not to generate opposition to reform, and to deal with those numerous instances where there was opposition to reform, but no vested rights had been established. In his brief later writings on the 'disappointment-prevention principle' Bentham was clearly developing a conception of justice applicable in a practical way to political reform."

A second problem which increasingly concerned Bentham in the 1820's was the tendency for the phrase 'greatest happiness of the greatest number' to be interpreted as allowing the oppression or even enslavement of a minority if the result produced no diminution of the total quantity of happiness.° In part, Bentham was concerned with the way the phrase 'of the greatest number' seemed to justify this view, and increasingly after 1827 he began to call this ultimate principle 'the greatest happiness' rather than 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'.' He also began to clarify his position on equality and especially on the relationship between equality and security so that reform which moved gradually towards increasing equality of wealth, following upon increased equality of power (through universal suffrage), without posing a general threat to security, could be incorporated into his system.'

Especially in these last years, Bentham assembled some ingredients for a theory of justice. In the 'Article on Utilitarianism' he attempted to bring these various elements of his approach to justice into some sort of focus and to point out how he conceived of justice in relation to utility. He noted that the term 'justice' in reference to rules of justice was generally employed with two implicit assumptions: (a) that the rule of action had been laid down by a competent authority; and (b) that the rule was 'a right and proper one'.' He then proposed that any of the various 'rules or maxims of justice' might be tested in relation to the greatest happiness principle. This test apparently consisted of two parts, the first being to see if the maxim was in conformity with the greatest happiness principle and the second to ensure that it was subordinate to it. Bentham admitted that this brief sketch of justice was unsatisfactory and incomplete, yet 'this is all that can yet be done towards rendering the import attached to it clear and determinate'.' The next stage was not, for Bentham, to construct a 'theory' of justice but to look at the way justice might have some role in the two main branches of law (as he conceived them): the civil and penal. In civil law, as we have seen, he found the rule of justice in the 'disappointment-prevention principle' and in penal law, in the application of penal sanctions to minimize various wrongs. It is worth noting that he did not mention 'political justice', the subject of Godwin's book, or distributive justice, except as the 'disappointment-prevention principle' had a bearing on it. In these two cases justice would not necessarily contain one of the two assumptions mentioned above. That is to say, the relevant maxims would not necessarily be laid down by a competent authority, as the maxims of political and distributive justice might logically precede the establishment of the competent authority. At this level, maxims of justice would rival the greatest happiness principle, and Bentham had insisted on the clear subordination of justice in this respect.

Although Bentham had turned away from the tradition in which justice might be equated with the whole of virtue (as in Plato and Aristotle) he had not neglected justice in the whole of his system. In this respect he anticipated J. S. Mill both in discussing justice as a principle clearly subordinate to utility and in linking justice to the theme of security.' Nevertheless, from the point of view of the relationship between justice and utility, it is clear that Bentham rejected Godwin's approach of constructing an utilitarian theory of justice.

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I For references to Bentham by Godwin, see Ford K. Brown, *William Godwin*, (London, 1926), 322; C. Kegan Paul, *William Godwin: his friends and contemporaries*, 2 vols. (London, 1876), II, 314-20; F. Rosen, *Progress and democracy: William Godwin's contribution to political philosophy*, University of London Ph.D Thesis, 1965, p.210.

[2] D. Locke, *A fantasy of reason, the life and thought of William Godwin*, (London and Boston, 1980), 295; see also pp. 10, 11, 167-68, 174, 319, 350. See P.H. Marshall, *William Godwin*, (New Haven and London, 1984), 3, 99, 100.

[3] See *The works of Jeremy Bentham, published under the superintendence of John Bowring*, 11 vols. (Edinburgh, 1838-43), II, 462; see also X, 13, 59.

[4] W. Godwin, *Enquiry concerning political justice*, ed. F.E.L. Priestley, 3 vols. (Toronto, 1946). This edition consists of a reproduction of the third edition of 1798 and variants from the two earlier editions of 1793 and 1796.

[5] *Deontology together with a table of the springs of action and article on utilitarianism*, ed. A. Goldworth (Oxford, 1983), *[The collected works of Jeremy Bentham* ECW1(London and Oxford, 1968-)1, pp. 283-328. For the debate over Macaulay's critique of James Mill's *Essay on government*, see *Utilitarian logic and politics*, ed. J. Lively and J. Rees (Oxford, 1978).

[6] See *Deontology (CW)*, xxxiii.

[7] Ibid., 307-08.

[8] Professor Goldworth has suggested (CW, 307n.) that the errors with which the work was charged and which led to Godwin's 'atonement' were to be found generally in Malthus's attack on Godwin or in the most recent work in the debate over population, Francis Place's *Illustrations and proofs of the principle of population* (1822). Although the controversy over population might have recalled Godwin's earlier work to Bentham's mind, Godwin never 'atoned' for his writing on population, and Bentham was more probably referring here to the criticisms made especially of his conception of justice *in Political justice. 'In* Godwin's own lifetime', D. H. Monro has written *(Godwin's moral philosophy*, London, 1953, p.9), 'this was apparently what most people remembered from *Political justice'*. Whatever reminded Bentham of Godwin's work — it may have been the essay on Godwin published by Hazlitt *in The spirit of the age* in 1825, the death of Samuel Parr (the friend of Bentham who earlier was a critic of Godwin) in 1826, or simply the recollection of Godwin's book (as the passage suggests), — it seems clear from the context of the passage that it was Godwin's conception of justice to which Bentham referred.

[9] Locke, 172-73. Monro has written (p. 14): 'Godwin, then, arrives at the utilitarian solution, at about the same time as Bentham, and apparently independently of him'.

[10] Locke, 173. The passage in Godwin's *Political justice* may be found in Book II, Chapter ii.

11 See F. E. L. Priestley, III, 22, 26; see also a new approach to this problem in M. F. E. Philp, *William Godwin's political justice, 1788-1800*, D. Phil. Thesis, Oxford, 1983.

[12] ed. J. H. Burns and H. L. A. Hart (London, 1970), WWI, 120n.

[13] See, for example, Bentham's *Traites de legislation, civile et penale*, ed. E. Dumont, 3 vols. (Paris, 1802).

14 *Deontology [CW1*, 219-22.

[15] See F. Rosen, *Jeremy Bentham and representative democracy, a study of the constitutional code*, (Oxford, 1983), 101-106.

[16] *Deontology [CW1*, 308.

[17] Bowring, V. 266-7; III, 325-26; III. 226.

[18] In an essay on Hume's conception of virtue, written by Bentham in 1828 and published for the first time in the *Deontology* volume as an appendix, Bentham linked the 'disappointment prevention principle' with Hume's concept of justice *(CW*, 353). This would seem to suggest, however, that Bentham's principle had little relevance to reform and radical politics, as Hume's conception of justice as security of property had little relevance to reform and radical politics (except perhaps as it excluded notions of divine justice and natural law). But some comments made by Bentham about Locke reveal that he would differ from Hume in the extension of security and 'disappointment-prevention' to spheres other than property: 'Locke showed that on that occasion he had missed sight of so many other valuable subject matters of possession, namely, power, reputation, condition in life in so far as beneficent, not forgetting exemption from *pain* in all the several shapes in which either body or mind is the seat of it (a possession for which, unfortunately, language has not been found to furnish any shorter name), possession giving

security to which is among the functions and cares of justice: so many subject matters of *maleficence* on the part of individuals, of inhibition and punishment at the hands of government, and to the extent of such inhibition (termed also prohibition) of delinquency on the part of individuals' (CW, 314-15). This extension of the subject matter where 'disappointment-prevention' might apply enabled Bentham to move beyond the protection of property in the narrow sense.

[19] See *Deontology* (CW), 309-10. See also R. Shackleton, 'The greatest happiness of the greatest number: the history of Bentham's phrase', *Studies on Voltaire and the eighteenth century,* XC (1972), 1461-82.

[20] See Rosen, *Jeremy Bentham and representative democracy,* 200-203.

[21] Ibid., 211-20.

[22] *Deontology [C* WI, 308.

[23] Ibid.

[24] See J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism* (1863), Chapter V.

Henry Grove: a dissenter at the parting of the ways

Alan P. F. Sell

The venerable High Calvinist, John Ball of Honiton (1665? — 1745), knew where he stood.' On 7th October 1730 he delivered *Some remarks on a new way of preaching propos'd in an ordination sermon preach'd at Taunton* (1736). The new way is the way of the rationalists, and among prominent culprits are Socinus and Locke:

> Socinus was a great Reasoner, and he tells us, he did not believe a Thing, because he found it in the Scriptures; but first consulted whether the Thing was agreeable to his Reason, and then believed what was written, otherwise not . . . And do not many of our rational Divines copy after him, who endeavour to interpret away the plainest Places of Scripture, to establish their own Notions, which they call Reason and Philosophy? You see there are some that come up pretty near to his Way of using the holy Scriptures.'

As for Locke, he is `so much admir'd and recommended to Students in Divinity,' yet he was 'above Ordinances and the Worship of God' .[3] Locke waters down the scriptures, blunting the edge of such texts as 'Thou shalt surely die' by holding that after death the wicked have no sensation or being.

Isaac Newton and Samuel Clarke are no less guilty: they 'think it not just that God should punish Sin committed in this world with eternal Misery. These are the Men that are for rational Enquiries, and free Thought; and shall Dissenters lackey after 'em? God forbid! i[4]

By way of illustrating the peril Ball cites a king of Sweden who, after coming into contact with Leibniz, 'a great Genius that lov'd Reason and free Enquiries', became 'very cold in Religion and indifferent to the Duties of it' .[5]

Not only is the new way of preaching inherently misguided — was not Christ's own preaching dogmatical? — it does not even work: 'I wish we could hear of more success from this new-fashion Preaching.'[6] If only ministers would receive the wisdom of God and not of men, and preach the scriptures `instead of making Harangues upon Virtue!"

Ball's concern is fuelled by the fact that error has come as close to home as Taunton. It is represented there by the learned Dr. Henry Grove (1683-1738)[8] whose pious parents Ball had known:

> They were indeed no Philosophers, but they thought it the highest Reason that Men should obey his Commands, who after he had killed, was able to destroy both Body and Soul in Hell-fire. But the wise Doctor says, this is to please Children with Sugar-Plums, and to fright 'em with Whips, and not likely to do any Good, because they did not form their Minds to a rational Sense of Good and Evil, or give 'em a Taste and Relish for Virtue.'

Grove's parents, by contrast, believed that 'the Scriptures were able to make them wise to Salvation' and they acted accordingly. After all, Christ `taught by Precepts, Promises and Threatenings', and did not delineate the nature of good and evil 'in what they call a rational Way'. `Wo to our Saviour when he falls into the Hands of Philosophers and rational Divines!' [1°]

From a number of interesting points which arise from Ball's diatribe we note two in passing. First, Ball clearly fears for the Ark. He epitomizes Christians of every age who are convinced that new ideas will undermine the faith once delivered to the saints. The nineteenth-century Irish Presbyterian Professor, Thomas Witherow comes to mind as a later example of this perennial tendency. With reference to the spread of the Arian poison in eighteenth-century theological colleges Witherow lamented, 'Heresy from the pulpit may slay her thousands, but heresy from the rostrum slays its tens of thousands'." Ball would surely have concurred, for did not Henry Grove occupy the rostrum at the prominent Taunton Academy? The attitude of Ball and of Witherow is that of conservatives in every age. Our own view is that this attitude may not be dismissed out of hand, for in a proper sense there *is* something to be conserved by the Church in order that it may be handed on; and in each successive generation Christians need to rediscover what it is.

Secondly, Ball's implication that the new preaching does not work may not be taken at face value. F. J. Powicke long ago showed that, for example, in Exeter — and there largely under the influence of one of Grove's students, Micaijah Towgood (1700-1792) and *his* pupil James Manning' — Arian teaching became so compelling to many that their cause was the most flourishing in the city. Conversely, High Calvinism was not enough to prevent the withering of other churches." Certainly Towgood's position was such that a mere eight years after the passing of John Ball, he could encourage the Exeter Assembly to overturn its resolution of 1719, which had required trinitarian subscription of all ordinands.

I

But our immediate concern is with Grove's reply to Ball. This is the more telling because Grove was not given to controversy. He had taken no part in the doctrinal/subscription debates which had led to the Salters' Hall meeting of 1719; and he regularly refused invitations to preach in notable places `through a strong attachment to quiet, liberty, and independence'. Indeed, 'He often applied to the warm dealers in controversy, those lines of Mr. Baxter:

> We croud about a little spark,
> Learnedly striving in the dark;
> Never so bold as when most blind,
> Run fastest when the truth's behind."

The writer of the *Memories* from which we have just quoted goes on to say, `His moderate conduct drew on him the censures of some, as if he were indifferent to the truths of the gospel; but these could not induce him to alter. He did not believe that the wrath of man would ever work the righteousness of God, or that interposing the authority of fallible mortals was the proper way to end controversies, or establish divine truth."

All of which suggests that Ball must have caught Grove on the raw. Pacific though he was, Grove took up his pen and addressed a *Letter* to Ball which was published in 1737. In the Preface he writes of Ball that:

> He mistakes, he accuses, he rails, he exclaims and laments; and that's all. This, indeed, must be said for him, that he is a bright example of the dogmatical and mechanical way of writing, and of that aversion to Reason in Religion, with which it seems to be one principal part of his aim to possess his Readers.'

Ball's weak argumentation and downright errors might have been excused had Ball written in haste following the publication of Grove's sermon, *Some thoughts concerning the proofs of a future state from reason* (1730), which is ostensibly the occasion of Ball's *Remarks.* But the two works are separated by six years. Nevertheless Grove waxes magnanimous: 'I heartily forgive the Writer, and wish him no other harm than a better spirit'." Grove cannot understand why Ball should wish to maintain the 'inhuman' and 'unchristian' opinion 'which damns all the Heathen without mercy', and he finds no justification for Ball's conviction that those who maintain the contrary are fellow-travellers with free thinkers and deists.

We need not, however, pick the specific doctrinal bone of contention as between Ball and Grove. Of more importance is Grove's general stance *vis-a-vis* the place of reason in religion. Against Ball, Grove insists that when he emphasizes the reasonableness of the duties of morality, and God's goodness in requiring them — far from departing from Christ's way of preaching he is entirely in the line of Christ. For Christ frequently gave reasons for his commands, and did not usually deduce them overtly from an elaborate doctrinal system. How can it be a mark of disrespect to the Saviour to amplify the reasons he has given for moral living? Nor is such amplification a sign of one's going beyond the apostles, of whose teaching we have only the substance. Indeed, we could not have had all of their amplifications 'without swelling the Records of our Religion to an inconvenient bulk' .[18]

Grove is particularly strongly opposed to any doctrine of regeneration which would rule reason and consideration out of the conversion process. Conversion would then become an arbitrary action of the Holy Spirit, and faith's function as moral cause or motive would be impossible of fulfilment. Against this false account Grove makes 'the change of heart in conversion,

under the influences of divine Grace, to be the effect of rational conviction, and that of serious consideration' .[19] In this way the 'promises and threatenings of the Gospel produce their intended effect'." At this juncture Grove quotes from his original sermon in a footnote: if, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the love of God is begotten in us, this 'love must be the effect of a conviction, that the things which the Gospel ascribes to God as adorable perfections, and requires of man in order to his resembling God are in their own nature lovely and excellent'.[21]

To Ball's `Wo' Grove returns his own: 'Woe to the most reasonable Religion in the whole world, when it falls into the hands of men that are the avowed enemies of Reason; the Goths and Vandals of the Christian Church! Woe to the Rational Divines should they fall under the power of blind and merciless bigots!'" More positively, 'the love of the righteous Lord, and of righteousness, is, ordinarily at least, the fruit of knowledge and consideration, under the conspiring influences of the Divine Spirit'."

Grove proceeds to show that *(contra* Ball's claim) he argues *against* Locke's annihilationist doctrine; and that whereas he gives thanks for all rational enquirers, and will receive the truth from 'Protestant or Papist, Orthodox or Heretic', he will not engage in personal attack when he disagrees with a man. He will not take the opinions of men before those of scripture, 'though I will frankly own that, were Ito take my faith upon trust, it should be from those that appear to have used the most pains to find out the truth; not from those who while they assume a power to dictate, and determine for others, seldom or never think or reason for themselves'.[24]

Grove thanks Ball for the reference to his parents who, 'if they were no philosophers, as you tell the world they were not, yet that they had no aversion to philosophy they showed by giving their Son a liberal education'."

The effect of Ball's pamphlet is to confirm Grove in his resolution 'not tamely to submit my Faith or Practice to the haughty dictates of any man, or party of men whatsoever; and in my notion of the necessity of men's making more use of their Reason in religious matters, than they ordinarily do'.[26] His prayer for Ball is `that what remains of the evening of your days may be calm and serene, useful and happy; and when the time comes for your departure out of this world, you may leave it in a more christian temper than that which you at present discover'."

I I

How shall we evaluate Grove's position on the place of reason in religion? First, he claims to stand in the line of Richard Baxter. In a Postscript to his *Letter* to Ball he quotes Baxter's opinion that those who charge such men as Chillingworth and Hammond with Socinianism are really only assisting that heresy by making it appear that the Socinians alone have a reason for their religion — as if to say: if faith be rational, it must be Socinian. 'What more can be done to the disgrace and ruin of Christianity', Baxter rhetorically asks, `than to make the world believe we have no Reason for it'[28]? Lest some should suspect Baxter's doctrinal soundness we may cite so staunch a Calvinist Puritan as John Flavel. Flavel by no means limited the role of reason to that of leaving sinful man without excuse. There was a positive function as well: `Reason exalts man above all earthly beings; it is his dignity and privilege, that God hath furnished him with abilities of mind, to recollect, animadvert, compare, infer, ponder, and judge his own actions'. By reason man becomes capable of 'moral government by human laws' and of 'spiritual government by divine laws'. All of which was not only to echo Calvin," but to pave the way for such a Cambridge Platonist as Benjamin Whichcote who, in his third letter to Anthony Tuckney wrote, `I oppose not rational to spiritual, for spirit is most rational'. For his part Grove declares that 'whatever Religion is rational, in the propriety of the term, must needs be divine' .[30]

But if Grove was verbally similar to some of the earlier divines, we must not overlook the differences in intellectual atmosphere as between the early eighteenth century and earlier periods. Thus, whereas Baxter, for example, wrote at a time of extravagant enthusiasms which, he felt, demanded the critical and balancing response of reason, the air Grove breathed was Augustan; reason for its own sake was now much more to the fore. Moreover, Baxter did not hesitate to put the other side of -the case, and he did it much more clearly than does Grove: 'He whose religion is all in his opinions, will be most frequently and zealously speaking his opinions; and he whose religion lies in his knowledge and love of God and Christ, will be most delightfully speaking of that happy time when he shall enjoy them.'"

Although Grove recognizes formality and enthusiasm as the extremes to be avoided, and thinks that they will be avoided only by 'a sober use of our reasoning faculty without which true Religion and false, the appearance and the reality are all upon a level' ,[32] his chief enemy is dogmatic doctrinal scholasticism. For him as for others, the watershed was Locke's *The reasonableness of Christianity as delivered in the scriptures* (1695), in which Locke championed reason's right to examine the Bible and to pronounce upon its contents in a manner uninhibited by tradition or received doctrinal formulae. As a student at Taunton under Matthew Warren, Grove had drunk deeply of Locke," and his further studies in London were taken under his

cousin Thomas Rowe, 'a zealous Cartesian' .[34] Moreover, unlike some, Rowe did not welcome free enquiry for himself and deny it to others. On the contrary, `To his pupils he allowed the most enlarged freedom of enquiry, and it is well known that some of them followed a path in controversy very different to that of the tutor.'"

Precisely because of his *relative* exaltation of reason, Henry Grove was never tempted to go beyond reason — as, for example, the Cambridge Platonist Henry More came near to doing when he refers to the Christian gospel as a 'kind of Engine' designed to elevate man to the contemplative life beyond rationality." If More was tempted to become airborne, Grove ever had his feet on the ground.

But if Grove felt uneasy in the presence of Calvinistic scholasticism, he was, in an even older sense, something of a scholastic himself. In 1732 he published his *Queries proposed to the consideration of all such as think it an injury to religion to shew the reasonableness of it.* In Query III he asks:

> Is not Reason one way of God's speaking to men, as Revelation is another? If so; after God hath spoken to us by Revelation, are we no longer to attend to him as he speaks to us, and instructs us, by our reason? Why? If he does not speak contrary things; which cannot be affirmed without blasphemy.'

Here is the nature-grace dichotomy which issued in the medieval 'synthesis'. The difficult questions in this connection include the following: *Can* we know anything of God unless he deigns to reveal it to us? Can *we*, being sinners, rely upon our reason apart from saving grace? Such questions are not pursued by Grove.

