

The essays previously included in the posthumous collection Moral Obligation are now augmented by a selection of previously unpublished writings from Prichard's manuscripts, allowing for the first time a full view of his distinctive contribution to moral philosophy, at just the time when intuitionism is enjoying a revival of interest.

Life Cockburn was born in London on August 16, In addition to her studies, she devoted time to writing plays. In , her second play, Fatal Friendship, was staged and printed. Both plays were very well received and she enjoyed some celebrity in theatrical circles. Cockburn wrote three more plays over the next three years. Trotter was so deeply impressed with his ideas that she felt obliged to take up her pen in defense of Locke against one critic in particular. Entitled The Defence of Mr. Locke himself was so impressed with the work, he presented Cockburn with a substantial gift of money and books in appreciation. It was finally published, anonymously, in in the English literary journal The History of the Works of the Learned. Remarks upon some Writers considers primarily the work of philosopher Samuel Clarke and various critics of his moral theory. In , she published a critique of the moral philosophy of Dr. In this work, Cockburn again defends a Clarkean view of morality. Cockburn was also deeply interested in religious issues and she wrote and published a series of theological works. These included a work, in the form of two letters, that examined Catholic and Protestant doctrine entitled A Discourse concerning a Guide in Controversies. This work was first published in Another work, first published in , entitled A Letter to Dr. She aided in the editing of this work, but did not live to see its publication in She died in May of Philosophy Although primarily concerned with moral issues, Cockburn philosophical writings which are taken here to include The Defence of Mr. There is also a broad range of topics addressed in her work Remarks upon some Writers, in which Cockburn begins by addressing several philosophical issues – necessity, the infinitude of space, and the nature and existence of spirits with regard to the notion of substance. The latter discussion revolves generally around epistemological concerns regarding the knowledge of real essences and the nature of substance, in which she argues that spirits must have extension of a sort in order to be proper substances. She makes this argument by appeal to a broadly Lockean view regarding substance. However, it is her moral theory that is most prominently emphasized throughout her works. Cockburn was mainly concerned with grappling with the defects and strengths of some of the predominating issues in moral theory at this time. Moral rationalism is, broadly speaking, the view that morality is the result of a rational process, whereby the mind reasons about moral ideas and creates moral rules although many thinkers, like Cockburn, argued that the mind, by this process, is actually in some way discovering eternal moral rules. Moral fitness theory is a rationalist theory that includes the notion that the human mind is able to grasp the various moral relations that result from the essential natures of things in the universe; e. Moral sense theory is the view that humans possess a special sensory ability that can determine, pre-rationally, what is good or evil This view was made most famous by Shaftesbury and Hutcheson. However, for many theorists, like Cockburn, this sensory information is not definitive – but is seen as an aid to moralizing that can, and should, be corrected by reason. In the Essay and other works, Locke had suggested that morality could be known by reason and had emphasized the demonstrative character of morality – thereby making a claim to the certainty with which moral ideas could be known. However, Locke never provided an explicit account of how fundamental moral ideas are derived. Burnet uses his critique of Locke as the springboard for his own moral position, one best described as a brand of moral sense theory, in which conscience is the human capacity for empirically discerning the moral value of acts. In other words, for Burnet, one can, upon observing a given set of circumstances, know with immediate certainty whether that act is morally good or evil. She argues that it is by reflecting upon the operations of our own minds that we can reach an understanding of both human and divine nature. According to Cockburn, morality is grounded in human nature, and the truth of moral laws is guaranteed by the fact that humans are designed by God. In later works, Cockburn explicitly adopts the language of fitness relations to describe the necessary moral order

arising from our created natures. Moral knowledge arises from reflection upon our own natures and moral affection arises out of our natural constitutions. She argues that conscience is not an immediate source of moral knowledge, as Burnet would have it, but a source of moral affection or feeling that complements, and presupposes, a proper i. She understood Hutcheson to found morality exclusively on the moral sense while her own view sees moral sense as only one component within a largely rationalistic account of human moral understanding. It is not surprising that Cockburn developed a proto-moral sense theory in the *Defence* and in later works. She sought early on to establish a foundation for morality in human nature that sufficiently accounted for the type of natural and seemingly immediate human moral sensibility that Burnet believed was not accounted for by Locke. Her first defense of Clarke was made in *Remarks upon some Writers*. Throughout her discussion, Cockburn maintains a commitment to the basic view that morality is founded in the nature of humans and God. She sees this view as cohering with the general concept of fitness that she locates in Clarke and his followers. In the *Remarks upon some Writers*, Cockburn responds to critics of Clarkean moral fitness theory. These laws are enforced by rewards and punishments that obligate by appealing to the fundamental human desire for happiness and freedom from pain. Their main objection to fitness theory is that fitness relations are not primitive moral constructs, but actually presuppose more primitive constructs – i. Fitness theory rests upon the view that human interest is a basic expression of a human nature brought into being by divine will. Natural good and evil are thus fundamental concepts for moral fitness theory, for it is human nature and all that is associated with it that provides the basis for moral law. According to this account, moral obligation arises from the demands of our natures – that is, we ought to be guided by that which is suitable and proper to our natures as rational and social beings. Common sense judges virtuous practice according to what is fit and natural, and not merely according to the good the practice produces. Rutherford himself offers a brand of consequentialism, defining as moral goodness that which brings about good and prevents evil. Cockburn objects to this view, arguing that it ignores the underlying fitness relations that serve to define what harms and benefits are significant or relevant for human beings in particular circumstances. Even a hermit or someone stranded on a deserted island may possess a sense of virtue, Cockburn argues, since virtue is not founded on our prediction of the effects our actions will have on other people. Cockburn identifies the moral sense as being a source of this disinterested affection essential to moral decision-making. While reason retains its position of prominence in her morality, the moral sense plays an important role according to her in motivating agents to act morally. The obligation we feel to obey moral rules arises, for Cockburn, not from reason alone, but from the perceptions of natural conscience, or moral sense. For Cockburn, moral sense was an important factor in accounting for moral judgments, but she insisted on its subordination to reason as a guide in moral judgment. She holds this moral sense account in concert with her rationalistic fitness view. She presents her moral sense theory within the context of a general moral fitness theory, suggesting that Clarkean moral fitness theory could easily accommodate such an account. *Philosophical Writings*, , Patricia Sheridan ed.

