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The Metaphysical Morality of Francis Hutcheson: A Consideration of Hutcheson's Critique of Moral Fitness Theory

Patricia Sheridan

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Abstract Hutcheson's theory of morality shares far more common ground with Clarke's morality than is generally acknowledged. In fact, Hutcheson's own view of his innovations in moral theory suggest that he understood moral sense theory more as an elaboration and partial correction to Clarkean fitness theory than as an outright rejection of it. My aim in this paper will be to illuminate what I take to be Hutcheson's grounds for adopting this attitude toward Clarkean fitness theory. In so doing, I hope to bring to light an otherwise unexpected continuity between moral sense theory and the moral rationalism to which it is usually opposed, and, in so doing, draw attention to the anti-sceptical realism that lies at the heart of both accounts.

Keywords Francis Hutcheson · Samuel Clarke · Moral fitness theory · Moral sense theory · British moralists

Hutcheson's moral theory is based upon the rejection of reason as the foundation for morality. It is therefore unsurprising that much of the secondary literature that deals with Hutcheson's moral sense theory tends to characterize it in terms of its opposition to rationalist theories like the 'moral fitness' view of Samuel Clarke. For example, in describing Hutcheson's moral sense theory in terms of a blanket rejection of rationalism, J.B. Schneewind claims that, 'Clarke's version of moral rationalism seems to be [Hutcheson's] main target.'[1] However, close attention to the details of Hutcheson's view of the metaphysical underpinnings of morality yields a somewhat different perspective on Hutcheson's relationship to Clarke and moral

[1] Schneewind, J.B., *The Invention of Autonomy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): p. 340. Similar views are held by a number of commentators – for example, see Jensen, Henning, *Motivation and the Moral Sense in Francis Hutcheson's Ethical Theory* (The Hague, Nijhoff, 1971): p. 68 and Kemp Smith, Norman, *The Philosophy of David Hume* (London: MacMillan and Company, 1966): p. 38.

P. Sheridan (✉)
University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, Canada, N1G 2W1
e-mail: pmsherid@uoguelph.ca

rationalism generally. Without in any way diminishing the epistemological contrast between Hutcheson and Clarke, I will argue in what follows that Hutcheson's theory of morality shares far more common ground with Clarke's morality than is generally acknowledged. In fact, Hutcheson's own view of his innovations in moral theory suggest that he understood moral sense theory more as an elaboration and partial correction to Clarkean fitness theory than as an outright rejection of it. My aim in this paper will be to illuminate what I take to be Hutcheson's grounds for adopting this attitude toward Clarkean fitness theory. In so doing, I hope to bring to light an otherwise unexpected continuity between moral sense theory and the moral rationalism to which it is usually opposed, and, in so doing, draw attention to the anti-skeptical realism that lies at the heart of *both* accounts.

The first section of the paper will contain a general discussion of Clarke's moral fitness theory. I will show that Clarke's rationalist moral epistemology is closely tied in with a teleological metaphysics. In the second section, I will discuss Hutcheson's critique of Clarke – a critique that Hutcheson elaborates alongside of his positive views. This critique, I argue, provides an important insight into the teleological nature of Hutcheson's moral theory. I will follow in the third section with a discussion of both the epistemology and metaphysics of the Hutcheson's internal sense theory. It is in the context of his discussion of the internal sense that we find Hutcheson's most complete presentation of the metaphysical principles that ultimately underlie his view of morality.

Clarke's Metaphysics of Fitness Relations

The central ambition of Clarke's moral fitness theory is to develop a realist conception of moral law that accords with the view that moral laws are both normatively necessary (in a sense to be explained below) and transparent to rational intuition. Clarke's view of moral fitness arises from a more general theory of natural fitness, according to which, the order and harmony of the universe consists in relations of fitness realized among nature's elements. To bring Clarke's moral theory into focus, it will be worth beginning with a brief account of his broader metaphysics of fitness relations.