He had said more than enough, however, to prompt John Ball to deem him `unsound' (to use a later epithet). One might have thought that Grove's refusal to be drawn into the Exeter and Salters' Hall disputes over trinitarian doctrine and confessional subscription would have gone some way towards redeeming him in the eyes of Ball and other conservatives. In fact it is more likely that they would have taken the following passage in Strong's funeral sermon for Grove as evidence that Grove was quite unprincipled: Grove did not make 'religion look disagreeable, by unsociable rigours, and sour austerities'. He happily joined 'the agreeable humour of a considerable wit, with the decent deportment of a serious divine'. Above all, 'he was very charitable in his sentiments of those that were of different opinions from himself . . . He had frequently been heard to say, 'the older I grow, the less inclined I am to quarrel with men for different opinions', adding that 'where there's an honest heart, God will overlook a thousand mistakes of the head'. I never knew him earnest and zealous for, or against, any particular principles' ."

The recollection that the preacher on this occasion, Strong of Ilminster, had `revised' the Westminster Confession in 1735; and that the elder Samuel Bourn's re-writing of Strong's text was published, together with Bourn's own *Lectures in a catechetical method* in 1738 in a volume recommended by several Presbyterian ministers including Henry Grove" would have done nothing to lessen the feeling of betrayal in conservative breasts. The recollection of other `evils' resulting from Grove's ministry — the 1744 breach in the congregation at Treville Street, Plymouth, when one of Grove's pupils succeeded the stalwart Calvinist Nathaniel Harding, who had ministered there for fifty-four years; William Cornish's refusal to allow Whitefield's 'star in the West', Risdon Darracott, to preach in his Sherborne pulpe — these and other incidents would only serve to reinforce the feeling.

The underlying question in all this is that of the locus of authority in religion; and although Grove himself propounded no obviously heretical doctrines, his liberal, open attitude provided a climate in which others, some of whom lacked his balance, could exalt reason alone to the detriment of sound doctrine. In this way, and despite himself, Henry Grove stood at the parting of the doctrinal ways.

III

Henry Grove's favourite field of study and writing was ethics. As in doctrine, so here: he stood at the parting of the ways; but, as we shall see, he took a practical step *vis-a-vis* ethics which encouraged the subsequent severance of that subject (in the minds of many) from religion.

In the preface to the sermon he preached at Taunton on 7th October 1730, at the ordination of his nephew, assistant tutor and eventual successor Thomas Amory, and William Cornish, Grove set down his position in a nutshell: 'morality is originally founded in the nature and relations of reasonable Beings; . . . it is one great excellency and commendation of the Religion of our blessed Saviour, that it hath given us a scheme of the purest, the most useful, and the most perfect morality that ever was' .[4]" The *Memoirs* inform us that Grove loved truth in all its forms, 'but moral truth the most, because it immediately improves the heart' .'We could hardly be further from cold intellectualism: Grove wants us to be kinder, holier, better. This way lies our true happiness: 'the design of Morality is to unite the distracted opinions of mankind in one uniform invariable idea of happiness, to lead them to the injoyments *(sic)* in which it is to be found, and to direct to the means for the attainment of it.' Man's chief end is to find his happiness in God." How may this be? The answer is given in the preface to the Amory-Cornish ordination sermon:

> The nature of man being considered, together with the relations he stands in to God, and his fellow-creatures, love is the first duty he owes both to them, and to himself; a love of desire, delight, and gratitude, mingled with an awful veneration to his Maker; a love of benevolence to other intelligent Beings; and a love enlightened by wisdom, not flowing from blind instinct, to himself. To this love, and by consequence, to all the actions that are the necessary effects, and genuine expressions of it, there must be an obligation antecedent in nature to any laws and precepts concerning it, whether human or divine. We are obliged to love God, not merely because he hath commanded us to love him, but because he hath made us capable of loving him, and both by his perfections and his benefits challenges our love. Did these not oblige us to love him as soon as we were in a condition to make any reflection on them, no subsequent command could oblige us to it. Why else are these things (viz, the perfections of the divine nature, and the kindness and love of God to us) mentioned as reasons of love which no ingenuous mind can resist? For if they are good reasons why we should love God, now that he commands it, they must be equally reasons for love antecedent to the consideration of any command whatsoever.'

This very important passage shows that although Grove will not have reason constricted by dogma; and although in the specific case of ethics he will not have morality 'deduced' from theology he by no means conceives of an irreligious ethic. He believes that there is a natural and a moral fitness in things; that the natural and the moral are inseparably united; and that because man is a rational being he is a moral agent. It is fit that man lives in a fit way.[46] Here is Grove the convinced Newtonian emphasizing the orderliness of God's governance of the world, and doing so in a typically early-eighteenth-century way; for we must remember that to Grove and his contemporaries 'Nature' means 'that natural order which operates in accordance with immutable laws' — it does not yet mean 'landscape' or 'the countryside'. To any who suggest that there are fitnesses apart from a Deity to order them, Grove replies that the very eternity and unchangeableness of the fitnesses implies the will of the Deity that they be so. Moreover, 'it is only from these unchangeable fitnesses in things that we can be certain of the unchangeableness of God in his purposes, and government of the world'.' So God makes the fitnesses eternal and unchangeable; and their eternity and unchangeableness assure us of God's unchangeableness. Here Grove is at his weakest, and the time was not far off when philosophers would without compunction sever ethics from religion. Indeed, Grove himself unwittingly took a practical step which facilitated this divorce.

Like some before him and many since, Grove became a curriculum innovator. At his Taunton Academy he removed the study of ethics from the theological department and made it a subject in its own right. But, to insist upon the point, *he* did not separate morality from God:

> As all Morality has its foundation in Religion, or the belief of a Supreme Being, and the hopes and fears of mankind relating to him, if there be no other life of man but what is animal and dying, Religion vanishes of course, and with that Morality, as far as it flows from conscience, regulates the habit and temper of the mind, and is supported by the awe or love of a Divine Being . . .[48]

Nevertheless, in ethics as in doctrine — and again *malgre lui* — Grove stood at the parting of the ways. Soon there would come those in the wake of Kant who would argue for the autonomy of morals; those who would advocate the divorce of morality from religion; and those who, in our own time, argue that there is no such thing as Christian Ethics — there are just Christians who behave ethically or not, as the case may be. Henry Grove could not have forseen these outcomes, and would probably not have welcomed them; but his curriculum innovation was one innocent step on the road to the several varieties of secular humanism.'

I V

Of Henry Grove it was said that 'In him the life of reason and religion seemed to have commenced together' .[5°] In the fields of doctrine and ethics he unwittingly assisted those who would exalt the former and repudiate the latter. Nevertheless we may be confident that the prayer which this 'burning and a shining light' offered on his own behalf at the end of his *Letter* to Ball was answered. Grove asked, 'that in simplicity and godly sincerity I may have my conversation in the world, not giving any real ground for reproach; and then whatever quarter it comes from, not troubling myself about it, regarding it only as an exercise of that charity and patience which I desire may always have possession of my breast.' The ground of our confidence? As Grove lay dying he said, 'I cannot express it, it is unutterable.' When asked to what he referred he replied, 'The goodness of God.'

Geneva

[1] For John Ball see *DNB*, where his father, who was in fact the ejected minister *William* Ball, is wrongly given as Nathanael Ball, who was ejected from Barley, Herts. For the evidence on this point see A.P.F. Sell, 'The Walsall riots, the Rooker family, and eighteenth-century Dissent', *Trans. South Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society*, n. 93, forthcoming.
[2] Op. cit., 9.
[3] Ibid., 22.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., 23.
[6] Ibid., 17.
[7] Ibid., 24.
[8] For Grove see *DNB; The Protestant Dissenter's Magazine (PDM)*, III, March 1796, 81-84; Thomas Amory's 'Account' of Grove's life prefixed to Grove's *Works* (1747); James Strong's funeral sermon for Grove, *The suddenness of Christ's coming consider'd and improv'd* (1738); H. McLachlan, *English education under the Test Acts*, Manchester *1931, passim.* Grove was born on 4.1.1683 and died on 27.2.1738. J. Murch incorrectly gives the year of death as 1737 in his *A history of the Presbyterian and General Baptist Churches in the West of England*, 1835, 194. Grove was the youngest of fourteen children, and had thirteen children of his own, of whom eight predeceased him, 'which gave him opportunities for manifesting great resignation' *(PDM).* In addition to his teaching, Grove regularly preached at Fulwood, Bishop's Hull and Westhatch. He was, says Strong, kind to the needy, though 'his worldly income was not great' - in fact it never exceeded £20 p.a. Frances Hodgess Roper has recently written on Grove's *Spectator* essays. See ' "One of the finest pieces in the english language": Henry Grove, A note,' in *The Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society* II, May 1980, 147-149. She underlines Grove's love of, and facility in using, classical allusions.
[9] Ball, op.cit., 19.
[10] Ibid., 20.
[11] Quoted by W.J. Grier, *The origin and witness of the Irish Evangelical Church* (now the Evangelical Presbyterian Church), Belfast [1945], 12.
[12] For Towgood see *DNB.* He became a tutor at the Exeter Academy when it opened in 1760. Manning contributed a list of 93 students who were educated under Grove at Taunton, and 48 (including himself) who were educated under Towgood and his colleagues at Exeter, to the *Monthly Repository* XIII, 1818, 89-90. Joshua Toulmin's MS. list contains a further 22 who were trained by Grove.
[13] See F.J. Powicke, 'English Congregationalism in its greatness and decline (1592-1770),' in *Essays Congregational and Catholic, ed.* A. Peel 11931], 308. Similar evidence is given for London. See also Powicke's paper in *Unitarian Historical Society Transactions, I,* 102- 128.
[14] *PDM,* 83.
[15] Ibid.
[16] H. Grove, *Works,* IV, 256.
[17] Ibid., 261.
[18] Ibid., 273.
[19] Ibid.
20 Ibid., 273-74.
[21] Ibid., 274. At this point the distinction (falsely) drawn in our own day between 'believing *in'* and 'believing *that'* comes to mind. At the most basic: how may we believe in God if we do not at the same time believe *that he is?* This is by no means to reduce faith to intellectual assent.
[22] Ibid., 275.
[23] Ibid., 277.
[24] Ibid., 284.
[25] Ibid., 285-86.
[26] Ibid., 287.
[27] Ibid., 289.
[28] Ibid., 296, quoting R. Baxter, *The saints' everlasting rest,* preface to Pt. II sect. 5.
29 John Flavel, *Works* (1820), 1968, VI, 472. For Calvin see Leroy Nixon, *John Calvin's teachings on human reason,* (New York, 1960); especially chapter II on 'The abilities of human reason'.
[30] *Works* IV, 292.

[31] Baxter, op. cit. (R. T. S. edn.), 254.
32 *Works* IV, 294 n.
3[3] Locke was studied at the academies conducted by the Presbyterians Joshua Oldfield in London, Thomas Dixon at Whitehaven and Samuel Jones at Tewkesbury; and by the Independents John Jennings at Kibworth and Philip Doddridge at Northampton. For Warren (1642-1706), a pioneer nonconformist tutor, see *DNB.*
[34] For Rowe (1657-1705) see *DNB.* John Evans, Daniel Neal and Isaac Watts were among others trained under Rowe.
[35] Walter Wilson, *History and antiquities of dissenting churches and meeting-houses in London, Westminster and Southwark,* III, 1808, 171.
[36] H. More, *An explanation of the grand mystery of godliness,* 1660, 361. See further, A.P.F. Sell, 'Platonists (ancient and modern) and the gospel', *Irish Theological Quarterly,* XLIV, 1977, 153-174.
[37] *Works* IV, 234. The queries were written in response to earlier offence taken at his Amory-Cornish ordination sermon.
[38] James Strong, *The suddenness of Christ's coming consider'd and improv'd* (Rev. xxii : 12), 26.
[39] See A.H. Drysdale, *History of the Presbyterians in England* (1889), 508.
[40] W. Densham and J. Ogle, *The story of the Congregational Churches of Dorset,* 1899, 257. The `drift' continued in the next generation of ministers, and the opinions of Thomas Amory (see *DNB),* Grove's nephew, assistant and eventual successor, exemplify it: `Dr. Amory was in advance of most of his Presbyterian brethren on many important and interesting subjects. Although his preaching was generally practical, he sometimes exposed with earnestness the doctrines of Calvinism, as conveying narrow and unworthy ideas of the Creator. He also rejected the doctrine of the Trinity as decidedly unscriptural . . . The right of private judgment was one which he held to be particularly sacred'. J. Murch, op.cit., 209.
[41] *Works* I, 469.
[42] *PDM,* 82.
[43] H. Grove, *A system of moral philosophy,* I, 3.
[44] Ibid., 96.
[45] *Works* I, 470-71.
[46] Ibid., 474-75.
[47] Ibid., 482.
[48] *A system of moral philosophy, I,* 56-57.
[49] It has been argued that in seeking to equate the moral with the spiritual, whilst sitting light to the theological, the Cambridge Platonists from their (earlier) side 'may have helped to foster a moral system in which the spiritual was virtually omitted'. So Aharon Lichtenstein, *Henry More, the rational theology of a Cambridge Platonist,* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), 204. It may not be without significance that More's *Enchiridion ethicum* (1667) was read in a number of dissenting academies. See McLachlan, op.cit., 302. There is, however, no evidence that Grove was particularly impressed by it either as a student, or later. In his college days he was influenced by the Anglican Richard Lucas's *Practical Christianity* (1690) and *Enquiry after happiness* (1685), both of which appear as recommended reading in *A system of moral philosophy.* For Lucas see *DNB.* Lucas's work on happiness was commended to John Wesley by his mother, Susanna, and he was similarly impressed by it. It is, as we hinted earlier, possible to argue that the reason-revelation bifurcation was latent in the medieval 'synthesis' of them.
50 *PDM,* 81.
[51] *Works* IV, 289-290.
[52] *PDM,* 84.

Francis Maseres, Richard Price, and the Industrious Poor

D.O. Thomas

In *England in the eighteenth century* in the course of describing the contribution made by the Dissenters to education and in characterizing their philosophical liberalism, **J.H.** Plumb compliments them upon their innovativeness and modernity, but has this to say about their social attitudes:

> Benevolence in its widest sense, was absolutely absent from their attitudes to life. Liberty and Freedom did not mean liberty to be idle and poor. Poverty, idleness, and crime were to be governed by Reason and Necessity. Poor Laws only cushioned the poor from the impelling force of Necessity and were, therefore, an incitement to idleness. They should be abolished along with alehouses and other distractions. The morals of the poor were to be more effectively controlled and, if need be, slavery should be reintroduced to help suppress crime, for a slave was obviously more useful to a society than a corpse. As in Methodism, the virtuous man was to be judged by his social virtue, by his ability to triumph through strength of will, but the only social services expected from him were his example, and occasional acts of rational charity. Instinctively the poor detested Priestley and like Guy Fawkes, he was burnt regularly, and, in the end, the Birmingham mobs tore down his house.'

What Plumb asks us to believe is that among the Dissenters, at least among those who were philosophical liberals, the springs of humanitarian sentiment and sympathy had run dry, and that for all their belief in progress and their optimism for the future, when confronted by the calamities suffered by the poor they were flintfaced and hardhearted. Plumb seems to have Joseph Priestley largely in mind and takes his position to have been shared by all the Rational Dissenters.

Two questions naturally arise - Does Plumb gives an accurate account of Priestley's attitudes? and were what are alleged to be Priestley's views shared by the other Rational Dissenters?

It has to be admitted that Priestley's attitudes to social problems frequently seem to betray what Anthony Lincoln terms 'a harsh individualism' ,[2] but it may well be questioned whether his attitudes to poor law relief were as harsh and as Plumb makes them out to be. Contrary to what has been the received opinion in many quarters Margaret Canovan[3] and Chuhei Sugiyame have shown there are considerable paternalist and mercantilist elements in Priestley's thought on economic and political matters.

In *Lectures on history and general policy* Priestley claims that the growth of wealth in society and the emergence of the divisions between the rich and the poor create a situation in which the latter will perish without assistance from

the former, 'On this account wise statesmen will take the state of the *poor* into consideration'. But there are great dangers that statesmen will try to do too much for in these situations governments are always tempted to do too much rather than too little. With this remark, Priestley launches into an attack upon the poor law as it was then administered. Providing subsistence for those 'who are indifferent about anything beyond a mere subsistence' encourages extravagance and idleness. 'Men in general will not submit to labour if they can live without it'. But Priestley did not, as Plumb alleges, advocate the abolition of the poor law - on the contrary, the State should continue to relieve `those who are reduced to poverty or were become disabled, in the service of their country, as soldiers, seamen, etc.' For the unemployed who are able-bodied there should be no public provision - if they failed to find work they would have to rely upon the charity of the better-off which, Priestley believed, would be more forthcoming if there were no public provision. Priestley does not deny that this would occasion great distress, but questions whether it would be any greater than that experienced under the existing system, where the truly deserving frequently decline parish aid and public funds are dissipated among the 'idle, the impudent, and the clamorous'.[5] Priestley's own proposal was that the poor should be obliged to provide for themselves by deductions from their wages. This would result in higher wages for those on subsistence level and it would operate as a tax on the product of labour, but this would be a better form of taxation than that embodied in the poor rate. Priestley realized that this measure would be resented as a limitation on the right of the labourer to determine the disposal of his income and that the infringement of his freedom would an evil, but this would be a lesser evil than those engendered by the poor law.[6] This proposal also appears in 'Some considerations on the state of the poor in general' which was prefixed to *An account of a society for encouraging the industrious poor*, a pamphlet published in 1787 to recommend a scheme devised by Priestley's brother-in-law, John Wilkinson.'

According to Plumb, Priestley believed that Reason and Necessity precluded using the poor-law to cushion the poor from the effects of poverty. Anthony Lincoln makes a similar point when he alleges that, according to Priestley, the poor law is 'a sin against self-help and philosophical necessity'.[8] The latter claim betrays a misunderstanding of the nature of philosophical necessity as conceived by Priestley, and a confusion of the metaphysical assertion that all events are determined, with the practical proposal that able bodied persons should be required to find work for themselves. It is to confuse a claim made about the nature of all events with a recommendation that attempts to control some conditions by the use of public funds should be cautious and limited. Philosophical necessity is neither selective nor partial —according to Priestley it would govern all practical policies, both those which would assist the able-bodied unemployed and those which would not. Harsh though Priestley's recommendations may seem, especially to those who take

for granted the extensive provision made by the welfare state, it is not as harsh as Professor Plumb makes it out **to be, for Priestley would not make an appeal either to philosophical necessity or to any other kind of necessity to prevent the disabled from receiving benefit. Neither is it clear that Priestley was without 'benevolence, in its wider sense', for it is at least arguable that benevolence does not require public provision for those who are able to provide for themselves. It might well be contended that in the longer term it is more benevolent to respect the autonomy of the individual and opt for a scheme in which individuals are encouraged to provide for themselves and given the means to develop self-command than it is to provide for their needs as they arise.**

Professor Plumb's highly condensed reference to Priestley's discussion of the permissibility of slavery is likely to mislead. It should be remembered, first, that Priestley was a stern opponent of what he called that 'abominable traffic', the slave trade and was a member of the Birmingham Committee of Correspondence of the anti-slavery movement.' Servitude, he maintained, is the most wretched of human conditions' — it has been abolished in the christian countries of Europe, and although it still survives in the colonies whence slaves are transported to the Americas. 'the injustice and ill-policy of this system' were pretty generally acknowledged. Slavery is offensive because it obstructs the development of human nature, because it causes great misery and is frequently practised with great cruelty, and because slave systems are less **efficient and less productive than those in which freedom is enjoyed. The circumstances in which slavery can be justified relate to the justification of punishment. According to Priestley, the aim of punishment is to secure lawabidingness by terrifying the potential wrongdoer. The legislator is justified in seeking the maximum of terror necessary to achieving this aim. Maximum terror is most often produced by capital punishment, but if it should happen that the threat of slavery would be more potent than the threat of death, its use would be permissible. Where it was permissible for this reason slavery would have the** *additional* **justification that 'some advantage might be derived from [the slaves] in compensation for the injury they have done to society' . " Slavery would be justified only in where it was more feared than death and in those circumstances it would be justified primarily not because it would be more productive, but because it would be more efficacious in reducing crime.**

In an attempt to throw some light upon the answer to the second question which I have proposed — whether the social attitudes which Plumb attributes to Priestley are shared by Rational Dissenters generally, I want determine whether his characterization of Dissent applied to those who tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to introduce a significant measure of social insurance in England in the 1770's, and to ask whether they deserve Professor Plumb's harsh judgement.