Chapter 2 : Adam Smith - Wikipedia

Extra resources for Moral Writings (British Moral Philosophers) Sample text Again, to take a modern instance, Green says: 'The motive in every imputable act for which the agent is conscious on reflection that he is answerable, is a desire for personal good in some form or other.

Basic concepts In the notion of consequences the utilitarian includes all of the good and bad produced by the act, whether arising after the act has been performed or during its performance. If the difference in the consequences of alternative acts is not great, some utilitarians do not regard the choice between them as a moral issue. According to Mill, acts should be classified as morally right or wrong only if the consequences are of such significance that a person would wish to see the agent compelled, not merely persuaded and exhorted, to act in the preferred manner. In assessing the consequences of actions, utilitarianism relies upon some theory of intrinsic value: Bentham and Mill were hedonists ; i. Utilitarians also assume that it is possible to compare the intrinsic values produced by two alternative actions and to estimate which would have better consequences. Bentham believed that a hedonic calculus is theoretically possible. A moralist, he maintained, could sum up the units of pleasure and the units of pain for everyone likely to be affected, immediately and in the future, and could take the balance as a measure of the overall good or evil tendency of an action. Such precise measurement as Bentham envisioned is perhaps not essential, but it is nonetheless necessary for the utilitarian to make some interpersonal comparisons of the values of the effects of alternative courses of action. Methodologies As a normative system providing a standard by which an individual ought to act and by which the existing practices of society, including its moral code, ought to be evaluated and improved, utilitarianism cannot be verified or confirmed in the way in which a descriptive theory can, but it is not regarded by its exponents as simply arbitrary. Bentham and Mill both believed that human actions are motivated entirely by pleasure and pain, and Mill saw that motivation as a basis for the argument that, since happiness is the sole end of human action, the promotion of happiness is the test by which to judge all human conduct. In addition, he reasoned that utilitarianism could solve the difficulties and perplexities that arise from the vagueness and inconsistencies of commonsense doctrines. Most opponents of utilitarianism have held that it has implications contrary to their moral intuitionsâ€”that considerations of utility, for example, might sometimes sanction the breaking of a promise. Some utilitarians, however, have sought to modify the utilitarian theory to account for the objections. Criticisms One such criticism is that, although the widespread practice of lying and stealing would have bad consequences, resulting in a loss of trustworthiness and security, it is not certain that an occasional lie to avoid embarrassment or an occasional theft from a rich person would not have good consequences and thus be permissible or even required by utilitarianism. But the utilitarian readily answers that the widespread practice of such acts would result in a loss of trustworthiness and security. It permits a particular act on a particular occasion to be adjudged right or wrong according to whether it is in accordance with or in violation of a useful rule, and a rule is judged useful or not by the consequences of its general practice. Another objection, often posed against the hedonistic value theory held by Bentham, holds that the value of life is more than a balance of pleasure over pain. Mill, in contrast to Bentham, discerned differences in the quality of pleasures that make some intrinsically preferable to others independently of intensity and duration the quantitative dimensions recognized by Bentham. Some philosophers in the utilitarian tradition have recognized certain wholly nonhedonistic values without losing their utilitarian credentials. Thus, the English philosopher G. Even in limiting the recognition of intrinsic value and disvalue to happiness and unhappiness, some philosophers have argued that those feelings cannot adequately be further broken down into terms of pleasure and pain and have thus preferred to defend the theory in terms of maximizing happiness and minimizing unhappiness. It is important to note, however, that, even for the hedonistic utilitarians, pleasure and pain are not thought of in purely sensual terms; pleasure and pain for them can be components of experiences of all sorts. Their claim is that, if an experience is neither pleasurable nor painful, then it is a

matter of indifference and has no intrinsic value. Another objection to utilitarianism is that the prevention or elimination of suffering should take precedence over any alternative act that would only increase the happiness of someone already happy. Historical survey The ingredients of utilitarianism are found in the history of thought long before Bentham. Antecedents of utilitarianism among the ancients A hedonistic theory of the value of life is found in the early 5th century bce in the ethics of Aristippus of Cyrene, founder of the Cyrenaic school, and a century later in that of Epicurus , founder of an ethic of retirement see Epicureanism , and their followers in ancient Greece. The seeds of ethical universalism are found in the doctrines of the rival ethical school of Stoicism and in Christianity. Growth of classical English utilitarianism In the history of British philosophy, some historians have identified Bishop Richard Cumberland , a 17th-century moral philosopher, as the first to have a utilitarian philosophy. Bentham himself said that he discovered the principle of utility in the 18th-century writings of various thinkers: Another strand of utilitarian thought took the form of a theological ethics. Bentham, who apparently believed that an individual in governing his own actions would always seek to maximize his own pleasure and minimize his own pain, found in pleasure and pain both the cause of human action and the basis for a normative criterion of action. For Bentham, the greatest happiness of the greatest number would play a role primarily in the art of legislation , in which the legislator would seek to maximize the happiness of the entire community by creating an identity of interests between each individual and his fellows. By laying down penalties for mischievous acts, the legislator would make it unprofitable for a person to harm his neighbour. Bentham attracted as his disciples a number of younger early 19th-century intellectuals. James Mill argued for representative government and universal male suffrage on utilitarian grounds; he and other followers of Bentham were advocates of parliamentary reform in England in the early 19th century. John Stuart Mill was a spokesman for woman suffrage , state-supported education for all, and other proposals that were considered radical in their day. He argued on utilitarian grounds for freedom of speech and expression and for the noninterference of government or society in individual behaviour that did not harm anyone else. In it utilitarianism is viewed as an ethics for ordinary individual behaviour as well as for legislation. John Stuart Mill, Library of Congress, Washington, D. LC-USZ Utilitarianism since the late 19th century By the time Sidgwick wrote, utilitarianism had become one of the foremost ethical theories of the day. His *Methods of Ethics* , a comparative examination of egoism, the ethics of common sense, and utilitarianism, contains the most careful discussion to be found of the implications of utilitarianism as a principle of individual moral action. BBC Hulton Picture Library The 20th century saw the development of various modifications and complications of the utilitarian theory. Moore argued for a set of ideals extending beyond hedonism by proposing that one imaginatively compare universes in which there are equal quantities of pleasure but different amounts of knowledge, friendship, beauty, and other such combinations. He felt that he could not be indifferent toward such differences. Urmson; and by the analysis by John Rawls , a Harvard political philosopher, of the significance for utilitarianism of two different conceptions of moral rules. Smart , a British Australian philosopher. Effects of utilitarianism in other fields The influence of utilitarianism has been widespread, permeating the intellectual life of the last two centuries. Its significance in law , politics, and economics is especially notable. According to the utilitarian, the rationale of punishment is entirely to prevent further crime by either reforming the criminal or protecting society from him and to deter others from crime through fear of punishment. In its political philosophy , utilitarianism bases the authority of government and the sanctity of individual rights upon their utility, thus providing an alternative to theories of natural law , natural rights, or social contract. What kind of government is best thus becomes a question of what kind of government has the best consequencesâ€”an assessment that requires factual premises regarding human nature and behaviour. Generally, utilitarians have supported democracy as a way of making the interest of government coincide with the general interest; they have argued for the greatest individual liberty compatible with an equal liberty for others on the ground that individuals are generally the best judges of their own welfare; and they have believed in the possibility and desirability of progressive social change through peaceful political processes. With different factual assumptions, however, utilitarian arguments can lead to

different conclusions. On the other hand, William Godwin, an English political philosopher of the early 19th century, assumed the basic goodness of human nature and argued that the greatest happiness would follow from a radical alteration of society in the direction of anarchism. Classical economics received some of its most important statements from utilitarian writers, especially David Ricardo and John Stuart Mill. Ironically, its theory of economic value was framed primarily in terms of the cost of labour in production rather than in terms of the use value, or utility, of commodities. Later developments more clearly reflected the utilitarian philosophy. In economic policy, the early utilitarians had tended to oppose governmental interference in trade and industry on the assumption that the economy would regulate itself for the greatest welfare if left alone; later utilitarians, however, lost confidence in the social efficiency of private enterprise and were willing to see governmental power and administration used to correct its abuses. As a movement for the reform of social institutions, 19th-century utilitarianism was remarkably successful in the long run. Most of its recommendations were implemented unless abandoned by the reformers themselves, and, equally important, utilitarian arguments were commonly employed to advocate institutional or policy changes. Summary and evaluation As an abstract ethical doctrine, utilitarianism has established itself as one of the small number of live options that must be taken into account and either refuted or accepted by any philosopher taking a position in normative ethics. Utilitarianism now appears in various modified and complicated formulations. In the 20th century, philosophers noticed further problems in the utilitarian procedures. One of them, for example, was with the process of identifying the consequences of an act—a process that raises conceptual as well as practical problems as to what are to be counted as consequences, even without precisely quantifying the value of those consequences. For example, the question may arise whether the outcome of an election is a consequence of each and every vote cast for the winning candidate if he receives more than the number necessary for election, and, in estimating the value of the consequences, one may ask whether the entire value or only a part of the value of the outcome of the election is to be assigned to each vote. There is also difficulty in the procedure of comparing alternative acts. If one act requires a longer period of time for its performance than another, one may ask whether they can be considered alternatives. Even what is to count as an act is not a matter of philosophical consensus. These problems, however, are common to almost all normative ethical theories, since most of them recognize the consequences—including the hedonic consequences—of an act as being relevant ethical considerations. The central insight of utilitarianism, that one ought to promote happiness and prevent unhappiness whenever possible, seems undeniable. The critical question, however, is whether the whole of normative ethics can be analyzed in terms of this simple formula.