The prime mover in this scheme was Francis Maseres (1731-1824) who was, as his career illustrates, a man of parts: lawyer, mathematician, historian, and innovator in the field of social insurance. He entered Clare College, Cambridge in 1748 and was admitted to the Inner Temple in 1750. He was called to the bar in 1758 and his subsequent career included the following legal appointments: Attorney General of Quebec (1766), Cursitor Baron of the Exchequer (1773), and Senior Judge of the Sheriffs' Court in the City of London (1780). In the Inner Temple he became a Bencher in 1774, a Reader in 1780 and Treasurer in 1781. In his essay 'The old Benchers of Inner Temple', Charles Lamb referred to him as one who still 'walked in the costume of the reign of George the Second'. He was elected F.R.S. in 1771 and Joseph Priestley wrote of him that his works in mathematics were 'original and excellent' .[12] He was profoundly interested in the nascent actuarial science, his principal work in this field being the massive *The principles of the doctrine of life-annuities* which was published in 1783.'[3] He was also interested in constitutional theory and published a translation of the sixth chapter of the eleventh book of Montesquieu's *De l'esprit des lois* under the title *A view of the English constitution,'* and a pamphlet entitled, *Considerations on the expediency of admitting representatives from the American colonies into the British House of Commons* which appeared in 1770. He was a Unitarian, and a close friend of Theophilus Lindsey. [15] In a pamphlet entitled *A paraphrase on a passage in a sermon preached by the most reverend Dr. Markham . . .*[16] he replied vigorously to an attack made upon the Dissenters by the Archbishop of York in *A sermon preached . . . before the Society for Propagating the Gospel on the 21st February, 1777.'*[7]

In the *Public Advertiser* for 22 July 1771 under the signature Eumenes, Maseres published a paper entitled, 'A proposal for establishing life-annuities in parishes for the benefit of the industrious poor'. It was subsequently republished with additions in the *Lewes journal* for 14 and 21 October of the same year, and as a separate pamphlet but under the same title in the following year. [18] There was a need for such a scheme, Maseres argued, because many poor people failed to make adequate provision during their working lives for their old age. This neglect was due in part to their idleness and in part to their extravagance. Consequently when they were no longer able to work they became a burden upon their parishes. But the failure to provide was also due to the lack of a simple and secure method of investment to provide annuities in old age. What was needed was a scheme by which the poor could invest some part of the moneys they earned during their working lives and so provide against hard times in the years when they could no longer work.

At the outset Maseres makes it quite clear that the scheme he puts forward is not designed to meet the needs of the 'poor country labourers in husbandry' for they would have nothing to spare from their wages after supplying themselves and their families with a

moderate support. In their old age the members of this group would continue to be dependent upon parish relief. Maseres's scheme was designed primarily to help those who could support themselves upon their earnings in the first three days of the week, such as labouring men in the towns and cities, household servants, and journeymen in handicraft trades. Later in his career in his *Principles* Maseres wrote of the scheme, 'It was intended to operate as an encouragement to journeymen manufacturers, handicrafts-men, household servants, and others to industry and frugality, by offering them a safe and convenient method of employing the money they could save out of their earnings in the purchase of remote life = annuities that were to take place in the latter period of their lives .. [19] In every parish, responsibility for running the scheme would devolve upon the Churchwardens and Overseers of the poor of the parish. They were to be empowered to grant life-annuities. These annuities were to be granted at 3% or higher. There was to be an upper limit to the benefits available under the scheme, and there was to be a minimum investment. On the one hand, no annuity on any one life was to exceed £20 per annum, and on the other, no sum less than £5 could be used to purchase an annuity. A register of all grants was to be kept by the parish. The monies received by the Churchwardens were to be invested in 3% Bank annuities. Since at this time the Bank Annuities stood at 88, the Churchwardens would be making a profit, which could be used to defray the expenses of buying and selling stock, and managing the fund. (It is not clear what was to happen if the price of 3% Bank annuities went above par). The rates at which annuities were payable were to be based on Thomas Simpson's *Treatise on the doctrine of annuities and reversions.*[20] Maseres estimated that' £10 invested in the scheme by a man at the age of twenty-five would entitle him to an annuity of £3.16s.8d. for life at the age of fifty. One especially interesting provision in view of what has been said about the social attitudes of the Dissenters was that it stipulated that those in charge of administrating the fund should be empowered with the consent of the community to dispose of any capital in excess of a thousand pounds for the benefit of the poor of the parish either by repairing old almshouses or by building new ones, or by increasing the weekly allowances made to the poor, or in pious and charitable works designed for the relief of the poor. The beneficiaries of the scheme were not to be restricted to those who could afford to buy annuities. [21]

Maseres thought that a scheme such as this would have several advantages. The poor would be provided with better means of sustenance, 'a more independent and comfortable support' in their old age, than would be provided by relief under the poor rate, and they would be encouraged to greater industry and to greater sobriety and virtue during their working lives.

Consequently, the nation as a whole would benefit from the greater industry of the poor, and the land-owners would benefit from 'a diminution of the poors-rate upon the estates of the rich'. Everyone would benefit, the poor, the rich, and the nation as a whole. It is tempting to see the scheme as a device by which the better off members of society could shuffle off their resp¯Onsibility for the poor, and as an attempt by a new breed of wealth to dismiss the obligations that had been regarded as traditional. But, as we shall see, the reality is more complex than this generalization would suggest.

A copy of Maseres's scheme was submitted to Richard Price before publication. It would not have surprised his contemporaries that Maseres should consult Price for in the previous year Price had published his *Observations on reversionary payments* in which he had set forth his views on how schemes for providing annuities should be constructed and the data he had collected on the expectation of life in towns and in the countryside. Hitherto Price's experience had been gained in advising societies such as the Equitable Society for Assurances and in criticizing other societies whose schemes, he believed, were not based on secure foundations. Part of the reason for publishing on these topics was the need to make members of the public aware of the disasters they could meet if the schemes in which they participated were not well-founded. In a letter to a correspondent who has not yet been identified' Price wrote approvingly of Maseres's plan, but drew attention to the fact that the expectation of life in London was less than it was in the country towns and parishes. In the first edition of *Observations on reversionary payments*, Price had drawn attention to this difference; `in general under the age of 50, the *expectations* of lives here [in the village of Holy cross in Shropshire] exceed those in London, in the proportion of 4 to 3'. 'In the parish of Holy Cross . . . the eleventh part of the inhabitants live to 80. But in London for 30 years ending at the year 1768, only . . . a 40th part have lived to this age'.[23] It would therefore be inadvisable to determine the values of annuities for the whole kingdom on data drawn only from London. In his letter Price suggested that it would be better to use Halley's tables or those based on data collected at Norwich and Northampton. He also suggested that no one should be allowed to become an annuitant until he had reached the age of fifty-five or sixty for he `would not give men any temptation to relax their industry while capable of it'.' Price repeated this point in some criticisms appended to a summary of Maseres's proposals which was published in the supplement to the second edition of *Observations on reversionary payments*. His puritanism emerges very strongly — one ought not to run the risk of checking industry among the poor' .[25] Annuities payable at too early an age 'were they to become very common in a state, might have a

bad effect, by weakening the motives to industry, and promoting idleness and dissipation' .[26] Price thought that it would be an improvement if the annuities paid under the scheme increased with the age of the purchaser, £5 per annum for the first five years, £10 per annum for the second five years, and £15 per annum for the remainder of life. He included a table setting out the payments required to secure these annuities. Further advantages would accrue if the purchaser were to be allowed to choose the age (55 or 60) at which his annuity should commence; if his annuity could be paid quarterly, and if the purchaser were allowed to buy his annuity in stages. The last-mentioned provision would make it easier for young people to participate in the scheme. But although he had these criticisms to make Price was in no doubt as to the value of the scheme that Maseres proposed. Provided that the provision of annuities did not weaken the motives to industry and encourage dissipation and idleness, he was wholeheartedly in support of the institutions, whether private or social, that provided them. It was, however, important that these schemes should be founded on a sound actuarial base and adequate demographical data, for if they failed they would result in serious losses to those who had invested in them, and to the public if the government was required to make good the financial losses. Price notes that after the failure of the Charitable Corporation Parliament granted a lottery of half a million in 1733, and the Company of Mercers had to receive parliamentary aid when their scheme for the relief of widows ran into difficulties. (As we shall see, it was the fear, quite generally felt, that failure would result in a charge upon public funds that generated a great deal of the opposition to Maseres's plan.) These schemes were particularly valuable where 'their object is the support of the destitute widow, or in any way the relief of unavoidable distress; and, particularly, when they are designed to enable the lower part of mankind to provide against the wants and incapacities of old age' Price frequently stressed the humanitarian aspect of these schemes. For example, in the second edition of *Observations on reversionary payments* he writes, 'The lower parts of mankind are objects of particular compassion, when rendered incapable, by accident, sickness or age, of earning their subsistence.' Price thought that schemes such as the one that Maseres proposed would encourage industry instead of discouraging it. At the same time it would relieve the parishes of a considerable 'part of their present burdens'. It is worth noting that what Price sought, and what he thought Maseres's scheme would achieve, was an alleviation of the burden upon the poor rate — he did not wish to abolish the poor-law. Alleviation would be secured by persuading those who could provide for their own old age to do so. Parish relief would and should be still available to those whose resources did not enable them to participate in the scheme. To reduce the burden on the poor-rate was, as Maseres had claimed, a pressing social problem. Maseres had estimated that for the country as a whole the money actually raised for the poor rate amounted to more than a million, but even so in many districts those who depended upon parish relief were 'but indifferently' provided for. In the fourth edition of *Observations on*

reversionary payments Price noted that the amount of poor rate collected in 1777, according to the returns of the Overseers of the poor was £1,556,804.[29]

When his plan was published in pamphlet form, under the title *A proposal for establishing life = annuities in parishes for the benefit of the industrious poor* Maseres dealt with Price's criticisms.' He acknowledged the need for different rates in town and country, and conceded that because the expectation of life was greater in the country the Northampton Tables would be more suitable for the country than the London Tables used by Thomas Simpson. On these tables he calculated that the life annuity payable at fifty to a man who invested £10 at the age of 25, would be £2. 15s. per annum. To Price's suggestion that none of the annuities should commence until the purchaser had reached the age of fifty-five or sixty, Maseres replied that he saw little danger of the scheme 'checking the industry of the poor' because it would appeal only to those 'as are too well disposed to an industrious course of living to remit their endeavours to improve their circumstances in consequence of the accession of even the greatest life-annuity that can be granted to any one person, according to the foregoing plan which is only £20 a year . . .'. To Price's suggestion that the rates of annuities should be correlated with the increasing age of the purchaser Maseres replied that he had no serious objection to it other than that it complicated a system whose merit lay in its simplicity and practicability.

In his pamphlet Maseres asked members of the public to assist him by criticizing and improving the scheme.' One to respond to this invitation was Benjamin Franklin who wrote to Maseres on 17 June 1772[32] to draw his attention to the way the aged were provided for in an institution which he had encountered in Holland. Maseres's scheme aroused considerable interest in Parliament and a Committee was formed for drafting a Bill to incorporate it. This Committee included William Dowdeswell, George Rice, M.P. for Carmarthenshire, and Sir George Savile in whose house in Leicester Square they met to consider their clauses of the Bill." This Bill was given the following title:

A bill to enable the rectors, or vicars, churchwardens, and overseers of the poor, in many of the parishes of England and Wales, to grant ANNUITIES for their lives, to such of the inhabitants of their respective parishes as are disposed to purchase them, and to engage the poor-rates of the said parishes, as a collateral security for the payment of the said ANNUITIES. As will appear, it was the method of providing collateral that was to prove the most vulnerable point of the whole scheme. The draft adopted most of the suggestions that Maseres had made in his *Proposal.* The annuities should be assessed at $3^1/_4$ compound interest. They were to be paid quarterly. The minimum sum that could be laid out in the purchase of an annuity was £5. The maximum annuity that could be held in any one parish was to be £20. No

annuity should commence before the purchaser (if a man) had completed his forty fifth year, or (if a woman) had completed her thirtieth year. In line with Price's recommendation different tables were used for computing the annuities of townsfolk and countryfolk. The probabilities of human life for London, Westminster and Bristol were to be taken as those set forth in the eighth table of the appendix to Price's *Observations on reversionary payments;* this was based upon data given by Thomas Simpson in his *Select exercises.'* For all other parishes the probabilities were those set out in Price's fourth table in the same appendix; this table set out the probabilities of life at Northampton.[35] Parishes were to be at liberty to adopt the scheme or not, but adoption should not take place until it had been approved by a majority of the inhabitants of a parish, and adoption could be for only a limited time.

Maseres was highly optimistic that the bill would succeed. In later years he recalled that at the time the only objection that seemed likely to be made to the project was the difficulty of carrying it into execution. So 'that the experiment might be as little hazardous as possible' the bill was made entirely optional, and the rateable inhabitants of every parish were left at liberty to grant or not grant any of these annuities'.

When the text of the bill was published it aroused considerable interest and encountered much criticism.' Maseres discussed the points raised against his scheme in a pamphlet entitled, *Considerations on the bill now depending in the House of Commons for enabling parishes to grant life-annuities to poor persons, upon purchase, in certain circumstances, and under certain restrictions.'* It was alleged that this scheme would check matrimony. Maseres professed not to understand how this 'can have any force'. It was complained that the scheme would put too early a period to the poor man's labour. This objection also came to the fore when the measure was debated in the Commons, 'At fifty for men to give up their employments, and rest themselves under the comforts of an annuity! Sir, the state requires services at their hands after they have arrived at that period.'" Maseres replied that the scheme would not affect day-labourers in industry as they would not be able to afford to participate. On the other hand, those who could afford to join `will probably be of so industrious a disposition that they will not be induced to leave their employment, and live idle in the possession . . . of £20 a year'. It is interesting to note that Maseres's answer here does not question the assumption that to reduce the age at which the day-labourer could retire from work would be an evil; on the contrary, he maintains that what was allowed would be an evil, would not occur. It was alleged that the scheme would aggravate the tendency to 'throw small farms together', as day-labourers who put their money into an annuity would therefore be limited in their ambitions. Maseres doubted whether many day-labourers would be able to afford to participate in the scheme but even where they could, their reluctance to acquire farms was not the sole reason why the number of small farms was

declining. Another objector thought that the annuitant would come under pressure from his family to sell his annuity and live on the parish. Maseres thought otherwise, 'Men will have pleasure in being independent of the parish'. An annuity of £20 a year is much preferable to a parish allowance of 1/- or 2/- a week, the latter being all that was allowed even in a rich parish such as that of St. James in London. Another objector claimed that it would be imprudent to purchase an annuity if it was unalienable. Maseres replied that under his scheme it would only be unalienable if the purchaser consented that it should be. Another critic asked whether or not the scheme would prevent young people setting out from home to seek their livelihoods. Maseres answered that there was no reason to expect that buying an annuity would tie a person to a place. Another critic asked rhetorically, 'Are not annuitants drones?' Maseres replied sharply that they were no more drones than others who lived on incomes 'not derived from their industry' and observed shrewdly that it is not the way a person receives his income that makes him a drone, but the way in which he spends it. Finally, it was asked, would not some parishes suffer losses from corrupt agents? Maseres conceded that this objection pointed to the weak side of the project, but continued, 'nothing but experience can inform us how far it is practicable for the parishes to get their respective stocks in the bank-annuities managed with fidelity and diligence' .[39] Perhaps the most telling criticism of the Bill was that put forward later by Sir F.M. Eden: since no sum less than £5 could be received by a manager as the price of an annuity, it may well be wondered whether the scheme was well contrived to provide for the labouring poor, as it professed to do. It would require considerable self-denial for someone earning a shilling or eighteenpence a day to accumulate the sum needed to buy an annuity.[4o]

Permission to bring in the bill was debated in the Commons on 11 December 1772.[4,] The measure was introduced by William Dowdeswell and seconded by George Rice; it was supported by Sir George Savile, Sir Richard Sutton, Edmund Burke, Mr. Cornwall, Mr Jackson, counsel to the Board of Trade, and Thomas Townshend. In the Bill as presented there were some significant changes to the scheme first put forward by Maseres. The aggregate sum that could be laid out by any one parish in Bank-annuities was to be £500. Male contributors were to be entitled to receive their annuities after they had completed their fiftieth year but not before (this was to revert from the provision in the first draft of the bill — that the age should be forty-five — to that originally made in Maseres's *Proposal),* whereas women could receive theirs after they had completed their thirty-fifth year. Especial care was to be taken that the ratepayers should not be abused. 'The managers (of the fund] should not have the power of granting any of these annuities without the consent of the rateable inhabitants of the parish, who should be assembled in the vestry. And in these meetings of the parishioners it should be necessary not only that the majority of them in number should consent to the granting the annuity proposed, but that those who so consented should have paid more

than half the last poor's rate paid by all the rateable inhabitants'.[42] Those who put the scheme forward were careful to ensure that no situation would arise in which those who would have to pay increased rates in the event of the schemes failing and the annuities becoming charges against the rates should be at the mercy of those who benefited from the imposition of rates without having to pay them. In introducing the bill Dowdeswell relied heavily upon the arguments in its favour that had been put forward by Maseres. The operation of the scheme would be to everyone's advantage, to the poor, to the rich, and to the nation as a whole. It would benefit the poor, not only because it would make some provision for their old age, but because the 'prospect of future comfort by the means of sobriety and industry would actually render them sober and industrious, and thus beget a habit, which will make their bodies more healthy, their lives longer, and their happiness greatest'. It would help the nation at large, because `its wealth depends upon the general stock of industry, which is here increased as well by the general increase of industry, as by that waste of lives which it is now calculated to prevent' .[43] And it would be in the interest of the rich because it would relieve the poor rates. The debate generated a great deal of enthusiasm in the Commons and the Bill received its third reading on 5 March 1773 by 62 votes for and 34 against."

Whatever celebrations there might have been in Leicester Square when the bill passed through the Commons so successfully were premature. The measure was destined to be defeated in the Lords. According to the *General Evening Post* for Friday 26 March 1773:

> The second reading of Mr. Dowdeswell's annuity poorbill came on yesterday, according to order, in the House of Lords. A noble Lord rose up, and, after having convinced the House of the impropriety of passing such a Bill, moved that the second reading might be postponed for six months; the question being put, the House divided, when 55 appeared for the adjournment, and six against it.'

The identity of the noble lord who convinced the peers of the impropriety of passing this measure into law is unclear. Maseres, to whom we are indebted for the longest extant account of the matter, said that it was Camden, but according to the *Public Advertiser* for 26 March, Camden was numbered among those who like the Dukes of Richmond and Manchester and the Marquis of Rockingham were in favour of passing the Bill. Those who opposed included the Lord Chancellor and Lord Mansfield. But whoever the noble lord might have been, it is interesting to note the grounds upon which he argued that the scheme was rejected, namely that it was prejudicial to the interests of the freeholders of land. The landed interest, it was alleged, would be adversely affected in the following way:

> That the option . . . was not given to the right persons, or to those who were most likely to be affected by the burthens which the granting these annuities might hereafter bring upon the parishes. For that the option was given to the rateable inhabitants of the parish, who were, for the most part only renters of the land they occupied; whereas the burthen upon the poor's rate arising from the supposed deficiency of the annuity fund was not likely to be felt till many years after the granting of the annuities, when the leases of the renters who had voted for the granting of them, would be at an end, or, if they were renewed, would have been renewed at a lower rent than before, in consideration of the approaching and probable increase of the poor's rate arising from the said supposed deficiency; which would be an injury to the freeholders of the land, who are possessed of the permanent property of it.[46]

What appears to have dominated the debate in the Lords and led to the rejection of the Bill was the fear that the adoption of Maseres's plan by the parishes might involve heavy charges upon the poor rate. As the plan made the annuities chargeable on parish funds, there would be a continuous threat that failure would prove expensive to the local authorities. This burden would be especially heavy and bitter to bear since those responsible for meeting the charges would be of a later generation than those who had incurred the risk. It is ironical that a scheme that was designed to lessen the burden of the poor rate should have been rejected for fear that it might possibly increase that burden.

In a paper entitled *The self-legitimation of an entrepreneurial class: the case of England'* the sociologist Reinhard Bendix argues that in late eighteenth century England the emerging class of industrial entrepreneurs conceived it to be in their interest to create a large reservoir of cheap labour, a work force that would be adaptable, disciplined and, above all, mobile. To do this they had to weaken the hold of well-established attitudes — to weaken the habitual deference of the labouring classes towards the aristocracy and the gentry, to weaken the acceptance of traditional practices, and to reduce dependence upon parish relief. The ideological instrument that lay to hand was to extend to the working class their own concept of self-dependence; by this means they would not only destroy the dependence of the workforce upon the rich and the affluent, they would apply to the labouring classes the same concepts that had assisted them in the development of their power and influence. According to Bendix, this ideology was developed in opposition to the older paternalist tradition in which the more affluent accepted a responsibility to protect the poor and relieve their distress in return for the deference of the less fortunate. In this instance, however, it is difficult to present the conflict between the reformers and the conservatives as a conflict between those who wanted to shuffle off their responsibilities towards the poor and those who wished to retain a traditional order in which the more affluent acknowledged and wished to continue to discharge an obligation to help the more unfortunate. In this case it is difficult to see the Lords simply as living up to the aristocratic

ideal of benevolent concern for the poor, when it is seems evident that they were very much concerned to limit the burden which the poor rate might lay upon them. And if the charge is made against the reformers that their advocacy of self-dependence was an ideological mask for the pursuit of a class interest it might also be alleged that the paternalism attributed to the rich and affluent was severely restricted in practice by the perceived interest of the class.

It is now time to try to consider what light an examination of Maseres' s plan and the fate it suffered upon the second of the questions suggested by Plumb's characterization of the Dissenters — Is it true that the Rational Dissenters shared the social attitudes that Plumb ascribes to Priestley?

It is undeniable that Maseres and Price set a high value on self-dependence. This can be seen as an extension to the resolution of social problems of the high value that they set upon personal autonomy generally. In religion a person should only accept what he believes to be true; in questions of morality the individual should follow his own conscience; in all matters, everyone should think for himself and follow his own judgement. It was therefore to be expected that they should hold that wherever possible every person should to look to his own interest and provide for his own needs. But this emphasis upon autonomy does not entail that the poor law should be abolished; neither did it imply that there should be public provision only for those who had been reduced to poverty or disabled in the service of their country. Both Maseres and Price acknowledged that there would always be a sizeable proportion of the population who would be dependent upon parish relief in old age and that the state should continue to meet this need. The corollary to this admission that the State has a duty to help those on subsistence level wages was an acknowledgement that not all poverty is due to idleness and extravagance. Price certainly believed that 'the lower part of mankind' had strong tendencies to idleness and dissipation but he did not hold that poverty was wholly attributable to these vices. This can be clearly seen in his historical account of the consequences of the engrossing of farms and the enclosure of the commons. Many small farmers had become agricultural labourers, the number of working people had increased, the price of necessaries had risen, real wages had fallen and poverty had increased." It was just a fact of contemporary economic life that many could only earn for themselves subsistence wages, and whether they were vicious or not, it was inevitable that when they ceased to be able to work they would become dependent upon public provision.

Secondly, at least at this stage in their careers, that is in the 1770's, Maseres and Price, did not as Priestley was later to do, introduce an element of compulsion into their plans. In his *Lectures on history and general policy,* Priestley allowed that the introduction of compulsion would be permissible,

but in the plan that Maseres brought before Parliament compulsion applied neither to the parish authorities nor to prospective annuitants. Every parish was to be free to decide for itself, if need be by a majority of those paying the poor rate, whether they wished to adopt the scheme, and every subscriber was free to invest or not in the plan. Later in his career, Price gave advice on actuarial matters to John Acland when he was preparing his *A plan for rendering the poor independent of public contribution.'* The scheme which this pamphlet advocated was different from Maseres's in three important respects — it was designed to provide relief in times of sickness as well as in old age; it applied to the whole working population and not just to the more prosperous; and subscriptions were to be compulsory.[5s] As far as is known Maseres was not involved in the preparation of this scheme which was much nearer than Maseres's own scheme to Priestley's prescription.

Although both Maseres and Price wished to reduce the burden on the poor rate by making the more prosperous workers self-dependent, it would be misleading to describe them as advocating an unqualified individualism or as proponents of *laissez-faire.* They were far from saying that the prosperous should have no concern for the poor. On the contrary there was a strong paternalist element in•their thinking, even though it operated at, so to speak, a second order rather than at a first order level and even though it relied heavily upon private charity rather than upon public provision. They believed that they had a duty to help the poor to become more self-dependent. This was to be achieved primarily by creating the institutions through which the poor could be helped to help themselves. Schemes, like the one which Maseres and Price put forward, should be devised to encourage the poor to emulate the behaviour of the more successful.

There is an air of paradox about the claim that the reformers were both ardent liberals and paternalists. They believed, as I have stressed earlier, that every one should be free, as far as possible, to think for themselves and to act upon their own judgement. This was especially true in religion and in matters of conscience. But they appreciated that this ideal could not be realized simply by pursuing a policy of non-intervention. Men had to be helped to achieve autonomy partly by removing the restrictions upon the exercise of freedom, but also by being helped to achieve self-command through education and schemes like the plan for social insurance which Maseres and Price advocated. Some of the paradox is resolved if we bear in mind the distinction between helping a person directly and helping him to help himself. It is further resolved if we bear in mind that paternalist benevolent attitudes do not necessarily entail public provision. Margaret Canovan has shown how much of Priestley's paternalism depended upon the exercise of private charity' and throughout his career he was nervous even if sometimes ambivalent about invoking the aid of the state. The paradox of combining liberal and paternalist attitudes is not however entirely dissipated by these considerations, for there

remains a tension between promoting the liberty of the individual and advocating the measures that will enable the individual to become self-dependent. For example, both Price and Priestley thought that the sale of alcohol should be strictly controlled. Price thought that the Act of 1743 (repealing the Act of 1736 by which the sales of 'spirituous liquors' was virtually prohibited) was pernicious in that it led the 'lower people' to destroy themselves by drinking gin, and he approved the act of 1751 which raised the duties on spirits and forbade distillers, grocers and chandlers to retail them.' State intervention could legitimately be invoked in other matters as well: to support agriculture, to control the enclosure of land, to prevent rural depopulation, and to discourage luxury and celibacy." Priestley, too, even though he relied heavily upon private charity favoured legal controls to eliminate 'profligacy and vice'. Lotteries diverted men from honest industry,' and alehouses and 'other places of entertainment' encouraged men to be extravagant and neglect their families. *Supernumerary alehouses* should be suppressed by law.[55]

Priestley also advocated that the State should provide elementary education for the poor 'which would so far improve their minds that they would be much more within the influence of honourable ambition than they are at present' .[56] But perhaps the most remarkable and far reaching justification for state intervention that he makes is the claim that the right of person to do what he thinks fit with his own property is qualified and limited by considerations of the public good — 'it always is, and must be taken for granted, that every society has a right to apply whatever property is found or acquired within itself to any purposes which the good of society at large really require' ."

Perhaps the strangest of Plumb's criticism of the Rational Dissenters when related to Price's activities, is his claim that 'benevolence, in its widest sense, was absolutely absent from their attitudes to life'. In his *Review of the principal questions in morals* Price, although he agreed that benevolence is not the whole of virtue, is prepared to say that 'what will be most beneficial, or productive of the greatest publick good, I acknowledge to be the most general and leading consideration in all our enquiries concerning *right'.*[58] Price attacked the notion that the different grounds of rightness of actions could be reduced to one; on the contrary, he maintained that there are several different `heads of virtue' and that where more than one is engaged in judging what action is right, different claims have to be weighed against each other. Doing good to others is one such criterion but it is not the only one. But, although beneficence is not the sole consideration it is the most important. Price repeatedly stresses that we have a duty to relieve the distress of others. In *Sermons on the Christian doctrine,* for example, he says, We have all of us *commissions* from God . . . to relieve distress, and to seek and to save that which is lost; and we should consider ourselves as *sent* of God for this purpose.' [59] In considering beneficence it is also important to bear in mind that

the benefit must not be conveyed in a way that is damaging to the self-esteem and dignity of the recipient: neither should it be presented in a way that would prejudice or undermine his moral development. Among eighteenth century moral philosophers Price was not alone in preaching such caution and circumspection. In *An enquiry concerning the principles of morals* Hume writes, 'Giving alms to common beggars is naturally praised; because it seems to carry relief to the distressed and indigent: but when we observe the encouragement thence arising to idleness and debauchery, we regard that species of charity rather as a weakness than a virtue.' Hutcheson too claims that certain principles should govern charity, 'First, that it be not hurtful to the morals of the object . . . by encouraging them in sloth, meanness of temper, or any vicious disposition . . .'"It would not have surprised Price's contemporaries that he should share these cautious qualifications and that he does so would not be an adequate reason for saying that benevolence was `absolutely absent from his attitudes to life'. What Plumb means by `benevolence in its widest sense' is, perhaps, not altogether clear but if we interpret him as Bentham interpreted the phrase 'the most extensive and enlightened benevolence', namely, as 'well advised benevolence',' it is difficult to resist the conclusion that Plumb's complaint at least as against Maseres and Price is not well-founded.

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Op. cit. (Harmondsworth, 1950), 134.

[2] Anthony Lincoln, *Some political and social ideas of English Dissent, 1763-1800* (Cambridge, 1938), 175.

[3] Margaret Canovan, Paternalistic liberalism: Joseph Priestley on rank and inequality', *Enlightenment and dissent,* No 2 (1983), 23-37.

[4] Chuhei Sugiyama, 'The economic thought of Joseph Priestley', *Enlightenment and dissent,* No. 3 (1984), 77-90.

[5] Joseph Priestley, *Lectures on history and general policy, the theological and miscellaneous works of Joseph Priestley,* ed. J.T. Rutt, 25 vols. (London, 1817-31), [hereafter referred to *as Works],* XXIV, 226.

[6] Ibid., 227.

[7] *Works,* XXV, 314-319. Earlier in his career Priestley had played a prominent part in the establishment of the Widows' Fund Association which was designed to assist Nonconformist ministers, their widows and their families. For a discussion of the part played by Priestley in establishing this fund and a revision of the claim that he was the originator of the scheme, see H. McLachlan, *The Widows' Fund Association* (1937), 1 1 ff.

[8] Lincoln, 177. For Priestley's account of the distinction between the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination and the philosophical doctrine of necessity, see *Works,* III, 534-35.

[9] Canovan, 27.

[10] *Works,* XXIV, 308.

[11] Ibid., 288. See also 'A sermon on the subject of the slave-trade, delivered to a Society of Protestant Dissenters at the New Meeting in Birmingham, 1788', *Works,* XXV, 363-387.

[12] J.T. Rutt, *Life and correspondence of Joseph Priestley,* 2 vols. (London, 1831), ii, 490.

[13] London, 1783 (referred to hereafter *as Principles).*

[14] London, 1781.

[15] See Thomas Belsham, *Memoirs of the late reverend Theophilus Lindsey* (London, 1812), 433.

16 ([n.p.], n.d.[circa 1777]).

[17] London, 1777.

[18] London, 1772; referred to hereafter as *Proposal.*

19 Op. cit., iv.

[20] London, 1742.

[21] *Proposal,* 62.

[22] See Richard Price to [an unidentified correspondent], 17 July 17[71], *The correspondence of Richard Price, vol.* 1, ed. D.O. Thomas and Bernard Peach (Duke University, Durham, N.C., and the University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1983), 99-101.

[23] Op. cit., 193, 201. That the inhabitants of London were more short-lived than the rest of mankind had been noted by A. de Moivre who was cited by Price, ibid., 263.

[24] Op. cit., 101.

25 Op. cit., 2nd edn. (1772), 380-87.

[26] Ibid., 380.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid., 120.

[29]0p. cit. (1783), I, 141.

[30] See *Monthly review,* XLVI (1772), 622, where Maseres is said to have published his pamphlet only after incorporating some 'alterations and amendments suggested by the celebrated author of the *Observations on reversionary payments'.*

[31] *Proposal, 25,* 26.

32 Benjamin Franklin to Francis Maseres, 17 June 1772, *The complete works of Benjamin Franklin* ed. Bigelow, 10 vols. (New York, 1887-88), v.338-340.

[33] *Principles,* 34.

[34] See *Observations on reversionary payments,* 2nd edn., 326.

[35] Ibid., 317.

[36] See P.H.J.H. Gosden, *Self-help* (London, 1973), 5.

[37] London, 1773; hereafter referred to *as Considerations.*

[38] See *Par/. Hist.,* XVII, 791-3.

[39] *Considerations,* 30.

[40] Sir F.M. Eden, *The state of the poor* (London, 1797), I, 356.
[41] *H.C.J.*, xxxiv.
[42] *Principles*, 36.
43 *parl. hist.*, XVII, 639-42.
[44] Ibid., 791-93. The debate in the Commons was reported in the *London Evening Post*, 6 Mar. 1773.
as See also *H.L.J., xxxiii, 577.*
[46] *Principles*, 38.
[47] Institute of Industrial Relations Reprints, Berkeley, California, 1954, 268ff.
48 See *Observations on reversionary payments*, 4th edn., 252-253, and 272-74; and Howard Williams, 'Karl Marx and Richard Price', *Enlightenment and dissent*, No. 3 (1984), 91-94.
49 Exeter, 1786.
[50] See D.O. Thomas, *The honest mind*, 230-31.
[51] Canovan, 29ff.
[52] See Richard Price to Lord Monboddo, 23 Sept. 1783, W. Knight, *Lord Monboddo and some of his contemporaries* (London, 1900), 257-58.
[53] D.O. Thomas, 116, 117.
[54] *Works*, XXIV, 289.
[55] *Works*, XXV, 319.
56 Ibid.
[57] Ibid., 318.
[58] Op. cit., ed. D.D. Raphael (Oxford, 1948, revised impression 1974), 153.
[59] Op. cit, (London, 1787), 163.
[60]0p. cit., ed. Selby-Bigge, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1902), 180.
61 Francis Hutcheson, *System of moral philosophy*, (Glasgow, 1755), I, 306.
62 J. Bentham, *An introduction to the principles of morals and legislation*, ed. J.H. Burns and H.L.A. Hart (London, 1970), 117.

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Thomas L. Hankins, *Science and the Enlightenment*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985, H/c, £20.00 ($29.95), pbk. £6.95 ($9.95). vii + 216pp.
Colin A. Russell, *Science and Social Change, 1700-1800*, The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1983, £15.00, pbk. £5.95, xvii + 307pp.
Everett Mendlesohn, *Transformation and Tradition in the Sciences. Essays in Honor of I. B. Cohen*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, £40.00 ($54.50).
Dorothy A. Stansfield, *Thomas Beddoes M. D. 1760-1808, Chemist, Physician, Democrat*, D. Reidel Publishing Co., Dordrecht, Boston, Lancaster, 1984, xx + 306pp. £35.75.

Modern man anxious to explain and understand the paradox of his dominance over nature and his own brutalization has turned his attention to the science which gave him such Faustian power. This has led to the view that the failings of the modern world are a consequence of the Scientific Revolution, which created a naively positivistic science, a predominantly mechanist and materialist explanation of the world, and a rigid division between mind and matter. When we complete this charge by adding that this `descent of man' was accompanied by his despiritualization and loss of religion we find ourselves on familiar territory; it is that of the late-eighteenth-century attack upon the Enlightenment. The accusations of infidelity, atheism, and materialism were levelled against the *philosophes* and fellow travellers and were held responsible for the excesses of the French Revolution. Burke particularly denigrated the application of the methods of geometry to politics and society. Indeed, the Enlightenment never enjoyed the respect which was accorded to the Scientific Revolution: W. H. Reid in 1800 described the thought of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Boulanger, Buffon, Bailie, Marmontel and Diderot as 'this many-twinkling meteor of infidelity', but referred to Newton as 'immortal') Present day critics make no such distinctions.[2] Their charges deserve serious consideration for the scientific control over nature and man's inhumanity to man have reached more terrifying proportions than the late-eighteenth-century mind could contemplate. Yet those who make them are nonetheless honour bound to examine the evidence scrupulously. Recent works relating to eighteenth-century science suggest that the legacy of the Scientific Revolution was far more complex than their interpretations suggest, and I shall attempt to explore those complexities in the following pages.

The emergence of the idea that the laws of nature were uniform, and hence of an objective world of nature which could be investigated by mathematical means, made the Scientific Revolution possible. Although from one point of view this may appear to involve the secularization of the idea of nature, a process in which man was cut off from nature and lost his special place in the cosmos, from another viewpoint it looks as if the very notion of universal

scientific laws was a consequence of the western belief in a celestial lawgiver. The scientific revolution and its aftermath can be seen as the theological stage in the history of science which would ultimately prepare the way for an Einsteinian view of the cosmos.' In this perspective secularism might be one aspect of the Enlightenment but not genuine secularization. The rigid Cartesian division between mind and matter, which was a major focus of intellectual debate in the eighteenth century can be seen to be a rationalization of the Christian tradition of separating body and soul. Even Laplace's famous disclaimer that he had no need of a hypothetical God was simply an affirmation of the regularity, predictability and self-containedness of nature, which in turn implied a creator or lawgiver. Although eighteenth-century French science, like the French Enlightenment, was most likely to call in question God's role, it was nonetheless preoccupied with the way God had or had not organized His world. It was not an English scientist but Maupertuis who argued that the metaphysical principle of 'least action' upon which the laws of motion were based proved the existence of God.' Keith Thomas's illuminating suggestion that 'modern atheism is probably best understood as a conviction growing out of Christianity, rather than something encroaching upon it from an external source' can be applied appropriately to Enlightenment science.' The deism and the atheism of the eighteenth century belong to a theological and indeed Christian world view. Why else would the Enlightenment be so concerned about the design of nature and the origins of evil. It has been well argued by Norman Hampson that 'the *coherence*, as well as the confidence of the Enlightenment, rested on religious foundations'.[6]

It is the broad religious framework of the Enlightenment and not just the religious dimension of it which is important for the understanding of eighteenth-century science. The religious quest was never far from any aspect of Enlightenment endeavour. In this sense, we need to study the Enlightenment 'as religion'.' At the same time, one recognizes that the desire to integrate science and religion was much more explicit with certain thinkers and branches of the Enlightenment and at particular periods in its development. Theodicies and natural theologies were far more prevalent earlier in the century than later. The English contributed notably to this aspect of the Enlightenment and were least likely to accept the Cartesian mind/matter dichotomy. Lockeian sensationalism retained the link, however imprecisely or dubiously between mind and matter. In denying the possibility that animals could have immaterial souls, Locke felt that Descartes had sacrificed commonsense on the altar of intellectual consistency and most Englishmen who had opinions on the question agreed.' But if English sensibilities were offended by the cold logic of the Cartesian attitude towards animals, the equally 'chilly viewpoint on outer space' of the Cartesians did find its defenders.' The English Deists supported the idea that the Universe was a mechanism which did not need God's special providential care for its regulation. Indeed it is one of the many contrarieties of Enlightenment

thought that mechanist materialism was a dominating influence at a time when natural theologies were prevalent. Hankins suggests that the mechanical philosophy and natural theologies were complementary, 'because both approaches to the natural world merged the living and the nonliving together'.[10] It is true that physico-theologians could draw on the mechanical philosophy. Thomas Burnet, author of *The Sacred Theory of the Earth* described animals as mechanisms in which the two 'master springs' were the stomach and the heart." However, whereas consistent mechanists wished to separate God, man and nature, Burnet and like-minded contemporaries such as John Ray, George Cheyne, and Williams Derham wished to integrate them. Descartes would hardly have approved of Burnet's assumption that no 'truth concerning the Natural World can be an Enemy to Religion; for Truth cannot be an Enemy to Truth, God is not divided against himself' .[12] For his own speculations upon the history of the world he preferred to regard the biblical account of creation as irrelevant. [13]

Although the physico-theologians brought the valuable perspective of time to their study of nature, revelation proved indispensable in their reconciliation of religion and science. For Burnet the human body was a self-regulating and self-renewing machine: it was like a mill which had 'a power of nourishing itself by the Water it receiv'd, and of repairing all the parts that were worn away'. However, it did not 'grind for ever' because of the harsh climatic conditions which had set in with the Flood." The problems of creating an effective natural history in the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century were indeed immense, and it is not surprising that Burnet turned to revelation for assistance. But with the gradual development of new scientific disciplines such as botany, zoology, geology and meteorology, which Hankins regards as the Enlightenment's most important contribution to the modernization of science, the way was prepared for another revolution in science, the Darwinian. In the process the view of the body as a mechanism was soon discarded. Burnet's metaphor of a mill, which in effect was animated, exemplifies its obvious limitations. Bernard de Fontenelle writing in 1733 conceded that that mathematics had been unable to unravel the complexity of living things. He suggested that the mechanical model should be abandoned and that instead living things should be studied in themselves with the aim of reducing them to rule. In the development of experimental physiology the English who had been so little enamoured of Cartesianism led the field.