Chapter 3 : Moral Writings - H. A. Prichard - Oxford University Press

British Moral Philosophers These new editions of often out-of-print classics in the history of ethics and moral philosophy include introductions that examine the context, themes, and lasting significance of each of the featured philosophers work.

So far 3 volumes are available: Readers new to Hobbes should begin with *Leviathan*, being sure to read Parts Three and Four, as well as the more familiar and often excerpted Parts One and Two. The Philosophical Project Hobbes sought to discover rational principles for the construction of a civil polity that would not be subject to destruction from within. Continued stability will require that they also refrain from the sorts of actions that might undermine such a regime. For example, subjects should not dispute the sovereign power and under no circumstances should they rebel. In general, Hobbes aimed to demonstrate the reciprocal relationship between political obedience and peace. The State of Nature To establish these conclusions, Hobbes invites us to consider what life would be like in a state of nature, that is, a condition without government. Perhaps we would imagine that people might fare best in such a state, where each decides for herself how to act, and is judge, jury and executioner in her own case whenever disputes arise—and that at any rate, this state is the appropriate baseline against which to judge the justifiability of political arrangements. He assumes that people are sufficiently similar in their mental and physical attributes that no one is invulnerable nor can expect to be able to dominate the others. While people have local affections, their benevolence is limited, and they have a tendency to partiality. Concerned that others should agree with their own high opinions of themselves, people are sensitive to slights. They are curious about the causes of events, and anxious about their futures; according to Hobbes, these characteristics incline people to adopt religious beliefs, although the content of those beliefs will differ depending upon the sort of religious education one has happened to receive. Hobbes further assumes as a principle of practical rationality, that people should adopt what they see to be the necessary means to their most important ends. The State of Nature Is a State of War Taken together, these plausible descriptive and normative assumptions yield a state of nature potentially fraught with divisive struggle. The right of each to all things invites serious conflict, especially if there is competition for resources, as there will surely be over at least scarce goods such as the most desirable lands, spouses, etc. People will quite naturally fear that others may citing the right of nature invade them, and may rationally plan to strike first as an anticipatory defense. Conflict will be further fueled by disagreement in religious views, in moral judgments, and over matters as mundane as what goods one actually needs, and what respect one properly merits. Further Questions About the State of Nature In response to the natural question whether humanity ever was generally in any such state of nature, Hobbes gives three examples of putative states of nature. First, he notes that all sovereigns are in this state with respect to one another. Third and most significantly, Hobbes asserts that the state of nature will be easily recognized by those whose formerly peaceful states have collapsed into civil war. The bonds of affection, sexual affinity, and friendship—as well as of clan membership and shared religious belief—may further decrease the accuracy of any purely individualistic model of the state of nature. Another important open question is that of what, exactly, it is about human beings that makes it the case supposing Hobbes is right that our communal life is prone to disaster when we are left to interact according only to our own individual judgments. Perhaps, while people do wish to act for their own best long-term interest, they are shortsighted, and so indulge their current interests without properly considering the effects of their current behavior on their long-term interest. This would be a type of failure of rationality. Such an account would understand irrational human passions to be the source of conflict. Game theorists have been particularly active in these debates, experimenting with different models for the state of nature and the conflict it engenders. The Laws of Nature Hobbes argues that the state of nature is a miserable state of war in which none of our important human ends are reliably realizable. Happily, human nature also provides resources to escape this miserable condition. Humans will recognize as imperatives the injunction to seek peace, and to do those things