Clearly the notion that mechanistic materialism was the dominant legacy of the Scientific Revolution, the 'paradigm' which it bequeathed to Enlightenment science, is inadequate. It was not even dominant in the early eighteenth century. An obvious alternative to Cartesianism as the major feature of Enlightenment science is Newtonianism. Yet the Newtonian legacy

was by no means clear cut. Hankins suggests, in a remark reminiscent of Sir Ernest Barker's on Rousseau, that one could read what one wanted into Newton's work. Moreover, in the natural desire to go beyond Newton's ideas, other sources of inspiration were sought. In a lucid exposition of the development of post-Newtonian mechanical philosophy he shows how the Leibnizian concept of *vis viva* (giving force') cut across the Newtonian concept of force. This was not a Cartesian v. Newtonian conflict however, for the Cartesians sided with the Newtonians on the issue. It could involve a strain on loyalties for the staunch Newtonian Voltaire was disconcerted by Madame du Ciliatelet's conversion to the Leibnizian position. To complicate matters she continued to remain a devotee of Newton and she subsequently with Clairaut translated *Principia Mathematica* into French. Despite Voltaire's scorn for the idea of *vis viva* it made steady progress in the Enlightenment, forming a crucial notion of analytical mechanics, and eventually displacing `force' from the centre of modern physics. Yet if Leibniz provided an important rival authority to Newtonian ideas, Newtonians themselves found alternative interpretations in their master's own work to the idea of gravity as a force acting at a distance. In the 1740s, Newtonians began to argue that gravity acted not at a distance but through some intervening fluid or 'ether'. This interpretation, although eventually it would be discarded, proved more useful than the idea of an abstract (and unquantifiable) force in understanding and quantifying heat and electricity which just were beginning to receive attention. In other areas of science, however, Newtonian ideas, argues Hankins, had little relevance. Newtonianism was a badge giving scientists confidence and enabling them to draw on the prestige of that great genius. But the notion that Enlightenment science was the application of Newtonian methods to aspects of science in which the master's work had yet to be completed is much too simple. Hankins shows that the Englightenment saw the creation of new sciences rather than the completion of the scientific revolution. In particular he rejects Butterfield's notion of a 'postponed scientific revolution in chemistry'. [15] Chemistry emerged as a separate science out of physics, medicine, pharmacy and industrial chemistry, and the remnants of alchemy. Crucial to this process was the creation of an effective nomenclature. Lavoisier argued that if a 'well-composed language' were created, Nature would inexorably reveal her secrets,' The prophecy was self-fulfilling. Lavoisier's *Methode de Nomenclature Chimique* (1787) created a chemical language which enabled quantification to proceed apace and which rid chemistry of its remaining associations with alchemy. This trend towards the mathematization of nature is the dominant trend of Enlightenment science and it occurred despite gloomy prognostications about the future of mathematics voiced throughout the Enlightenment. But for D'Alembert and Condorcet the future of knowledge and the fate of mankind depended upon the continued application of the analytical method to the world of nature. Even D'Alembert's colleague, Diderot who thought that mathematics had reached its limits and that scientists relied too much upon analysis, acknowledged the propriety of applying analytical reason to nature. It is in

this sense that the Enlightenment was Newtonian for it generally followed the Newtonian method of analysis clearly set out in his *Opticks* where he defined it as 'making experiments and observations and in drawing general Conclusions from them by Induction'." Newtonianism was thus not a unified body of knowledge but a method, and it was a method which carried with it the key assumption of the Scientific Revolution, namely that nature was real, coherent, distinct, rational, and unified. We have reached the hardly earth-shattering conclusion that Enlightenment science was characterized by that scientific rationalism which dominated science in the two hundred or so years following the scientific revolution.

While the importance of scientific rationalism in providing the science of Enlightenment with its methods and assumptions cannot be gainsaid, that science is at its most interesting and fertile (and characteristically Enlightened?) in those areas where there was most uncertainty and where the relationship between reason and observation, theory and practice, was imprecise and open to differing views. This is true of the experimental physiology which developed in the 1740s; it was unable to provide a clear alternative to mechanical philosophy partly because the theoretical implications of empiricism were not always palatable and partly because of the inadequacy of experimental knowledge. In an illuminating passage, Hankins argues that the rejection of mechanism could have led to the revival of Christian ideas of the soul, but such were the anti-religious sentiments of the *philosophes* that they preferred to revive the ancient Stoic principle of a *pneuma* which breathed life into all matter. Rather than resort to the notion of the soul they distributed it throughout matter. Such ideas led to the speculations of Diderot in the *Dream of D'Alembert* (1769) in which the physiological ideas of Theophile de Bordeu in particular were used to suggest that the universe was one dynamic organism. Another alternative was preferred by La Mettrie. He retained mechanist ideas but abandoned the mind/matter dichotomy. In *L'Homme-Machine* (1748) he created a deterministic and atomistic universe. This was the ultimate expression of atheistic materialism in the eighteenth century. Neither Diderot nor La Mettrie were leading scientists, although the latter had studied with Boerhaave and both were conversant with the latest scientific views. Their work has a special significance for it provides a link, as Hankins notes, with 'the wider domain of Enlightenment philosophy'.[18] Since perhaps only Turgot of the major *philosophes made* an original contribution to science — his theory of expansibility — it is a pity that Hankins does not explore more fully the impact of science on the views of the well-informed *philosophe.* It is true that he does this to some extent in his chapter on the moral sciences, which indeed begins with a discussion of Turgot, but the chapter perhaps inevitably covers much familiar ground and is the least satisfactory in the book. It would probably have been more useful to have offered some reflections and even brief case studies on the intersection of science and Enlightenment philosophy. One

would like to know more about the way in which the concerns, prejudices and theories of the *philosophes* shaped the enterprise of science, and conversely how the approaches, assumptions and conclusions of the scientists affected the work of the *philosophes.*

If the limitations of Enlightenment science arose partly from the mental world which they inhabited, others arose from the inadequacies of their techniques and apparatuses. Hankins points out that the Enlightenment's attempt to understand generation could not be solved by experimental evidence alone. Despite some skilful and ingenious experimentation notably by Spallanzi who demonstrated that frogs' eggs required fertilization by male sperm (by making tight fitting taffeta pants for male frogs!), the experimental evidence failed to clinch the argument either for preformation theories or for theories of epigenesis (the idea derived from Aristotle that a substance takes on a form which is potentially but not actually in it). Spallanzi, for example, remained attached to preformation theory even though his experimental work suggested that it was inadequate. But his caution arose from his careful empiricism; it appears that some frogs' eggs if pricked with a needle can develop parthenogenetically, that is without the presence of semen. Hankins stresses the sophistication of Enlightenment generation theories and the distance they had travelled from their ancient origins. What Enlightenment science lacked was a good compound microscope which would have facilitated the observation of the cell and its structure. This was not available until the 1830s.

It is particularly instructive to examine the way in which individual scientists reacted to the circumstances of the mid-eighteenth century when the mechanical philosophy was breaking down and the argument from design was under increasing attack. Here we may turn to Shirley Roe's paper on 'The Newtonian physiology of Albrecht von Haller' in the eighteenth-century section of the handsome festschrift to I. B. Cohen. Haller (1708-77) was educated at Leyden, and from the first he appears to have been a robust empiricist for whom the rationalism of Descartes was quite alien. Later, in a conscious reference to Newton's abhorrence of hypotheses, he declared, `beyond the scalpel or microscope I do not make many conjectures' .[19] He was indeed a scrupulous and painstaking experimentalist; one of the volumes of his *Sur la formation du coeur dans le poulet* (1758) was devoted to hourly observations on incubated eggs. Nonetheless, under Boerhaave he was heavily influenced by mechanist attitudes to the body and in his science he sought to reconcile mechanist and empirical approaches. Through Boerhaave and through the experience of visiting England — he was in England in 1727 when Voltaire was also visiting — he was profoundly influenced by Newton. He was not only a fervent advocate of the Newtonian method, but he also followed Newton in believing matter to be passive and inert and that motion was imparted by God. This made vitalist views unattractive as alternatives to

mechanistic ones. Instead, Haller suggested his own synthesis. This he called `animal mechanics' in which he made the new and important distinction between irritability and sensibility, the former being a property solely of the muscle fibre and the latter being the means by which impressions were transmitted via the nerves to the soul. Irritability Haller likened to gravity; it was an attractive force whose effects could be demonstrated — such as the heartbeat of animals after death — even though we do not know its cause. Despite La Mettrie's mischievous dedication of the first edition of *L'Homme Machine* to Haller, the latter' s views were far removed from his deterministic materialism. Haller believed that La Mettrie had misused his concept of irritability, which for the Frenchman proved that a separate spiritual soul did not exist. Haller, who had studied divinity before medicine, believed profoundly that the universe was a product neither of chance nor material necessity but of God's design. His Newtoniansim was that of the Boyle lecturers, fundamentally theological. If all scientists had followed Haller then

> eighteenth-century science would have been truly Newtonian; Roe shows convincingly that Newton's inspiration may be found in Haller's experimental method, his animal mechanics and his belief that science exists to serve religion."

If Haller was a stricter Newtonian than those who revived Newton's aetherial theories in the 1740s in response to the failings of mechanist physiology, he does typify the way scientists used theory in trying to solve the problems confronting them. In line with the *philosophes'* distrust of metaphysics, they were anxious to ensure that theory was disciplined by experimental evidence. Hankins suggests that this was especially true of the revival of vitalism in the 1760s when 'the new principles in chemistry and physiology were meant to stand for observable qualities, not for the old imagined 'souls' or 'influences' of Renaissance animism' .[21]0ne must concede that there are dangers in over-stressing the cautious experimentalism of Enlightenment science. Hankins' interpretation is reinforced by his decision to pay little attention to the popular and speculative dimensions of eighteenth-century science such as Mesmerism. Yet his view of the science of the period as a thoroughly sober-minded pursuit finds confirmation from what, at first sight, would appear to be an unlikely source, namely Allen G. Debus's paper on 'The Paracelsians in eighteenth-century France' contained in the festschrift to I. **B.** Cohen. Debus does not however agree with Hankins's assessment that `by the time of the Enlightenment, alchemy had all but disappeared' .[22] Rather, he points to the persistence of interest in alchemy, natural magic, and Paracelsian medical chemistry throughout the eighteenth century as witnessed by the healthy publishing industry on these subjects. In France, he points out that the University of Montpellier continued its association with Paracelsian chemistry, an association which can be traced back to the sixteenth century, and suggests that it is not surprising that it was a Montpellier that the vitalist school of medicine was created. Hankins, too, notes that the exponents of

vitalism, Henri Fouquet, Gabriel-Francois Venel, and Theophile do Bordeu were all graduates of this school. He treats them as part of Enlightenment science and contributors to the physiological debate of the time, both Fouquet and Venel having written articles for the *Encylopedie*. Debus, on the contrary, interprets the Paracelsian tradition as separate from the mainstream of Enlightenment science and regards the Paracelsian orientation of Venel's article for the *Encyclopedie* as, in the context, eccentric. Although he does not develop a 'high' and 'low' Enlightenment thesis for eighteenth-century science, he emphasizes the anti-establishmentarian nature of the Paracelsians. This, however, seems to need some qualification. Amongst the Paracelsians he notes are Antoine Deidier (d.1746) who was physician to the king and Royal Professor of Chemistry at Montpellier, and Joseph Chambon (1647-c.1733) who was 'well-received' by Fagon, Louis XIV's physician, and who, though falling foul of the Faculty of Medicine at the university, was allowed to practise by a special arret of the Parlement of Paris. He eventually saw the inside of the Bastille because of his politics not his medicine. Another alchemist, Antoine-Joseph Pernety (1716-1800/1), was librarian to Frederick the Great. The publication of his major alchemical dictionary in 1758 does not appear to have incurred royal disfavour. One wonders, therefore, how serious were the obstacles to the dissemination of Paracelsian views. Debus argues that the triumph of the mechanical philosophy in the seventeenth century led to the exclusion of 'rival sects' from the scientific academies. But this did not prevent the continuation of the tradition in Montpellier, nor the propagation of scientific views associated with Stahl, van Helmont, Glauber and Becher, all praised by Venel in his article for the *Encyclopedie*. Yet, if Debus portrays the Paracelsians as representing an alternative, anti-establishmentarian science, he is anxious to distinguish them from popular science and the undercurrent of occultism which came to the surface in the pre-revolutionary decades in France; they were serious scientists who maintained 'a vigorous continuation of the Renaissance chemical philosophy' .[23] Debus points to the need for further research into the Paracelsian tradition, starting perhaps with the University of Montpellier. It is also clear that the relationship between Paracelsian science and Enlightenment science needs further investigation. Debus is no doubt correct in his criticism of Whiggish scientific history which has no place for the Paracelsians but it is doubtful whether a 'new model for the development of science' may be constructed from his suggestion that it may be located in the confrontation or debate between a science which was mathematical, observational and experimental and one that was spiritual, mystical and religious.'

The limitations of Debus's suggestion will already be apparent from what has been said about Haller; they are perhaps even more clearly displayed in another paper in the same festschrift, that by Robert Schofield on 'Joseph Priestley, eighteenth-century British Neoplatonism and S.T. Coleridge'. At first sight, Priestley would appear to conform to Debus's antithesis. He is

usually portrayed 'as representing a world view structured by Newton, Locke, and David Hartley that was overturned when Coleridge returned from Germany in 1799, bringing with him a 'glowing enthusiasm' for Immanuel Kant' .[25] But in an elegant piece of scholarly investigation Schofield shows, first, that there were elements of Neoplatonism in Priestley's philosophy derived in particular from his education at Daventry Academy, and, second, that this influenced Coleridge on his path away from materialism even before his contact with German Philosophy.' He argues that Coleridge could find in Priestley's work four of the five streams through which seventeenth-century Neoplatonism flowed into the eighteenth century: Newton and the Newtonian physico-theologians; John Locke; David Hartley; and the Dissenting academic tradition especially as represented by Isaac Watts and Philip Doddridge. Schofield accepts that Priestley was not a conventional Neoplatonist, but argues that his mathematical, mechanical idealism, which lay outside the materialism, utilitarianism and empiricism characteristic of late-eighteenth-century British thought, formed a preliminary stage in the formation of Coleridge's spiritualized organicism. One wonders, however, whether Priestley can be so clearly distinguished from his contemporaries. It is one thing to suggest that Coleridge found in Priestley's work idealist potential, but quite another to argue that Priestley's position was actually mathematical, mechanical idealism. Schofield notes that the main trends of late-eighteenth-century thought had been selected from Locke, Newton and Hartley. But Priestley's contemporaries also selected from him those same trends: materialism, utilitarianism, and empiricism. Conversely, if Priestley could be viewed differently, so could Locke, Newton and Hartley, for their work, as Schofield points out, also contained Neoplatonic elements. Probably the crucial feature of Priestley's thought which made it attractive to Coleridge was that it was monist. It was an easy transition from `mechaniz'd matter' to `animated nature' .[2'] One is reminded here of the close relationship between the materialism and vitalism of the mid-century following the breakdown of the Cartesian mind/matter dichotomy. There may also be parallels between the persistence of Neoplatonism in England and the continuation of Renaissance chemical philosophy in France. Debus notes that Joseph Chambon in his *Traite des metaux* (1714, repr. 1750) discussed the similarity between the calcination of metals and their subsequent recovery through reduction with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.[28] Although Priestley constantly stressed 'the narrowness of our comprehension' ,[29] he was prepared to speculate upon the relationship between the workings of nature and his religious beliefs. Benjamin Rush recalled that in his conversations with him Priestley 'inclined . . . to the annihilation of the wicked, from the analogy of some plants and animals which have perished forever on our globe' .[3°] Rush's recollections also show that Priestley could imbibe uncritically certain popular beliefs; in this case, that horses could be tamed by 'tickling them about the ears' .[3'] In fact, horse-breakers probably exploited the horse's sense of smell.' All this demonstrates the real difficulties of constructing a model of scientific change based upon Debus's antithesis, even while acknowledging

the strength of the trend towards the mathematization of nature in Enlightenment science.

The authority of John Locke could be cited in favour of the mathematization of moral philosophy. Indeed, for Locke moral philosophy could be a more exact science than natural philosophy. He argued that in moral questions the mind could judge with mathematical precision for the real essences of ideas were the same as the nominal essences. In contrast, in natural philosophy, 'the ideas of the unknown properties of bodies, based on rational and regular experiments, are still but judgement and opinion, not knowledge and certainty' .[33] This is decidely not the position of the scientific rationalist for whom the world of nature could be understood objectively, and in practice most eighteenth-century scientists ignored such theoretical doubts. They assumed that the reduction of nature to rule furthered real understanding. A few, it is true, had their doubts. Buffon criticized Linnaeus's taxonomy on the grounds that it introduced a false precision into nature. In nature, he argued, `there actually exist imagination' .[34] But he was swimming against the tide. The trend towards the mathematization of nature continued inexorably, yet Locke's predictions were not fulfilled as regards the moral sciences. As Hankins notes, the application of science to human affairs led to difficulties which were not resolved in the Enlightenment. In so far as its method was Newtonian empiricism, then science aimed to be descriptive, and it was difficult to see how descriptive science could furnish prescriptive rules for men and society. But Enlightenment science, despite its oft-professed Newtonianism, was not purely empirical, it aimed to be predictive, and it had the authority of Locke for believing that in the moral sciences at least exact laws could be discovered. If these were discovered, then a further dilemma would be posed: how could the application of predictive laws to man confer upon him greater freedon; how could natural laws be reconciled with 'natural rights'? Two papers in the festschrift shed some light upon the way in which science was applied in the attempt to improve man's lot, Victor Hilts on `Enlightenment views on the genetic perfectibility of man' and William Coleman on 'Inventing demography: Montyon on hygiene and the state'.

The Enlightenment concern with the origins of life took precedence over the desire to understand man's genetic constitution or inheritance. This neglect may be attributed to the Enlightenment's broad religious concern with creation and to the centrality of the assumption of the essential uniformity (and rationality) of man to its task. Yet the neglect was not total. If Enlightenment philosophers were not much interested in inheritance or individual diversity, this was not so with Enlightenment physicians who were very much concerned about the hereditary transmission of disease. Two approaches were possible: one concerned the elimination of disease, the other concerned its hereditary transmission. Most Enlightened physicians adopted both approaches, but it was the latter which led to notions of genetic

perfectibility. Erasmus Darwin suggested that individuals should take into account hereditary background in the choice of marital partner. Though the implications of such eugenic attitudes for personal relationships were unpleasant (and, one might add lasting; one of my aunties judged family marriages according to whether one had married into 'good stock'), the dangers arising from them were much greater when they were suggested as the basis for state policy, as they were on the continent. For some Cameralist writers, eugenic policy was part of their concern for a well ordered police state. The most notable example of such thinking appeared in volume one of Johann Peter Frank's *System einer v011standigen medicinschen Policey* (1779). His recommendations involved the restriction of marriage to healthy citizens and implied the keeping of careful records.' The French hygienist, Charles Augustin Vandermonde, went further in suggesting that marriage partners should be chosen from different climates. The connection between inheritance and environment implied here can be traced to the classical belief that the temperaments were modified by climate and inheritance. Such ideas were taken up not only by physicians but also by *philosophes.* La Mettrie suggested that the different characteristics of nations could be attribute partly to 'the difference in foods and difference in inheritance' and partly to 'the mixture of the diverse elements which float around in the immensity of the void' .[36] Thus those who hoped for the perfectibility of man stressed the importance of improving the environment in the broadest sense, for it included the genetic environment. Benjamin Rush even believed that moral character was inheritable, and suggested that at some time in the future it would be possible to predict with 'certainty' the intellectual character of one's offspring. However, even a mathematician of the distinction of Condorcet was unable to reduce heredity to rule though he was optimistic about improvements in man's genetic inheritance. His aspirations for perfectibility did not imply selective breeding; rather they rested on a belief in the inheritability of acquired characteristics. Thus improvements in education would have an incremental effect over generations. Condorcet's friend and disciple, the physician Cabanis, shared his views and hoped that men could be restored to a state of natural equality. Thus one way or another Enlightened man was determined to create a philosophy based either on the assumption of the natural equality of man or the belief that men could be made more equal. The observation of diversity did not lead to its romanticization. But the Enlightenment failed to place such beliefs for the improvement of mankind upon an objective basis; they were, or at least became in the hands of Cabanis, ideological. This is hardly surprising. Even if Hankins is correct in arguing

that the Enlightenment could have progressed farther in its understanding of hereditary transmission, it remains true that is not until this century that the complexities of evolution and genetic make-up have been reduced to rule. But in the more limited spheres of individual welfare and governmental concern for the citizens' well-being, more impressive steps were taken to tame nature and make life more predictable.