necessary to secure it, when they can do so safely. They forbid many familiar vices such as iniquity, cruelty, and ingratitude. Although commentators do not agree on whether these laws should be regarded as mere precepts of prudence, or rather as divine commands, or moral imperatives of some other sort, all agree that Hobbes understands them to direct people to submit to political authority. The social covenant involves both the renunciation or transfer of right and the authorization of the sovereign power. Political legitimacy depends not on how a government came to power, but only on whether it can effectively protect those who have consented to obey it; political obligation ends when protection ceases. Absolutism Although Hobbes offered some mild pragmatic grounds for preferring monarchy to other forms of government, his main concern was to argue that effective governmentâ€”whatever its formâ€”must have absolute authority. Its powers must be neither divided nor limited. The powers of legislation, adjudication, enforcement, taxation, war-making and the less familiar right of control of normative doctrine are connected in such a way that a loss of one may thwart effective exercise of the rest; for example, legislation without interpretation and enforcement will not serve to regulate conduct. Similarly, to impose limitation on the authority of the government is to invite irresolvable disputes over whether it has overstepped those limits. If each person is to decide for herself whether the government should be obeyed, factional disagreementâ€”and war to settle the issue, or at least paralysis of effective governmentâ€”are quite possible. To avoid the horrible prospect of governmental collapse and return to the state of nature, people should treat their sovereign as having absolute authority. He argues that subjects retain a right of self-defense against the sovereign power, giving them the right to disobey or resist when their lives are in danger. He also gives them seemingly broad resistance rights in cases in which their families or even their honor are at stake. These exceptions have understandably intrigued those who study Hobbes. It is not clear whether or not this charge can stand up to scrutiny, but it will surely be the subject of much continued discussion. Hobbes progressively expands his discussion of Christian religion in each revision of his political philosophy, until it comes in *Leviathan* to comprise roughly half the book. There is no settled consensus on how Hobbes understands the significance of religion within his political theory. Hobbes on Women and the Family Scholars are increasingly interested in how Hobbes thought of the status of women, and of the family. Hobbes was one of the earliest western philosophers to count women as persons when devising a social contract among persons. He insists on the equality of all people, very explicitly including women. People are equal because they are all subject to domination, and all potentially capable of dominating others. No person is so strong as to be invulnerable to attack while sleeping by the concerted efforts of others, nor is any so strong as to be assured of dominating all others. In this relevant sense, women are naturally equal to men. They are equally naturally free, meaning that their consent is required before they will be under the authority of anyone else. He also argues for natural maternal right: He witnesses the Amazons. In seeming contrast to this egalitarian foundation, Hobbes spoke of the commonwealth in patriarchal language. Hobbes justifies this way of talking by saying that it is fathers not mothers who have founded societies. Such debates raise the question: To what extent are the patriarchal claims Hobbes makes integral to his overall theory, if indeed they are integral at all? Very helpful for further reference is the critical bibliography of Hobbes scholarship to contained in Zagorin, P.

Chapter 4 : 19th Century British Philosophy - Bibliography - PhilPapers

Joseph Butler's Fifteen Sermons () is a classic work of moral philosophy, which remains widely influential. The topics Butler discusses include the role of conscience in human nature, self-love and egoism, compassion, resentment and forgiveness, and love of our neighbour and of God.

The speaker was trying to provoke a reaction, but this might have gone unnoticed. There is a clue in her reference to moral philosophy. For at least the past years, people who have thought about these things have suspected " or hoped " that morality is the one thing that sets human beings apart from nature or should one say, the rest of nature? Nature is the realm of laws, stern and unbreakable, and morality that of freedom. Nature is how things are, morality how they ought to be. We are not, in the relevant sense, part of nature " not even of that part of nature that consists in our fellow animals, and, still less, plants. Have we anything to learn about morality from plants? This might well depend on that bigger question: Foot began her philosophical career in a world where it seemed that the big questions of moral philosophy had been settled. It was easy to look around and conclude that here was that unlikeliest of things in philosophy, a consensus. This consensus included both Oxford dons in Britain and the existentialists of the Parisian Left Bank, those setters of intellectual fashion in their respective countries. The differences between the prose styles and personalities of the British and French philosophers " the one scholastic and relentless, and the other lyrical and exploratory " concealed a deeper similarity. They were trying to do something else " express emotion, prescribe actions, or something else of the kind. They were matters of choice, and to think otherwise was to deny that most basic of truths: Foot came to disagree. She was never a lone voice. At the University of Oxford, once she was elected a fellow of an Oxford college, she had friends who broadly shared her outlook and developed distinctive versions of it over the course of long and fruitful careers. Iris Murdoch and Elizabeth Anscombe would come to be better known than their slightly younger colleague, and Mary Midgley would have a mid-career blossoming as a formidable public intellectual. But Foot was no lightweight. Less prolific than Murdoch, Anscombe and Midgley " her collected writings fit into three slim volumes " she carved out a distinctive place for herself among the thinkers of her generation. But the absence of pressure toward relentless publication meant that she could follow her nose at her own pace, taking seriously one of her favourite dictums from Ludwig Wittgenstein: What mattered in the end, after all, was the work, and the light it cast on the place of the human in the natural world. Her father was the prosperous manager of a steelworks in Yorkshire who brought her up in a world of hunting balls. When, for once, she found herself with a governess who had a university degree, the idea of going to university herself occurred to her for the first time. When she was admitted to study PPE philosophy, politics and economics , her mother worried for her prospects. A friend comforted her: Between the one-on-one or small-group tutorials she received in the traditional Oxford way, and the intense conversations with her peers, she received a philosophical education of great concentration and eccentricity. The men " both dons and undergraduates " were, for the most part, away. As the women educated in those years later found, this made for an atmosphere of discussion quite unlike the one both before and after the war. As Midgley put it in a letter to *The Guardian* in It was clear that we were all more interested in understanding this deeply puzzling world than in putting each other down. Foot was sent for tutorials in philosophy to a young man called Donald MacKinnon. He would lie on the floor and beat the walls, brandishing a poker and attacking the fireplace. He was given to painfully long, reflective silences, when it was simply unclear if he could hear what was said to him. But once his terrified students discovered that neither he nor they would come to any serious harm, they would find themselves in the middle of the most exhilarating conversations they had ever had. Conversations with MacKinnon were wide-ranging, open-ended and intense. There was no attempt to shut up anyone by declaring their claims nonsensical or meaningless. Oddly enough, Ayer saw himself as rescuing the claims of ethics from the dustbin to which he thought a yet earlier academic had inadvertently consigned it. In the early years of the 20th century, the Cambridge