It was a commonplace of seventeenth and eighteenth-century thought that a large and healthy population meant a prosperous state. The state was, however, slow to organize *effective* measures for the prevention of high mortality and the decrease in mortality in the eighteenth century occurred in the main independently of state action. This is not to say that he attempts of states to improve public hygiene were not in their way impressive.' But there was a growing appreciation of the need to base action upon detailed knowledge rather than upon general principles. This was exemplified in the work of Auget de Montyon, a French intendant, and author of *Recherches et considerations sur la population de la France* (1778). Montyon approached his work in true Baconian fashion, believing that the inquisitive administrator was in the best position to appreciate the problems of society and to take appropriate action. Alas, as an administrator he was a failure. He lacked the political arts and was successively recalled from three intendancies. But he made good use of his bureaucratic knowledge. Believing that the scientific method could turn government into a science, he argued that science should begin with a proper understanding of the size and condition of the population. Since counting of the French population as a whole did not begin until the Controller Generalship of the Abbe Terray (1769-1774), Montyon had to approach his task through detailed local studies. From these he inferred that the French population was of the order of 23.5 to 24 million, a more optimistic figure than that suggested by the Physiocrats and a more accurate one.[38] Montyon's statistics of mortality led him to recommend a whole range of hygienic measures including the draining of marshes and stagnant pools, sanitary improvements in towns and cities, the provision of a balanced diet and the prevention of in-breeding. If such concerns were not startlingly new, what was, in the French context, original was his desire to place such policies on an informed basis. For example, as regards provisioning, he was not simply concerned that mouths should be fed, but was interested in finding a correct nutritional balance, and he advocated further research into the relative nutritional values of cereals. As Coleman notes, policy in Montyon's view should be based upon 'a body of reasoned statistics'. It was an approach which led him to the very modern appreciation that malnutrition is not always the result of a lack of food.

It was thus through practical concerns that the difficulties of reducing the moral sciences to rule were most effectively tackled. Probability theory first developed in relation to problems relating to gambling, but it was the more pressing concern with insurance, especially life insurance, which led to its advancement. At the root of practical concerns lay demography for neither individuals nor governments could take informed decisions about the future unless accurate mortality tables were made available. Yet in the eighteenth century very few had both the mathematical knowledge and the practical involvement necessary for development of the moral sciences. Montyon argued that only an *elite* would have sufficient expertise to take enlightened

administrative decisions: 'without doubt administrative functions must be confined only to those who have made careful study of science' ."His vision of a well ordered police state can be linked with that of the Cameralists. In Germany, close links existed between the states and the universities, which both provided the governments with bureaucrats and analysed and articulated the needs of state. In the view of Professor G. F. Lamprecht of Halle the state should aim to provide its citizens with 'the comforts and amenities of Life' and to make them 'more well behaved, healthier, wiser, wealthier and more secure' .[4°] This led him to suggest *inter alia* that all towns should be the same size, that roads should intersect at right angles, that mothers should be compelled to suckle their children and that the colouring of Easter Eggs should be banned. Such were the curious alchemies of dottiness and commonsense produced by the urge to reduce all things to rule, but underlying them was an authoritarian trend. These were the dangers of the quest for predictability. Yet the developing ability to predict the future did not mean that the use of science to determine events inevitably led to the loss of freedom. Sometime ago Fritz Hartung suggested that the trend towards regulation and prohibition in the smaller German principalities was supplanted under Enlightened Absolutism by another towards positive measures encouraging citizens voluntarily to join schemes, such as insurance schemes, for the protection of their own well-being. He instanced the decision in 1801 of the Faculty of Medicine in Jena to reject compulsory vaccination because it was 'irreconcilable with the unassailable liberty which is the right of every father' .[4I] More recently, Marc Raeff in his study of *The Well-Ordered Police State* has confirmed the trend away from state intervention. Whereas Hartung saw in the process an erosion of the state's confidence in regulation and a flagging of energy which explains much of the failure of Enlightened Despotism, Raeff argues that it arose from the very success of the state in disciplining its citizens and that the replacement of prohibitions by positive encouragements led to a release of energy and the attempt to realize the goals of the well ordered police state by other means.' There are clearly dangers in over-stressing the development of *laissez faire* but at least one can state that the application of science to government did not lead inevitably to the loss of freedom even in those states in which it was most clearly harnessed to government.' In so far as hygienic policy made the future of citizens more secure, it enhanced the freedom of all, but the extent to which one benefitted from the relaxation of controls depended upon one's social station. This serves as an important reminder that the study of Enlightenment science and its uses is incomplete unless one studies the social context of science.

It is only too easy to feel that eighteenth-century science is difficult enough to explain in its own terms without bringing in extraneous social considerations. That is not how scientists of that era felt. They proclaimed the value of their discipline and recommended the adoption of its techniques. Bernard de Fontenelle declared,

A work on politics, on morals, a piece of criticism, even a manual on the art of public speaking would, other things being equal, be all the better for having been written by a geometrician.'

It is in the moral sciences that the connection between science and society appears most obvious, and yet the relationship between the two is nonetheless intricate. Montyon linked demography with the cause of humanity, and hoped that his work would modify 'the physical, moral and political order' But it is easier to understand the motivation of Montyon's work than to explain how it affected his demographic studies. Was he a better demographer than Mirabeau the Elder because he was more optimistic than the Physiocrat about the future of his country? We know from the case of Richard Price that extreme conscientiousness does not always prevent one from being misled by one's own preconceptions.' The relationship between science and less high-minded social considerations can be equally problematic. In the eighteenth century science became fashionable. It has been argued that in eighteenth century England science was embraced because it was a branch of culture. If so, it is no easy task to elucidate the relationship between the Enlightenment, science and society. It is not a task which has been undertaken in the works mentioned thus far. Almost all give broadly intellectual accounts of scientific change. Hankins touches on public interest in science. He notes that the concept of subtle fluids first made its appearance circa 1740, 'when demonstration experiments in physics were rapidly gaining in popularity' .^' Could it be that the concept was attractive because it provided a readily intelligible explanation which at the same time retained an element of mystery? Hankins does not say. Of the popular electrical experiments, he comments, 'even the most elaborate showmen were using their experiments to test existing theories and to suggest new ones' This is surely stretching a point. One suspects that Hankins' real position is that of Lord Brougham, who, writing of Humphry Davy's flirtation with popular science, declared that 'the incongrous combination of science and fashion . . . form a most imperfect union, and produce a compound of no valuable qualities' .[49] Hankins no doubt did not intend to write a book about the social context of science, but given the chosen limits of his work, it is fortunate that there exists an ideal complement to it in Colin A. Russell's. *Science and Social Change, 1700-1900.* Russell provides amplification of some of the points made by Hankins by explaining in terms intelligible to anyone who has no more than a
rusty '0' level knowledge of science some of the scientific processes which were investigated by eighteenth-century scientists. More importantly, he introduces the reader to the range of explanations now being offered for scientific change and of which the student reading Hankin would be but dimly aware.

Russell begins by presenting the student with a series of alternative theories of scientific change and concludes that most are simplistic. He himself offers a composite theory which suggests a complex interrelationship between science,

society, ideology, technology and crafts. This rules out a straightforward cause and effect account of scientific change and at times his undogmatic approach leads him to be content with offering congruities or parallels. In contrast with Hankin's study which is centred on France, Russell's work concentrates on Great Britain, although he constantly draws attention to similarities and contrasts with scientific developments on the continent, and does in fact devote on chapter to science in France in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic era. As far as eighteenth-century science is concerned, his discussions of the significance of Newtonianism and of the relationships between science and radical politics are particularly valuable.

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Russell argues that 'science was generally in poor shape during most of the eighteenth-century',' and his explanation is that science lacked effective techniques, systems of thought and effective organization. While rejecting J.D. Bernal's thesis that decline was primarily a result of social and economic factors, he nonetheless concedes that 'science in its changing modes of expression and practice reflected underlying changes in the social ideologies of the period' .[51] But he is generally anxious to refute the notion that science can be understood solely in terms of ideologies, though characteristically he is scrupulous to give such accounts a fair hearing. He provides a careful and sympathetic account of Margaret F. Jacob's view that Newtonianism as propagated by the Boyle lecturers served as 'the social ideology developed by the church after the Revolution' .[52] A skilful dissection then follows. Russell accepts the close connection between Latitudinarianism and Newtonian science, and that the Boyle lecturers treated nature and society *as* 'parallell cases of God's overruling providence'," but argues that Jacob's evidence that Newtonianism represented a political, social and economic order is both limited and suspect. The best way to understand the Boyle lectures, he suggests, is in terms of their professed theological purpose, that is, he supports Robert Schofield's view that Christian apologists adopted Newtonian natural philosophy as a response to atheism. Furthermore, Jacob's interpretation of Newtonian natural theology fails to explain its widespread appeal outside English society. That appeal can certainly be explained in Schofield's terms. Theologians aware of the threat of the new science to belief embraced natural theology with open arms. One might add that any total explanation of the enthusiasm for natural theologies in the first half of the eighteenth century should take into account the fact that for many life did improve. After the end of the War of the Spanish Succession providence appeared to be generally beneficent. In the next few decades war and aggrandizement gave way to complicated diplomacy and the jockeying for position. Plague and famine appeared to be dying out and the European economy emerged from a prolonged depression. Well might Addison believe that 'Providence has imprinted so many Smiles on Nature' .[54] Such enthusiasm is not so much contrary to religious anxiety as its counterpart, of which the following lines from an early poem by Haller provide but one example:

Enough there is a God, nature shouts it out,
The whole construction of the world shows signs of his hand.'

This alliance between science and religion lasted longest in England where, as Russell convincingly shows, it has proved of enduring significance.

If Newtonianism proved too protean a concept to be linked to an ideology, there would appear to be a stronger case for arguing that later in the century science was ideological, that it was manipulated by the new industrial bourgeoisie to procure social legitimation through scientific or 'pseudo' scientific societies. Once again Russell demonstrates that the allure of grand theory is false. Not only is the relationship between science, applied science, scientific societies and economic activity difficult to chart but it was further complicated by political radicalism and religious dissent. Although he implies that more research is needed into science and the industrial revolution, his discussion of the chemical industry, in whose development science would appear to have played an obvious and crucial role, shows how difficult it will be to arrive at a general explanation of the relationship. Eighteenth-century chemical theory lagged behind empirical developments in technology. Joshua Ward, a 'quack' doctor, discovered that sulphuric acid could be made cheaply by heating sulphur and potassium nitrate (saltpetre) in water. Although the process was too complex for a theoretical chemist to understand, it was nevertheless a man trained in chemistry who perfected it so that sulphuric acid could be made even more cheaply and on a larger scale. This was John Roebuck, who appears to typify, if one dare make such an assertion, the various interconnections between Dissent, medicine, chemistry, the Dissenting Academies, Scotland, Holland, scientific advance and emergent industrialism. Educated at Northampton Academy, Edinburgh and Leyden, he settled in Birmingham as a doctor where he met Samuel Garbett a local businessman (and future financial adviser to Lord Shelburne). They went into partnership to produce sulphuric acid and soon set up a new works at Prestonpans. This avoided infringing Ward's patents. More importantly, it brought them into contact with the Scottish chemists and opened up a large
market for their acid in the Scottish linen industry. Thereon they diversified, setting up the Carron iron works. Roebuck himself collaborated with James Watt in the development of the steam engine and in chemical experiments. It would take a bold man to fit Roebuck into any single explanation of the relationship between science and industry. Russell contents himself with the observation that 'all his work was characteristic of the new combination of industrial enterprise and scientific enquiry'."

Russell is similarly cautious in his discussion of the social function of science in the scientific societies and of the relationship between radicalism and religion. Sometimes one feels he is over-cautious: he comments on Joseph Priestley and the Birmingham Riots, 'once again science, society and religion

were seen to be locked together in the life and experience of one man' .[57] That really does not say too much. Moreover, his suggestion that Priestley 'was almost the only English scientist of any distinction to adopt a radical political stance' does not square easily with his demonstration later of the pervasive interconnection between science, Dissent and political radicalism." His major anxiety as regards the scientific societies is however to refute the notion that they can be understood solely in terms of ideology or social legitimation. His prime example is the Lunar Society of Birmingham. In his interpretation he follows Robert Schofield's view of the society as an advanced guard for the new industrial society." At the same time he is anxious to stress the purely scientific credentials of the society. He draws attention to the members' belief in the systematic investigation of the laws of nature, to their open-minded empirical enquiry, their extensive contacts with and recognition by the scientific community in Britain and Europe, and to the collective nature of much of their scientific work. The latter was undertaken not least for the love of investigation and discovery. This a point which he later underscores. Citing the opinion of the early-nineteenth-century geologist, William Buckland, that `the human mind has an appetite for fruit of every kind, physical as well as moral, and the real utility of Science is to afford gratification to this appetite', he comments, 'in all the frenetic efforts sometimes made to "explain" scientific commitment in terms of economic greed or social aspiration, this is a simple point which historians neglect at their peril.' But the members of the Lunar Society were Baconians and expected the pursuit of science to have human application and to bring human benefits. The modern distinction between pure and applied had no meaning for them," and they were anxious to show how new scientific understanding could lead to advances in industry. Their credentials both as scientists and nascent industrialists are unimpeachable.

In 1963, Robert Schofield concluded his account of the Lunar Society by suggesting that, 'the numerous quasi-scientific, literary, philosophical discussion groups' of the time needed further investigation to test the belief that they too, were representative of the new society deliberately using science in the cause of industrialization.' Twenty years later, Russell, reviewing such research finds the results inconclusive. Societies such as the Manchester and Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Societies were larger than the Lunar Society, which had only fourteen members, and much less is known about their individual members. Russell's conclusions are somewhat paradoxical. He thinks it probable that the Manchester Lit. and Phil. was 'truly representative of the wider Mancunian industrial outlook' and that though motivated by technological and more general cultural considerations, the latter predominated.' As for the Newcastle Lit. and Phil. he suggests that it was not, at least initially predominantly a scientific society and that 'it offered a springboard for the much more extensive institutionalization of science in the nineteenth century' .[64] One point which he does not follow up is the

significance of medical involvement in these societies. Hankins notes the declining significance of medicine in science as the eighteenth century progressed while accepting that in Scotland medicine remained central to scientific innovation.' It is surely germane to our understanding of these societies to know how close were the ties between chemistry and medicine in late-eighteenth-century England.

In his discussion of the scientific communities of Birmingham, Manchester and Newcastle, Russell remarks on the close ties between science, radical religion and politics, which he choses to investigate further in a separate chapter. This is a valuable discussion which typically incorporates much specialist work. He suggests that the undoubted links which exist between science and political radicalism require quantification before a general picture can be presented, that it appears likely that radicalism did little to advance the cause of science, that anti-radical measures generally left science unaffected, and that science and political radicalism were not inseparably linked. But the fact that supporters of the *status quo* such as the Edinburgh Professor, John Robison, used science to attack radicalism does not prove that there were no ideological links between natural science and political radicalism. Earlier, in his discussion of anti-Newtonianism, Russell noted that it existed on both sides of the political spectrum. Significantly, he suggests that Toland's republicanism and Hutchinson's High Churchism were related to different conceptions of nature. Yet he is chary of drawing links say between Priestley's politics and his science, or between Robison's, as is clear from his conclusion which is worth citing *in extenso:*

> The polemics of Robison and his friends are enough to caution us against too facile an identification of the interests of science and political radicalism. Certainly there are superficial similarities in their approach: rejection of imposed authority, rationality, recognition of potential for social change, openness of data, and so on. Where these are also stressed by a religious creed, like Unitarianism or Quakerism, their mutual reinforcing effect is always stronger. But none of these morphological similarities is complete, and so the paradoxical situation arises in which science can be pursued by both the establishment and its enemies, and can be used both to support and to attack radicalism.[66]

This stands in marked contrast to Russell's willingness to find `isomorphisms' between anti-Newtonian science and politics. Since he makes little attempt to relate the content of radical political thought and science one must conclude that the paradox is of his own making.

If Russell has a tendency to err on the side of caution, that is a natural reaction to ideological accounts of the relationship between science and society. Recently, Keith Thomas has demonstrated decisively that ideas and

attitudes are not subordinate to economic and social needs, or, in a nutshell, self-interest. He has shown how the taming of wild nature, the development of capitalist society and of urban living led to the creation of sympathetic ideas of nature which were in direct conflict with man's new situation.' His work unfortunately was published too late for Russell to refer to it. But if Russell does not proffer such a clear antithesis between scientific ideas and social development he has a marked ability to dissect and explain the limitations of accounts which simplify the relationship between science and society and always in a fair-minded way. This is valuable work which not only furthers our understanding of the past, but also of the present, for it casts doubt upon analyses of our present dilemma based upon simplistic accounts of western science and of its relationship with society. Where Hankins and Russell have been bold enough to venture forth it is to be hoped that others will follow. Future studies will need to heed the example of Thomas and to pay more attention to the relationship between general social attitudes and habits and scientific thought." The most obvious intersection between science and popular attitudes, namely fashionable science, is not necessarily the most important area in which popular mentalities affect scientific thinking and vice versa but they do need to receive more attention than that provided by Hankins and Russell. It is difficult to understand why Russell omitted to discuss phrenology — in 1832 there were 29 phrenological societies in Great Britain — or Hankins, mesmerism. This is not a plea for a historicist account of science, but it is to suggest that accounts of scientific change and of the relationship between science and society will be incomplete unless we seek to reconstruct a general mental map of past times.

In the difficult task of reconstruction, research at all levels is needed, and not least into 'lost' individuals. Dorothy Stansfield has provided a fine example of such scholarly recovery. In what is undoubtedly a labour of love she has tracked down the records of the life of Thomas Beddoes and has put together the first scholarly account of his career. What her study reveals are the intricate cross-currents of late eighteenth-century science, so intricate that one is tempted to parody Buffon and suggest that 'there actually exist in history only individuals'. Yet Beddoes was not totally eccentric. As Russell notes, he provides an example of the conjunction between radical politics and science.

Educated at Oxford, London and Edinburgh, Thomas Beddoes returned to Oxford at the ˙end of 1787 as Chemical Reader, an unsalaried position. Initially, his lectures seem to have been successful, but by 1792 his numbers had dwindled and he offered his resignation. At that point the Vice-Chancellor invited him to draw up a memorial to be sent to the Secretary of State for the setting up of a salaried Chemistry Chair. The memorial received no response and within the year Beddoes had left Oxford. In the charged atmosphere of 1792, Oxford was staunchly loyal and an increasingly uncongenial place to the radically inclined Beddoes. In October 1792 he

published a pro-revolutionary fly-sheet which attacked the character of the French clergy. Since Oxford had recently raised over 1,100 pounds for emigre clergy this was hardly a politic move, and in April 1793 Beddoes left Oxford under a radical cloud. He settled in Bristol where he took up the practice of medicine. He did not however abandon his chemical studies. Indeed his main concern was to experiment with the use of gases for curing respiratory disorders, and eventually, in 1798, he set up a Pneumatic Institute. With the young Humphry Davy as his assistant, he turned to investigating the uses of nitrous oxide for curing nervous disorders. Neither he nor Davy fully appreciated its value as an anaesthetic although Davy noted the potential. The institute never quite achieved respectability and when Davy published his work on nitrous oxide, which made his reputation, he did so without reference to it and without the intended dedication to Beddoes. The latter died in 1808, prematurely aged by his efforts, and perhaps by his own experiments, feeling that his work had achieved little and that he still had much to do. His was a restless temperament and he was a man of enthusiasms, but his knowledge was considerable, he had a retentive memory, great gifts of observation and he was moved by a deep humanitarian concern. If his ideas tended to be rather speculative, eclectic and ill-disciplined, his influence was considerable both through personal contacts which were extensive for he was an unselfish man and a great encouragement to others, and through his publishing activity. He taught himself French, Italian and German while at Oxford. He built up an impressive library of foreign publications, and early in his career he translated works by Spallanzi, Bergman and Scheele. There can have been few in England who were more knowledgeable of continental thought. Throughout his career, in his numerous works and in his reviews for the *Monthly Review*, he drew attention to the major works of European science and philosophy. Unusually for the time he was well-versed in German, and his friend, Christoph Girtanner of the University of Gottingen, kept him up-to-date with the latest thought. It was he who sent him a copy of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, and Beddoes was probably the first to provide an account in English of Kant's ideas. It was Beddoes, too, who encouraged Samuel Taylor Coleridge to study at Gottingen. Shirely Roe notes that Haller has been described as the 'last universal scholar', but Beddoes who knew Haller's work, and who was, like Haller a poet, was not far behind.' His career reveals some of the numerous facets of enlightenment science: in no logical order, radicalism, Dissent, industry, chemistry, educational and philanthropic concerns, demography and Romanticism. Yet in truth many other candidates for the accolade could be found among the scientists of the Enlightenment. Although Enlightenment science which aimed to illumine all things had the paradoxical effect of facilitating the development of specialisms, it remained to the end a rich and fertile movement, always much more than the sum of its parts, and, as we have seen, possessing a Houdini-like ability to escape characterization. It is this very quality which makes the task of unravelling its polyphonic web so fascinating and so puzzling.

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[1] William Hamilton Reid, *Rise and dissolution of the infidel societies in this metropolis* (1800) in, Victor E. Neuberg, ed., *Literacy and society* (The Woburn Press, London, 1971), 27-30.

[2] Three very different but damaging critiques of the enlightenment and the scientific revolution can be found in Fritjof Capra, *The Turning point. Science, society, and the rising culture* (Flamingo, Fontana, London, 1983); Robert C. Solomon, *History and human nature. A philosophical review of European culture, 1750 — 1850* (Harvester Press, Brighton, 1979); and, George Steiner, *In Bluebeard's castle* (Faber and Faber, London, 1971).

[5] See Joseph Needham, *The grand titration. Science and society in east and west*, (George Allen and Unwin, London, 2nd impr. 1979), ch. 8, 'Human Law and the Laws of Nature', 229-330. See also Edward Grant, 'Late Medieval Thought, Copernicus and the Scientific Revolution', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XXIII, (1962), 197-220, for a discussion of the assumptions underlying the Scientific Revolution, and for the suggestion similar to that of Needham, that the revolution was dependent on a naive appreciation of the task of science.

[4] Thomas L. Hankins, *Science and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985), 36.

[5] Keith Thomas, *Man and the natural world. Changing attitudes in England 1500-1800* (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1984), 156-157.

[6] Norman Hampson, *The Enlightenment* (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1968), 106, my italics.

[7] This was the professed intention of Henry F. May in his study of *The Enlightenment in America* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1976), xiii. The passage is worth quoting in full for it shows a fine appreciation of the relationship between the Enlightenment and American religion, and of the way it ought to be studied: 'My book . . . does not deal equally with the two main clusters of ideas influential in early America: the Enlightenment and Protestantism, but rather about the Enlightenment, with Protestantism always in the background as matrix, rival, ally, and enemy. It is not about the Enlightenment *and* religion, but rather about the Enlightenment *as* religion'. One recognizes that much of the groundwork concerning Enlightenment science and religion has been done, notably in relation to Newton, but it has been slow to make an impact upon our general understanding of the Enlightenment. See G.S. Rousseau and Roy Porter eds., *The Ferment of Knowledge. Studies in the historiography of eighteenth-century science* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980), Steven Shapin, 'Social uses of science', 107-108.

[8] Thomas, op. cit., 34-35.

[9] Hampson, op. cit., 86. He applies the phrase to the Deists generally.

10 Hankins, op. cit., 117.

[11] Thomas Burnet, *The Sacred theory of the Earth* (London, 1697), bk. II, 144-145.

[12] Ibid., bk. 1, 'Preface to the Reader'.

13 Stephen Toulmin & June Goodfield, *The Discovery of time* (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1967), 98-99.

[14] Burnet, op. cit., bk. II, 141-145.

[15] See H. Butterfield, *The Origins of modern science, 1400-1800* (G. Bell & Sons, London, 1957), ch. XI, 191-209.

[16] Hankins, op. cit., 109.

[17] Ibid., 20.

[18] Ibid., 130.

[19] Roe, loc. cit., 289.

[20] In medical science the influence of both Haller's works and the Newtonian ideal were considerable. See W.F. Bynum, 'Health, disease and medical care' in Rousseau and Porter, op. cit., 220-221. Bynum also suggests that, following the uncertainties of the 1740s and 1750s, medical thought and practice became more distinctively local and national.

[21] Hankins, op. cit., 120.

[22] Ibid., 81.

[23] Debus, loc. cit., 208.

[2A] Ibid., 209.

[25] Schofield, loc. cit., 237.

[26] Readers of this journal will already be aware of Neo-platonic influences in Priestley's education from Professor Schofield's article in number 2, 1983, 69-81.

[27] Schofield, 'Joseph Priestley, Neoplatonism, and S.T. Coleridge', loc. cit., 239 and 249.

[28] Debus, loc. cit., 201.
[29] Joseph Priestley, *Letters to Dr. Home* (London, 1787), 66.
[30] George W. Corner, *The autobiography of Benjamin Rush* (Princeton University Press, 1948), 231.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Thomas, op. cit., 97.
[33] John Locke, *Essay concerning human understanding*, cit. Schofield, loc. cit., 244.
[34] Hankins, op. cit., 149.
[35] Hilts, loc. cit, 258, points out that since Frank's suggestions involved an attack upon arranged marriages and upon in-breeding, which should be mitigated by marriages between communities, they would have had an emancipatory effect for some.
[36] Ibid., 262.
[37] See for example Reinhold August Dorwart, *The Prussian welfare state before 1740* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1971) esp. chs. 7, and 16-19.
[38] Montyon's estimate for the French population was below that which historian's today take to be accurate, (to an error of $2^{9}/o$) namely 26 million. This is based upon the statistical enumerations initiated by Terray, and of whose pioneering work Coleman seems unaware. Coleman, loc. cit., 218; Pierre Goubert, trans. Steve Cox, *The Ancien Regime in French society 1600 - 1750* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1973), 33.
[39] Coleman, loc. cit., 228.
[40] Fritz Hartung, *Enlightened despotism* (Historical Association, London, 1957), 12.
41 Ibid., 22-23.
[42] Marc Raeff, *The Well-ordered state. Social and institutional change through law in the Germanies and Russia, 1600-1800* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1983), 253. The term 'police' had a broad administrative connotation in this period. Ibid., 5.
[43] For a cautionary note on Raeff's thesis, see the review of his work by Dr. Mike Hughes in the *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies vol.* 7, no. 1, Spring 1984, 111-113.
[44] Essay on 'The Utility of Mathematics', cit. Alan G.R. Smith, *Science and society in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (Thames and Hudson, London, 1972), 153.
[45] Coleman, loc. cit., 231.
[46] See D.O. Thomas, 'Richard Price and the population controversy', *The Price-Priestley Newsletter*, no. 4, 1980, 43-62.
[47] Hankins, op. cit., 51.
[48] Ibid., 55.
[49] Henry, Lord Brougham, *Lives of philosophers of the time of George III* (London and Glasgow, 1855), 110.
[50] Russell, op. cit., 33. Russell's citation of Hartley in support of his view is unconvincing. Hartley's point was that the *single-minded* pursuit of science was harmful because it deflected one away from one's central concern with God and led to exaggerated claims for the powers of science. This view was later echoed by Joseph Priestley. It is in this light that their opinions of their contemporaries need to be understood. See. John G. McEvoy, 'Enlightenment and Dissent in Science: Joseph Priestley and the limits of Theoretical Reasoning', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, no.2, 1983, 63.
[51] Russell, op. cit., 35.
[52] Ibid, p. 52; see also Margaret C. Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution, 1689-1720* (The Harvester Press, Hassocks, Sussex, 1976), 177.
[53] Russell, op. cit., 56.
[54] Essay on `Chearfulness', *Spectator*, 393 (1712), cit. Basil Willey, *The Eighteenth-Century background. Studies on the idea of nature in the thought of the period* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1962), 67-68.
[55] 'Gendanken uber Vernunft, Aberglauben, and Undglauben' cit. Roe, loc. cit., 286.
[56] Russell, op. cit., 101.
[57] Ibid., 62.
58 Ibid.
[59] Ibid., 105-107; see also Robert E. Schofield, *The Lunar Society of Birmingham. A social history of provincial science and industry in eighteenth-century England* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1963), 438-440.

[60] Russell, op. cit., 197.
61 This is a point which Russell himself makes in relation to the Mechanics' Institutes; ibid., 162.
[62] Schofield, *Lunar Society*, 439-440.
[63] Russell, op. cit., 109.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Hankins, op. cit., 114.
[66] Russell, op. cit., 150. See also 62-65.
[67] Thomas, op. cit., 301.
[68] For example Thomas convincingly shows how important the growing habit of keeping pets was to discussions concerning the rationality and souls of animals; op. cit., esp. 100-142.
[69] Roe, loc. cit, 273.

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Political Language in the Revolution Controversy

Ken Edward Smith

Olivia Smith's *The Politics of Language 1791-1819'* confirms that there is no necessary disjunction between the entertainment of new theoretical perspectives and the retrieval of detailed historical context. On the contrary, the book confirms that a hypothesis framed to provide connections between already known, yet seemingly anomalous, data may itself often lead to the discovery of new sources of information. Such has certainly been the case in the natural sciences: now it proves also to be true in the study of English political thought in the period immediately after the French Revolution.

Here we can sense that the germ of the study in question lay in reflection on the striking, yet largely unexplored, fact that a good many English radical writers and some of their opponents too, such as the later Coleridge, wrote not only on politics but also on grammar and rhetoric. Joseph Priestley, Home Tooke and William Cobbett come immediately to mind. Of course, we say to ourselves, these writers were generalists in an age of generalists and might as easily have turned their hands to ethics or statistics like Richard Price or English history and practical agriculture like Cobbett himself. Furthermore, we may easily add that in an age of increasing literacy but of limited public education there was naturally a large and lucrative market for such books. Yet even a little reflection may suggest that writing on such matters as grammatical standards and correctness or stylistic appropriateness could have wide-ranging political implications. That this was indeed so in the 1790's is one of the things Olivia Smith sets out to prove.

As an initial touchstone of the effectiveness of her re-orientation we may take the case of Horne Tooke, a figure who is ubiquitous in the biographies of literary and political figures of the period but whose own significance as a linking intellectual influence is often missed, reduced to anecdotal evidence of his personal influence or attributed solely to his famous Sunday dinners where radicals would foregather. The importance of such personal links is not denied here but the main stress falls elsewhere, most notably on the political significance of his linguistic theorizing in *The Diversions of Purley* (1798 and 1805). This book finds honorific though ultimately dismissive mention in histories of linguistics but it would be difficult to find any reference to it at all in studies of English political thought.

The Diversions emerges as a book which explicitly takes issue with elitist theories of language current in late eighteenth century England. That lexicographers such as Johnson could dismiss much day-to-day language as `fugitive cant' certainly implied that the speech of the labouring classes was inferior to that of the genteel. But far more structurally divisive were the claims of Monboddo, Harris and others that the classical languages were superior to English by virtue of their richness in particles and that educated English was superior to vulgar English for the same reason. The implication

was clearly that those who had not had a classical education, or at least a rigorous schooling in some formal English rhetoric, would simply be unable to think about important matters such as the structure of society in any coherent way.

One of Home Tooke's main purposes is to deny this division of languages or linguistic varieties into inherently superior and inferior kinds (his enterprise in this direction anticipates that of modern structural linguists who have attempted to show that there are no 'primitive' languages). He argues that at the heart of language are not particles but nouns, the former now being seen as abbreviations of the latter which 'originate in definable words which represent ordinary objects'. Just as much as its opponents' arguments from origins this contention would be considered unprovable today but it is at least as convincing and leads to a more sophisticated stylistic division. The languages of so-called 'primitive' peoples are slower but more definite in their semantics: the languages of 'advanced' peoples are quicker but less precise. In short, Horne Tooke sees the advantages as evenly spread, with a slight bias to the `primitive' on account of its uncorruptedness:

> Savage languages are upon an equal footing with the languages (as they are called) of *art*, except that the former are less corrupted: and that savages have not only as *separate and distinct ideas* of those relations as we have, but that they have this advantage over us (an advantage of intelligibility, though it is a disadvantage in point of brevity) that they also *express* them separately and distinctly (i, 399).

The literary and political implications of such a view are not far to seek. This outlook is seen as compatible with Wordsworth's in the *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* and as highlighting the political significance of the *Preface.* Conversely, *The Diversions* is established as the unnamed ghostly adversary with which Coleridge wrestles in *Biographia Literaria* as, recanting on his earlier radicalism, he seeks to draw a firm distinction between the language of sensation and the language of reflection. We can also see Home Tooke's views as casting doubt on the numerous decisions of Parliament to reject petitions on the grounds of their (supposed) linguistic impropriety. In fact language was conveniently relegated to the realm of unspeakable vulgarity when the messages it conveyed were found to be unwelcome.

Yet it was, by a supreme irony, the main protagonist on the conservative side who inadvertently showed the impossiblity of keeping everyday language out of post-Revolutionary politics. Olivia Smith shows how much of the power of Burke's *Reflections* comes precisely from its stylistic range, specifically from its cross-cutting of Lockean precision with *ad hominem* sallies, of ordered sublimity with vigorous metaphor. Even some of Burke's supporters, such as Phillip Francis, counselled caution in this respect. *The Monthly Review* noted the wide range of metaphors in the *Reflections,* `sublime and grovelling, gross and refined'.

Paine's reply in *The Rights of Man* is seen to owe something to Burke in exploiting this mix of the *philosophe* and the pamphleteer, and also in its skilful construction of a counter-narrator to the narrator invented by Burke for his work. But the style of the book also owes much to Paine's reading of French Enlightenment authors and to the experience of the American Revolution which had given rise to *Common Sense.* 'It was the cause of America that made me an author'. This mixed heritage of linguistic deposits may be seen in his responses to Burke where at times he deploys a sinewy Enlightenment counter-argument:

> The circumstances of the world are continually changing, and the opinions of men change also; and as government is for the living and not for the dead, it is the living only that has any right in it. That which may be thought right and found convenient in one age may be thought wrong and found inconvenient in another. In such cases, who is to decide, the living or the dead?

At other times, however, Paine will skilfully adopt Burke's metaphoric procedures to his own ends:

> It is not from his prejudices only, but from the disorderly cast of his genius, that he is unfitted for the subject he writes upon. Even his genius is without a constitution. It is a genius at random, and not a genius constituted. But he must say something. He has therefore mounted in the air like a balloon, to draw the eyes of the multitude from the ground they stand upon.

From the point of view of political history (as opposed to the broader history of political thought) perhaps the most interesting contribution of Olivia Smith is made in her fifth chapter, 'The Power of the Press and the Trials of William Hone'. Here Hone, the son of a lawyer's clerk, is seen as consciously using a heritage of popular religious and political culture dating back to seventeenth century controversy (Bunyan, Foxe and Lilburne). Bizarrely, in the dark days of 1817, Hone found himself basing his defence on the ground that his religious parodies were a direct attack on the government of the day. This was in fact the lesser of two evils, since it enabled him to evade the serious charge of blasphemous libel and to locate himself in a long and honourable tradition of anti-government satire using biblical parallels. By the end of the trial he had succeeded in defending himself in terms that made him sound like a Christian martyr and a radical patriot rolled into one:

> Who, 0 Who, who were the blasphemers? Who were the Atheists? Were they not the bloody-minded men who called themselves Christians, rather than the defenceless man whom they put to death . . . When in the King's Bench, he was shunned as a pestilence, even by those who were, or pretended to be, formerly his friends — by those whom, as David said of Jonathan, his heart loved.

Unfortunately, Olivia Smith's book, partly because of its starting date and partly because of its concentration on other areas, does not give us any extended study of radical Dissenting language in a stricter sense, though Priestley's political writings of the time would have lent themselves well to such a linguistic analysis, as would Price's famous 1789 *Discourse*. We must therefore turn to Marilyn Butler's necessarily brief introduction to *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy*[2] to obtain further hints on this. Her stance here is thought-provokingly questioning of the efficacy of the rhetoric of Enlightened Dissent during the Revolution period:

> Priestley and other Dissenting intellectuals are all along in a false position, cut off both from the governmental process and from meaningful political discussion with members of other social groups. The result is that during the 1780's and early 1790's they and those like them evolve a rhetoric of liberty which is international rather than patriotic, 'levelling' rather than hierarchical, and above all misleadingly unconstrained, since it puts its claims in respect of the individual conscience, which has no class accent. The message which comes across, unspecific yet unmistakable, is *insubordination* . . . Extremism, out of step with real sentiment in the country, is the main characteristic of this body of writing . . .

Marilyn Butler's position here is clearly not the conservative one with which a quick reading might confuse it: rather she is concerned that radical discourse should relate to 'grass-roots' feeling, that it should in every sense have a material base. However, her account does not sufficiently bear in mind the violences of discourse and action which were brought forth to separate Dissenting intellectuals from the populace. And one would like to see an Olivia Smith-like analysis of that international rhetoric of liberty, arguably a linguistic achievement fit to rank with Paine's, whatever its unhappy immediate consequences in Pitt's England.

Despite any disagreement one might have with her views on Radical Dissent's role, it is hard not to welcome Marilyn Butler's collection of controversial documents. It is true that her selection is both briefer and narrower than that made in 1950 by Alfred Cobban for his *The Debate on the French Revolution 1789-1800. We* miss here those personal letters and parliamentary speeches which do so much to fill out the context of the period in Cobban's selection. Absent also is Cobban's useful division into sections, so that we can easily locate specific debates on equality and property or the church and state.

What we do have, in recompense, is a tighter, more intense awareness of the debate actually being joined and in progress. We have about twenty pages each from Burke, Paine and Godwin, and here Marilyn Butler shows her strength as a close reader of texts, able to extract the pith of an argument. The

extracts from Godwin, for example, manage remarkably to provide key positions on political institution, education, justice, obedience, forms of government, revolution and other topics. In the important undergrowth of the controversy, where much of the battle for hearts and minds was fought, we find a telling juxtaposition of Hannah More's clever conservative vernacular in *Village Politics* with Joseph Spence's radical vernacular in *The Meridian Sun of Liberty*, and of William Cobbett's *The Soldier's Friend* with his reactionary *Observations on the Emigration of Dr. Joseph Priestley*. Although this new selection does not replace Cobban's generous inclusiveness, it gives us a more intense focus on the key debates of the 1790's.

It is not the explicit aim of either Olivia Smith or Marilyn Butler to draw out the contemporary, as opposed to the historical, implications of this debate on politics and language. But they do show that a concern with discourse, with unravelling the sub-texts as well as the explicit meanings of political arguments, can be a universally applicable procedure which shows how power is threatened and maintained not just with the help of language but within language, and thus thought, itself. More specifically, they help us to see that late eighteenth century radicalism of which Radical Dissent and its heirs (Godwin, Wollstroncraft and others) were a crucial part, had as one of its key purposes the questioning not only of all positive institution but of that central institution which encodes all the other institutions of society, human language itself.

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Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language 1791-1819* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1984) pp. xiii, 269. £19.50.

[2] *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy*, ed. Marilyn Butler (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984) pp. xii, 260. £7.95.

Peter H. Marshall, *William Godwin* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1984), xi, 497. £14.95.

Much as he decried the love of fame, William Godwin was far from unaffected by its attractions. He wrote his diary for posterity, obsessively listing his activities, his daily reading and his social contacts, and he also kept copies of most of his correspondence. His care for his posthumous reputation has been rewarded by the amount of scholarship expended on his life and times. Kegan Paul produced the first major biography in 1876, and this has been followed by works by Brown, Woodcock, and Locke.' There have also been a number of more philosophical works on Godwin — notably, Pollin, Monro, Fleisher, and Clarke.[2] Peter H. Marshall has now added a fifth major biographical work to the canon. While it might be felt that a further biography would be redundant given its predecessors, Marshall's book deserves serious consideration. It does so because, unlike earlier writers, Marshall pays long overdue attention to Godwin's early life and education. The eponymous biography is not without its faults — its style is sometimes a little heavy handed, Marshall is rather too ready to take what Godwin says about his life and opinions at face value, and he gives an unwarranted amount of space to those of Godwin's acquaintance who later achieved renown but whose contact with Godwin was not particularly extensive (as in his early discussion of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey which sheds little light on Godwin and seems misplaced in a work which makes few other concessions to contextual considerations). But, these points aside, it is, on the whole, a thorough and commendable piece of biographical work. And its major advantage over its predecessors is that it gives us a much more detailed account of Godwin's early years — in particular focusing on his upbringing in the theological and philosophical traditions of Dissent. Godwin was the son of a Presbyterian Minister, as a child he was educated by Dissenters of various hues, and he concluded his education with five years at the Hoxton Dissenting Academy under the tutorship of Kippis and Rees. On completing his education he spent four years as a Dissenting Minister and although he left the Ministry in 1783 — ten years before the appearance of his major philosophical work, *An enquiry concerning political justice* — he continued to move in Dissenting circles while making his living as a hack journalist in London.[3]

Marshall's emphasis on Godwin's early education, and his later emphasis on Godwin's secular rationalism and hedonistic utilitarianism make this book an obvious candidate for review in this journal. However, on Marshall's account, Godwin starts life firmly rooted in the tradition of Dissent only to emerge in *Political justice* as the champion of Enlightenment and the slayer of superstition. At the risk of caricature, Marshall gives us a Godwin whose mature thought provides a synthesis and development of the Enlightenment philosophy of Hume, the British Moralists and the *philosophes* — a synthesis which rises from the ashes of his earlier religious belief and his Dissenting background. The transformation is not, of course, complete. Marshall notes residues of Dissent or 'Calvinism' as he frequently refers to it (following Godwin's biographical note of March 1800) in Godwin's 'mature' thought.