philosopher G E Moore thought that he had shown something of great interest about the nature of morality with an argument of devastating simplicity: Surely it is possible to ask of something: If there is such a thing as goodness, it is not to be found in nature, and therefore, not to be investigated by those who make it their business to study nature, ie scientists and their philosophical apprentices. Religion and aesthetics went more or less the same way, all dismissed as worse than false. This style of brazen dismissiveness was alien to MacKinnon, and his attitude rubbed off on his students. In later years, Foot would say that what MacKinnon had taught her was virtue. Foot graduated and moved to London, to a little attic flat she shared with Murdoch. She took up a job as a government economist, while Murdoch worked for the civil service. The flat was no safe haven. The sound of German planes could be heard through a crack in the roof. When the raids were particularly intense, the women would huddle in the bathtub under the staircase. Their friendship – for a brief time a romance – was never less than intense. A few years later, the full extent of the Holocaust came to be known. Could someone looking at photographs of the death camps at Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz-Birkenau continue to maintain that ethical judgments were ultimately not the sort of thing to be true or false? The war changed everything. What had seemed tough-minded and revolutionary now seemed merely complacent. As Murdoch informally put it in a documentary interview in , it betrayed the smug assumption that: Part of what animated Foot and her allies was a conviction that the answer to such a question would not be easy or self-contained, would not be the sort of logical proof one could polish off in a few weeks, if one were only clever enough. When they returned to Oxford to take up fellowships at its colleges, their influence was not immediately felt. The clever young men were back from the war, inclined to patronise their female colleagues, and carry on where they had left off. In the early post-war years at Oxford, photographs from Bergen-Belsen notwithstanding, moral philosophy was not at the forefront of academic attention. Perhaps, indeed, this was the lesson of the war. Even before the war, the style of philosophical conversation had been tending away from the grandiloquent towards the dry and ironic. As Stuart Hampshire, a prominent philosopher from an earlier generation, put it in an interview with Isaiah Berlin in He had a good deal to be solemn about. After a brief period as a teenage pacifist, he decided to enlist, and ended up serving in the Royal Artillery. He was taken prisoner by the Japanese in , first tasked to work in pitiless conditions on the Siam-Burma railway, then imprisoned in Singapore until the end of the war. It was in a Japanese prison camp that he began work on the book that made his reputation, *The Language of Morals* Values were then chosen against a background of logical constraints, but they were still matters of choice, not of discovery. Hare found repugnant the idea that one could disclaim responsibility for what one did by protesting that one had only been following orders, a feeling of repugnance shared by others in the s when the Nazi war crimes trials had grabbed public attention. As Sartre put it elsewhere, human beings do not have an essence – a basic nature – that determines how they must choose: But all three of them took seriously the claim that moral judgments are an attempt, however flawed in particular cases, to get at something true independently of human choices. Much moral thought – and engaging in moral debate – feels like it is aspiring to get something right, something constrained by things beyond us, not some freewheeling creative act of invention. But is this feeling justified, or is this yet another attempt to pass the moral buck on to the Universe? Temperamentally unsympathetic both to religious solutions and to mystical ones, Foot looked for considerations that even Hare might recognise. Where, she asked, did this leave such a concept as rudeness? But there are objective criteria for counting some behaviour as rude rather than, say, polite or cowardly. She took the point further: That, and not some point of logic, is what marks them out as moral evaluations. Only a few years after Hare and Sartre thought that they had buried these old-fashioned ideas for good, Foot was trying to bring essence back. Over the next few decades, Foot found herself inching her way to a position long thought untenable: Hence the unexpected claim to her American lecture audience: In all three cases, Foot urged, there is room for speaking of healthy or unhealthy, excellent or defective specimens of their kind. This means that there is room to speak of the qualities conducive to their being healthy or excellent or otherwise. The vocabulary of human virtues and vices – courage, temperance, justice and so forth – belongs among the same structure of concepts.

The human virtues, she proposed, are natural excellences, while human vices are natural defects. The influence on the Church of his most important medieval interpreter, Thomas Aquinas, gave it a crucial role in Christian, especially Catholic, thought, which, to this day, is much concerned with the question of what acts and predilections are unnatural. The answer is delicate. An amusingly understated footnote in her final book, *Natural Goodness*, reads: To say that vice is a natural defect is not an answer to any question; it is simply a way of interpreting the question, of telling us where we should be looking. Human nature is a complex thing, and understanding it will take all the resources of the sciences – natural and social – as well as history. But the significance of those enquiries will lie ultimately in what they can say about the kinds of lives that might be good for us. And to know that, we must ask: What do we need – for ourselves, and from each other? And what must we be like to get it? There is something to get right here, and everything at stake. Nakul Krishna is a lecturer in philosophy at the University of Cambridge.