But these are seen as little more than lapses in Enlightenment. Marshall sets the tone for his account of the forces of Enlightenment and Dissent in Godwin's work by arguing that 'had Godwin not been such an extreme Calvinist in his youth he would probably never have developed *by reaction* such a profound humanism and so radical a philosophy'.[4] As I suggested, seeing Marshall as setting up Enlightenment and Dissent as two opposing forces in Godwin's philosophy risks caricaturing his position. In Chapter II of his biography Marshall does make less dichotomous use of the two traditions — in particular, he refers to Godwin's note of 1800 in which he identified three major errors in *Political justice* — Stoicism, Sandemanianism, and Calvinism. But whatever his comments in this chapter, when he comes to discuss *Political justice* at length (Chapter VII) he makes *no* reference at all to Godwin's Dissenting inheritance, and the texts which he draws on to bolster his interpretation of *Political justice* are almost entirely from the corpora of the British Moralists and the *philosophes.* Dissent is firmly relegated to the role of a potent draught imbibed in his youth and producing little more than hangovers and reactions in his mature thought — residues which once recognized are scrupulously attended to and removed from later editions and works. Whatever influence Marshall may recognize in his early chapters, the clear implication of the work is that *Political justice* is a work of secular Enlightenment — not one of Dissent.

This implicit opposition between the concerns of Dissent and those of secular Enlightenment vitiates Marshall's analysis of *Political justice.* In particular, it leads him to follow Locke and others in arguing that Godwin's fundamental moral position is best understood as a relatively consistent version of utilitarianism. It is true that in the later pages of his discussion of *Political justice* he refers to the importance of private judgement for Godwin, and to the Greek notion of individual self-fulfilment, but he does nothing to reconcile these very different principles with utility — and he thereby implies that they can be nothing more than necessary conditions for the attainment of optimal utility.

This claim, that Godwin's moral philosophy is best understood as utilitarian, makes three crucial mistakes. It fails to recognize the positive and powerful nature of Godwin's inheritance from Dissent; it mistakes the character of Godwin's moral philosophy; and in doing these two things, it fails to grasp the profound connections between Dissent, Enlightenment and political radicalism at the end of the eighteenth century. I wish to concentrate on this aspect of Marshall's account because, on first reading, the major strength of his biography over its predecessors is precisely the attention it gives to Godwin's Dissenting background. If we are able to recognize serious shortcomings in the treatment of the impact of Godwin's background on his mature thought we should feel justified in concluding that, for all its adequacy in other respects, Marshall's book fails to make a significant advance over earlier work.

Although Godwin, like many of his contemporaries, appeals to utility, to pleasure and pain as the basis of good and evil, and to the importance of acting so as to bring about the maximum benefit to, mankind, he retains through each edition of *Political justice* a set of more fundamental commitments which are derived from his Dissenting background. In particular, for all his reluctance to appeal to rights doctrines, he consistently appeals to what is tantamount to a right to private judgement. In the first edition of *Political justice* this is put in terms of a duty to private judgement —largely because Godwin wishes to repudiate the voluntarist tradition which sees rights as liberties, or forms of licence. But if we each have a duty to act on the basis of the full and free exercise of our private judgement then we each also have a right to do so, since we have a right to the forbearance of others. No one has a right to act authoritatively — 'society has no right to assume the prerogative of an infallible judge' .[5] Rights, on Godwin's account, are duty-based; and our duties are owed to our common rational nature and to sovereign and omnipotent truth. If we compare Godwin's arguments for private judgement with those used by Dissenters from Milton through to those presenting the Dissenters' case against Subscription and against the Test and Corporation Acts, we find that they are almost perfectly parallel. The doctrine of private judgement — a doctrine which Godwin described as `unspeakably beautiful' — formed the keystone of the Dissenters' case for freedom of conscience and religious practice. Even where they defended the claim in terms of rights and utility there is no doubt that the underlying rationale for their position was their view that private judgement was a duty owed to God. And for the Rational Dissenters a crucial aspect of this duty was the fact that it derived not simply from God's sovereign power, nor from His act of creation, but rather from the fact that He was the embodiment of truth and reason. In appealing to our duty to reason and truth rather than to God, Godwin was hardly making a novel claim — nor was he significantly breaking from his Dissenting inheritance. For many Rational Dissenters, God and truth were effectively synonyms; as Price put it: . . whenever we transgress truth and right we immediately affront God who *is* truth and right . . .'[6]

Although Godwin abandons various aspects of his Dissenting heritage in later editions *of-Political justice,* his account remains centred on the duty and right of private judgement — a doctrine he derives directly from the Dissenting tradition. It is this principle which underlies the whole of Godwin's political philosophy, from his discussion of government through his accounts of the superintendence of opinion and punishment, to his defence of the perfectibility of mankind. The tradition of Dissent is, therefore, deeply ingrained in Godwin's thought.

It might still be argued that private judgement is a secondary principle in *Political justice,* one which is essentially subordinate to the principle of utility. However, this case cannot be substantiated. At best *Political justice* can only be claimed to advance a complex form of ideal, rule and indirect utilitarianism. It is ideal in that the highest pleasures are attained by those whose intellectual and moral capacities are most fully developed; it is rule, because of the side constraints placed on the pursuit of utility by the right of private judgement and the requirement that we encourage the flourishing of disinterested benevolence; and it is indirect, because virtue is the greatest source of happiness and because true virtue can only arise through the expansion of the understanding and the development of individuals' intellectual capacities. But there is a further problem in claiming Godwin for utilitarianism. This highly complex form of utilitarianism can only claim to be a form of utilitarianism if the end pursued can be identified independently of the intellectual and moral capacities and characters necessary to achieve it. Godwin's vision of the future is of a society of rational and virtuous agents, but we need to know whether he values these agents because (and only in-so-far-as) they achieve greater and better pleasures, or because he believes that truly virtuous agents fully realize their essential natures or rational telos. If the former, Godwin's position can be subsumed under utilitarianism; if the latter, it is a 'perfectionist' account. While it is difficult to believe that Godwin himself formulated the issues in these precise terms, it is equally difficult to believe that what he was trying to do was offer us a consistent utilitarian ethic. And, although there is not the space here to offer more than a brief sketch of an alternative interpretation, it seems likely that the true centre of Godwin's moral philosophy was derived from a Dissenting vision of man's life on earth as progressing towards a state of blessedness through the full and unfettered exercise of one's God-given reason in the pursuit of truth. Godwin's account of the pleasures of a fully rational, benevolent existence is best understood as rooted in the Dissenting view that a life lived fully in the sight of God, where we increasingly approach the fully rational, autonomous and immortal nature of the deity, is one in which we attain a state of blessedness. To see the maximization of pleasure as the central concern of *Political justice is* to insist on the prosaic at the cost of the sublime. We grasp Godwin's conception better if we think of our development in terms of a gradual attainment of those excellences of our nature prescribed by a providence that is inherently rational.

This roughly sketched alternative account of Godwin's moral philosophy has a number of important implications both for our understanding of *Political justice* and for our appreciation of the relationship between Rational Dissent, the political radicalism of the 1790s and the nature of the English Enlightenment. I wish to conclude by referring briefly to a few of these implications.

Godwin's conception of a life lived solely according to the full and free exercise of private judgement, albeit informed by public debate and discussion, is not primarily derived from the Greeks — the polis may be one source of inspiration, (as may Rousseau's independent and virtuous citizen) but so too is the Dissenting vision of a community of the faithful and the life of candid debate and discussion lived by the social and intellectual circles in which Godwin moved while writing *Political justice. Political justice* thus becomes a vigorous defence and expression of a way of life embodied in Dissenting circles. As an expression its originality (which Marshall makes too much of, comparing Godwin to Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Mill) lies in its combination of a theistic tradition of argument concerning private judgement with a set of secular political concerns — with the dominance of the former being such that political concerns become subsumed beneath an over-riding commitment to the sufficiency of private judgement. As a defence its significance lies in its timeliness, and its vigour and commitment. The influence of Dissent on Godwin is also important because it is simply one aspect of an intricate web of relations between Dissent and the radicalism of the 1790s. Dissent provided many of the ideas and arguments, much of the initial organization and many of the social contacts which formed the basis for the dissemination of radical thought in this period. And it is an important consequence of Dissent's involvement that the aims, aspirations, and methods of the radicals remained radical rather than revolutionary — liberal, rather than socialist. Godwin provides merely one instance of this process, although an important one — since many of his reactions, as in his *Considerations on Lord Grenville's and Mr. Pitt's Bills* (1795), provide a good indication of the temperature of opinion among the middling orders during the last decade of the eighteenth century. Also, recognising Godwin's debts to Rational Dissent and to the theologically inspired morality of the period, is crucial because it provides us with a sharp reminder that the kind of opposition which Marshall establishes between Enlightenment and Dissent is simply untenable. Enlightenment in England was not predominantly atheistic — and atheism was not the *cause celebre* it was in France. Indeed, a good many of the motive forces of Enlightenment culture in England stemmed from Dissent.'

Marshall's biography while making new gestures towards Godwin's Dissenting background, still fails to integrate Godwin's past with the analysis of his moral and political philosophy. As such it makes no real advance over its predecessors. While the biography does have many virtues, it is its frustrating blindness towards the continued *positive* impact of Godwin's Dissenting background which vitiates its account of his thought, his reactions and his period. To this extent it must be seen as a missed opportunity to extend our understanding both of Godwin and of the place of Dissent in the radicalism of the period.

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I C. Kegan Paul, *William Godwin; his friends and contemporaries,* 2 vols. (London, 1876); F.K. Brown, *The life of William Godwin* (London, 1926); G. Woodcock, *William Godwin, a biographical study* (London, 1946); D. Locke, *a fantasy of reason: the life and thought of William Godwin* (London, 1980).
2 B.R. Pollin, *Education and enlightenment in the works of William Godwin* (New York, 1962); D.H. Monro, *Godwin's moral philosophy* (Oxford, 1953); D. Fleisher, *William Godwin, a study in liberalism* (London, 1951); J.P. Clark, *The philosophical anarchism of William Godwin* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1977).
[3] M. Fitzpatrick, 'William Godwin and Rational Dissenters', *The Price-Priestley newsletter,* III (1979), 4-28.
4 P.H. Marshall, *William Godwin* (New Haven, 1984), 24, emphasis added.
[5] Ibid., 100-101.
[6] Richard Price, *A review of the principal questions in morals,* ed. D.D. Raphael (Oxford, 1974), 89.
[7] R. Porter, *English society in the eighteenth century* (Harmondsworth, 1982), 98, and 'The Enlightenment in England' in R. Porter and M. Teich (eds.), *The Enlightenment in national context* (Cambridge, 1981), 5-15. Cf. also, A. Goodwin, *The friends of liberty* (London, 1979), chs. 2-6.

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Oxygen and the conversion of future foodstocks. Third BOC Priestley Conference, (London, The Royal Society of Chemistry, 1984).

The Third BOC Priestley Conference was held at Imperial College, London on 12-15 September 1983. An international meeting of scholars celebrated the sester-centenary of Joseph Priestley's birth in 1733 with a programme of lectures which reflected the enormous breadth of Priestley's interests and influence. The scientific section of the programme contained fifteen lectures on the general theme of the role of oxygen in the conversion of foodstuffs; the historical part contained eight lectures on various aspects of Priestley's life and work; the third Priestley Lecture was delivered by Joseph Needham, and dealt with the peaceful uses and industrial applications of gunpowder in China and the West. Although all of these lectures are collected in this volume, this review will concern itself with the historical section only.

As is to be expected from a set of contributors which includes among its ranks professional historians and scientists with an amateur interest in history, the scholarly quality and significance of this collection of essays is uneven. Some of them add significantly to our understanding of Priestley's life and work; others are of little interest to the researcher. Taken together they present a range of topics that does justice to the eclectic nature of Priestley's interests and concerns; but they do so in a way that fails to capture the integrating features of the totality of the Priestley corpus. This is especially true of the accounts given of Priestley's science.

A variety of the non-scientific aspects of Priestley's life are dealt with in papers by M. Fitzpatrick, D.A. Davenport, and R.E. Schofield. In his excellent study of 'Priestley in caricature', Fitzpatrick shows how late-eighteenth century caricaturists such as Gillray, Dent, Sayers, and Cruikshank, used a variety of representational devices — emblematic, visual, and literary — to portray Priestley and his fellow Rational Dissenters as a threat to 'Church and King'. Despite the depths of hatred evoked by the caricaturists in their paranoid defence of the established political order, Priestley and the Rational Dissenters refused to respond in kind, preferring the Enlightenment values of rational argument and candid enquiry to the scurrilous techniques of political propaganda. Given the balance of political forces involved in this dispute, it is not surprising that reason succumbed to rancour, and Priestley retreated into exile. Unfortunately, trouble went with him. As Davenport shows in his sympathetic account of Priestley's political life in America, he escaped the scathing satire of Gillray and the odium that accompanied it only to encounter the prickly pen of Peter Porcupine (William Cobbett) and the unwarranted attentions of John Adams's Secretary of State, Timothy Pickering, who threatened to proceed against Priestley under the Alien and Sedition Act, only to be persuaded from doing so by Adams himself. Priestley faced these trials and tribulations with the patience and forbearance that characterized his strong faith in the guiding hand of Providence, operating in all events to bring good out of evil. Thanks to Jefferson's assumption of the Presidency in 1801, Priestley was able to spend the remaining years of his life in peace and quiet on the banks of the Susquehanna River.

Schofield argues that since Priestley regarded himself as an amateur in chemistry and a professional in education and the ministry, historians should pay more attention to his education and theology than they do to his science. Accordingly, he offers the reader a useful and interesting survey of some of Priestley's work in education, politics, and metaphysics, with no more than peripheral reference to his science. Schofield ends up supporting the old-fashioned view that Priestley was a noble, versatile and energetic eclectic. In place of the integrated nature of Priestley's monistic sensibilities, this conclusion creates the impression of a disparate set of demands on Priestley's time and energy. D.M. Knight also supports the traditional view of Priestley's schizoid intellect. He brushes aside recent accounts of the interrelatedness of Priestley's science and theology, and presents him as an early victim of the `two cultures'. He gives a loosely associative account of Priestley's influence on a younger generation of thinkers, using William Hazlitt's pen-portrayal of Priestley to explain why he was a hero to young Unitarians such as Lucy Aikin, Charles Lamb and S.T. Coleridge. Drawing Humphry Davy into Priestley's circle of young admirers, Knight summarizes the former's version of the phlogiston theory in order to rationalize the latter's defence of it. Priestley remains a shadowy figure in Knight's picture and his science eludes his historiographical canvas.

W.A. Campbell provides a brief but useful description of the apparatus used by Priestley to manipulate gases; and R.G.W. Anderson tells the familiar story of the emergence and development of the chemistry of gases. Anderson de-emphasizes the conceptual and theoretical dimensions of science and concentrates on the observational and experimental aspects of the situation. Consequently, he refers to certain observations and experiments in order to portray Van Helmont as the discoverer of gases and to designate Boyle as the first to isolate hydrogen, even though the requisite concept of the gaseous state was not available to either of them. Similarly, he ignores the crucial theoretical innovations of William Brownrigg when he relates the discovery of the third, gaseous, state of matter to the quantitative enquiries of Joseph Black. Although Black distinguished between fixed air and common air, it was Brownrigg, not Black, who formulated the concept of a multiplicity of chemically distinct gases, similar to the varieties of solids and liquids.

J.W. Ashley Smith points out that Priestley's interest in science was encouraged by his experience in the Dissenting Academies, which introduced experimental science into their curriculum as a source of enjoyment, an object of utility, and a means of understanding the wisdom of God. J.H. Brook takes these suggestions further, and gives an excellent account of the interaction of Priestley's science and religion. Priestley rejected the Calvinist view of God's arbitrary will and transcendent power in order to uphold a principle of intelligibility, according to which the mind can know how the world is causally related to God. Besides providing this essential

presupposition for Priestley's science, rational Christianity sanctioned, motivated, and regulated the understanding of nature by relating it to Providential principles of progress, benevolence, and economy. Priestley's religion was, in turn, articulated according to the dictates of his scientific ontology and his theory of rational belief.

This collection of essays bears witness to the current health and vitality of Priestley scholarship. It is a measure of Priestley's greatness that he continues to evoke the attention, understanding and sympathy of historians of a variety of shades and opinions. This is a welcome state-of-affairs, even though it reinforces Priestley's opinion that the greater our knowledge the greater is our awareness of ignorance. According to this reviewer, historians need to pay more attention to Priestley's science in relation to the totality of his thought. This is especially true of his role in the chemical revolution, which is viewed as anticlimactic 'nit-picking' (pp. 381 & 434) and evidence of the paradoxical nature of this thought (p. 388). On the contrary, Priestley's objections to Lavoisier's version of the oxygen theory were serious and fundamental, and his conduct during the chemical revolution is perfectly consistent and intelligible when placed in the wider context of his philosophical, political and theological views. In order to understand Priestley's science, twentieth-century historians must distance themselves from the modernizing dissociation of sensibilities which was alien to Priestley's mind. For Priestley, facts were inextricably linked with values, and the fate of Faust awaited those who detached science from its moral function and theological objectives.

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Readers' Queries

A. *Thomas Taylor (1758-1835)*

The Revd. John Unsworth writes to ask whether any reader can supply evidence that would identify Richard Price as 'the most celebrated Dissenting preacher of the day' whose help was sought by Thomas Taylor?

Mr. Unsworth writes:

Thomas Taylor, 'the Platonist' was born in 1758 of Dissenting parents whose dearest ambition was that he should become a Dissenting Minister. He went to St. Paul's School for a short time but asked to be removed and returned home. He then had tuition from 'the famous Mr. Worthington of Salters' Hall'. Hugh Worthington (1732-1813) was Arian in theology and Salters' Hall was well known as a high powered 'think tank' for Dissenters. Worthington's father, also named Hugh (1712-97), had been Minister at Newington Green (where Price was to officiate for a quarter of a century) from 1739 until 1742 before going on to Great Meeting, Leicester. Like his son he was a lifelong Arian in theology.

At about fifteen years of age Taylor was put to work with a relative at the dockyard at Sheerness but some three or four years later he left this employment to take up again the hope of becoming a Dissenting minister. For some years he had studied and made himself master of all branches of mathematics, but to make his way into the Dissenting ministry he had to brush up his Greek. To this end, according to an autobiographical source,' he `sought the help of the most celebrated Dissenting preacher of the day'. Unfortunately, Taylor does not say who this was, and hence the occasion for this query. The year would be about 1777/8, not long after Price had become renowned for his pamphlets, *Observations on the nature of civil liberty* (for which he had been honoured with the Freedom of the City of London) and *Additional observations,* both of which he had published in defence of the American rebels. It is not implausible at least to suggest that Price was the celebrated preacher whose help Taylor sought, even though at this stage of his life he had perhaps won greater fame as a writer on political and financial matters than he had as a preacher.

Taylor's ambitions to be a Dissenting minister were not realized, his aims being frustrated, it is said, by an imprudent marriage and financial difficulties. He became, in succession, a schoolmaster, a clerk in Lubbock's banking house, and, finally, assistant secretary to the Society of Arts before retiring to study philosophy. He was fortunate to find patrons in William Meredith, a tradesman who settled an annuity of £100 a year upon him, and in the Duke of Norfolk who subscribed to the whole of an impression of his study of Plato, and thereafter there flowed from his pen a stream of translations of the Greek authors. Not all his work received scholarly acclaim, though his books were to be found on Coleridge's shelves and his translation of Plato was admired by Emerson.

Taylor and Price had many interests in common. Like both the Worthingtons they were Arians in theology, and they were both influenced by the thought of Plato, more especially as it appeared in the work of the Cambridge Platonists. Mary Wollstonecraft, who was a fervent admirer of Price and who attended his chapel at Newington Green, at one time lodged in the Taylor household.

I See *Thomas Taylor, the Platonist,* ed. Kathleen Raine and G.M. Harper (Princeton, 1969), 105-107, and 124. See also W.E.A. Axon, 'Thomas Taylor, the Platonist', *The library* (London, 1890).

`Not governing too much':

Mr. Oliver Stuchbury draws our attention to the following passage in Price's *Observations on the nature of civil liberty*, 'All government, even within a state, becomes tyrannical as far as it is a needless and wanton exercise of power or is carried farther than is absolutely necessary to preserve the peace and to secure the safety of the state. This is what an excellent writer calls `governing too much', and its effect must always be weakening government by rendering it contemptible and odious', and asks 'Who is the "excellent writer" and from what work is he quoting?'

[One possible source of the phrase 'not governing too much' is a passage in Jonathan (Shipley), Lord Bishop of St. Asaph, *A sermon preached before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts; at their anniversary meeting in the parish church of St. Mary-le-Bow, on Friday February 19, 1773,* 'the true art of government consists in *not governing too much'*. That Price referred to Shipley as 'an excellent writer' and not by name is understandable if we bear in mind that Price while writing against the establishment view would not want to embarrass the Bishop by referring to him directly. Those who kept abreast of the pamphlet literature would know to whom he was referring. But there may well be other sources from whom both Price and Shipley derive. Eds.]