Chapter 5 : 3 Ways to Determine Moral Principles Without Religion - wikiHow

Develops Prichard's intuitionist position on moral philosophy. As a realist, he maintains that through direct perception in particular cases, we come to have knowledge of universals. To questions about moral obligation, he argues that no single principle explains why right acts are right, that is to say, why certain acts are obligatory.

October 07, Prichard, H. Prichard and W. Prichard and Ross were members of the same circle of Oxford intuitionists led by Prichard that included H. Carritt, and John Laird, a circle that perhaps represents the glory days of British intuitionism. Prichard published remarkably little: However Prichard is reported to have written much that he never published--writings that were nevertheless circulated among his colleagues over whom he apparently had substantial philosophical influence. However, intuitionism continued to find some able supporters such as A. Ewing in the s. But at the start of the twenty-first century we now see a revival of intuitionism in the work of Robert Audi, 1 Russ Shafer-Landau, 2 and in a new collection of essays, *Ethical Intuitionism: Re-evaluations* Oxford, , edited by Philip Stratton-Lake. I will make a few remarks about the new Prichard material and then proceed to consider, in order, key metaethical views of Prichard and Ross in order to mark what I see as progress. Let me now turn to metaethical issues. We find in Prichard very little elaboration of these doctrines. Prichard, unlike Moore, does not employ the distinction between natural properties and nonnatural properties a distinction with which Moore struggled. Apparently, this was lost on many moral philosophers including Spencer, Hutcheson, Kant, Hobbes, Paley, and Joseph who, as Prichard reads them, attempted the impossible and thereby had a confused understanding of the nature of morality. According to Prichard, we can use clear thinking to recognize the fundamental differences between such simple properties as rightness and goodness on the one hand, and the distinct properties that philosophers have mistakenly identified them with on the other. Furthermore, we can recognize important differences in attributions of fundamentally distinct moral properties such as rightness and goodness. Such a regimen will apparently help us focus on the true sui generis nature of the moral properties in question. Prichard defended a kind of particularist moral foundationalism, according to which our knowledge of obligation and of value is grounded in our non-inferentially apprehending particular cases in which these properties are present. These particular apprehensions are the basis on which we come to grasp the self-evidence of general moral rules. So, in grasping the fact that some particular action is right, writes Prichard, [W]e appreciate the obligation immediately or directly, the appreciation being an activity of moral thinking. We recognize, for instance, that this performance of a service to X, who has done a service to the would-be agent, ought to be done by us. This apprehension is immediate, in precisely the sense in which a mathematical apprehension is immediate, e. Both apprehensions are immediate in the sense that in both insight into the nature of the subject directly leads us to recognize its possession of the predicate; and it is only stating this fact from the other side to say that in both cases the fact apprehended is self-evident. Prichard mentions two such preliminaries: Prichard says very little about the notion of self-evidence or about moral apprehension or about how we may legitimately work from apprehensions of particular self-evident truths in ethics to more general moral rules. Ross has more to say. Instead, Prichard claims that ordinary talk about a conflict of duties is really about something else. If we ask ourselves what this something else is, we seem driven to say that what is called a conflict of duties is really a conflict of claims on us to act in different ways, arising out of various circumstances of the whole situation in which we are placed. Further, we find no difficulty whatever in allowing that what we call claims on us may differ in degree, or that where there are two claims on us so differing, the act which there is greatest claim on us to do is duty. In brief, the advance in the intuitionist position that we find in Ross compared to Prichard involves the following ideas. Instead, Ross introduces the notion of a prima facie duty which he sometimes explains in terms of subjunctive conditionals 19 and sometimes in terms of tendencies Both ways of understanding this notion are problematic, as a number of philosophers have argued. Indeed, the notion of prima facie duty might seem like a setback for intuitionism. But I follow Stratton-Lake in thinking that the

idea here can be understood in terms of reasons. To talk about a prima facie duty is to talk about the fact that an action, in virtue of having certain properties, gives one a reason not necessarily sufficient to perform or refrain from performing the act depending on the feature in question. Given his pluralist theory of intrinsic good, Ross is able to subsume the prima facie duties of justice, beneficence, and self-improvement under a prima facie duty to promote the good, thus reducing the number of basic prima facie duties to five. Earlier I mentioned that Prichard was apparently an ethical pluralist, and my qualified claim was meant to indicate that given his adamant anti-theory stance, it is not so clear to me that Prichard is committed to pluralism or is best interpreted as a kind of particularist the kind that denies that ethics can even be partially systematized about the nature of rightness and goodness. In the preface to *The Right and the Good*, Ross claims that Prichard agrees with his treatment of rightness, which is some evidence of commitment to pluralism. The second area of progress concerns intuitionist foundationalism about moral knowledge. Here again, I think the advance is in the greater amount of detail we find in Ross compared to Prichard. Ross thought that, in the order of discovery, we come to recognize certain prima facie duties in a particular case. Finally, Ross also made some advance in thinking about moral metaphysics. Most notably, perhaps, is his view that although Ross was correct in thinking that basic moral properties such as rightness and goodness are nonnatural, Ross was mistaken in thinking that such properties are simple. According to Stratton-Lake, the moral property of rightness oughtness, for instance, involves the idea of certain features of an action giving us reason to perform the action xxii. Scanlon 5 seems committed to this kind of view. Oxford University Press, Dancy, *Moral Reasons*, Oxford: Harvard University Press, pp. I also wish to thank Philip Stratton-Lake for his comments on the penultimate draft of this review.

Chapter 6 : The Best Books on Moral Philosophy | Five Books Expert Recommendations

A collection of the ethical work of the Oxford moral philosopher H. A. Prichard (). The essays are augmented by a selection of previously unpublished writings from Prichard's manuscripts.

Philosophical work[edit] Prichard gave an influential defence of ethical intuitionism in his "Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake? This is a mistake, he argued, both because it is impossible to derive any statement about what one ought to do from statements not concerning obligation even statements about what is good , and because there is no need to do so since common sense principles of moral obligation are self-evident. The essay laid a groundwork for ethical intuitionism and provided inspiration for some of the most influential moral philosophers, such as John Rawls. He states that one cannot justify an obligation by pointing to the consequences of the obligated action because pointing to the consequences only shows that the action is desirable or advisable, not that it is obligatory. In other words, he claims that, while Utilitarianism may encourage people to do actions which a moral person would do, it cannot create a moral obligation to do those actions. Prichard is an ethical intuitionist , meaning he believed that it is through our moral intuitions that we come to know right and wrong. Further, while he believes that moral obligations are justified by reasons, he does not believe that the reasons are external to the obligation itself. For instance, if a person is asked why he ought not torture chipmunks, the only satisfying answer that could be given is that he ought not torture chipmunks. Foundationalism is a theory of epistemology which states that there are certain fundamental principles which are the basis for all other knowledge. In the case of ethics, foundationalists hold that certain fundamental moral rules are their own justification. The deepest challenge in moral epistemology, as in general epistemology, is raised by a skeptical regress argument: Someone is justified in believing something only if the believer has a reason that is expressible in an inference with premises that the believer is already justified in believing. This requires a chain of inferences that must continue infinitely, close into a circle, or stop arbitrarily. Academic skeptics reject all three options and conclude that there is no way for anyone to be justified in believing anything. The same regress arises for moral beliefs. The simplest way to stop this regress is simply to stop. If a believer can work back to a premise that the believer is justified in believing without being able to infer that premise from anything else, then there is no new premise to justify, so the regress goes no further. That is how foundationalists stop the regress in general epistemology. Moral intuitionists apply foundationalism to moral beliefs as a way to stop the skeptical regress regarding moral beliefs. Prichard finishes his essay by answering a few obvious problems. Most notably, he explains how people should guarantee the accuracy of their moral intuitions. Clearly, observations can be misleading. For instance, if someone sees a pencil in water, he may conclude that the object in the water is bent. However, when he pulls the pencil from the water, he sees that it is straight. The same can occur with moral intuition. If the intuition persists, then the intuition is accurate. Prichard further supports these claims by pointing out how it is illegitimate to doubt previously believed moral intuitions: The sense that we ought to do certain things arises in our unreflective consciousness, being an activity of moral thinking occasioned by the various situations in which we find ourselves. At this stage our attitude to these obligations is one of unquestioning confidence. But inevitably the appreciation of the degree to which the execution of these obligations is contrary to our interest raises the doubt whether after all these obligations are, really obligatory, i. We then want to have it proved to us that we ought to do so, i. This demand IS, as I have argued, illegitimate. Hence in the first place, if, as is almost universally the case, by Moral Philosophy is meant the knowledge which would satisfy this demand, there is no such knowledge, and all attempts to attain it are doomed to failure because they rest on a mistake, the mistake of supposing the possibility of proving what can only be apprehended directly by an act of moral thinking.

Chapter 7 : Moral Writings (British Moral Philosophers) - | SlugBooks

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Moral _____ - provides a natural and attractive account of moral _____. An example of this was given by American philosopher _____. He suggested that if you were in the hospital and learned that the only reason a friend visited was because it was the right thing to do.

Chapter 8 : Utilitarianism | philosophy | calendrierdelascience.com

This is the definitive collection of the ethical work of the great Oxford moral philosopher H. A. Prichard (). Prichard is famous for his ethical intuitionism: he argued that moral obligation cannot be reduced to anything else, but is perceived by direct intuition.

Chapter 9 : How Philippa Foot set her mind against prevailing moral philosophy | Aeon Essays

As part of their recent 'British Moral Philosophers' series, Oxford University Press has published an expanded version of the collection, now entitled, Moral Writings, edited by Jim MacAdam, that includes four never before published essays plus two letters, one of them from Cook Wilson to Prichard in and the other from Prichard to.