For Clarke, material things are non-spiritual beings that move in relation to one another according to natural laws. Matter is not self-moving, but entirely inert unless acted upon by some external force, and all material objects are neutral as to the motions they may acquire. In his work, *Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God* (hereafter referred to as the *Demonstration*), Clarke explains that '[a] *Tendency* to move some *one* determinate way, cannot be essential to any Particle of Matter, but must arise from some External Cause; because there is nothing in the pretended necessary Nature of any Particle, to determine its Motion necessarily and essentially *one way* rather than *another.*' (*Demonstration*, 531)[2] Thus, like the great mechanists of the period, Clarke rejects the notion that corporeal beings possess any intrinsic principles of motion. Accordingly, the laws of motion must originate in something

[2] All in-text references to the *Demonstration* to: Clarke, Samuel, 'Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God,' in *The Works* (1738), Volume 2 (Reprinted, New York: Garland, 1978).

other than the intrinsic properties of bodies. In his work *A Discourse Concerning Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion* (hereafter referred to as the *Discourse*), he writes as follows:

> [S]eeing matter is utterly incapable of obeying any Laws, the very original Laws of Motion themselves cannot continue to take place, but by something Superiour to Matter, *continually* exerting on it a certain Force of Power, according to such certain and determinate Laws. (*Discourse*, 601)[3]

Clarke is clearly leading to the suggestion that both the motions of bodies, and the laws by which they are governed, originate in God, for he goes on to propose that the phenomenon of gravity serves as 'an evident demonstration, not only of the World's being *made originally* by a supreme Intelligent Cause; but moreover that it depends every Moment on some Superior Being, for the *Preservation* of its Frame.' (*Discourse*, 601)

On its own, Clarke's view of physical processes as divinely governed and sustained does not diverge greatly from standard presentations of mechanism. In his theological emphasis, Clarke does not differ greatly from Boyle, for instance, whose notion of 'the course of nature' is equally theological.[4] What *does* distinguish Clarke's metaphysics from more orthodox forms of mechanism is its inclusion of a strong teleological dimension. According to Clarke, '*Inanimate* and *Irrational* Beings, by the *Necessity* of their Nature, constantly obey the Laws of their Creation; and tend regularly to the Ends, for which they were appointed.' (*Discourse*, 619) For Clarke, the lawful behaviour of physical objects is made necessary by the natures they possess and the ends to which those natures are directed according to Divine Providence. However, the necessity of law is not to be confused with the necessary existence of things that are subject to law, and Clarke warns against taking his view to carry the consequence that '*because I affirm the* Proportions *of things...to be Eternal and Necessary; that therefore I affirm the* Existence *of the Things themselves, to be also Eternal and Necessary.*' (*Discourse*, 586) For Clarke, God's freedom and power suffice to ensure that the contents of creation were a matter of divine choice, but for God to have chosen to create any system of beings whose natures fall short of perfection in the relations of fitness they realize would be incompatible with his nature as a perfectly wise and good being:

> [W]hile *Things* and their *several Relations* are, they cannot but *be* what they are; and an infinitely Wise Being cannot but *know* them to be what they are, and *judge* always *rightly* concerning the several Fitnesses or Unfitnesses of them; and an Infinitely Good being, cannot but *choose* to *act* always according

[3] All in-text references to the *Discourse* to: Clarke, Samuel, 'A Discourse concerning the Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation,' in *The Works* (1738), Volume 2 (Reprinted, New York: Garland, 1978).

[4] Boyle speaks of the 'course of nature' as the order God imposed on the motions of material things. In his essay, *The Excellency and Grounds of the Corpuscular or Mechanical Philosophy*, he writes, 'in the beginning, [God] so guided the various motion of the parts of [matter] as to contrive them into the world he designed they should compose; and established those rules of motion and that order amongst things corporeal, which we call the laws of nature'; in *The Scientific Background to Modern Philosophy*, Michael R. Matthews, ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989): 111.

> to his Knowledge of the respective Fitness of Things: It being as truly impossible for such a *Free Agent*, who is absolutely incapable of being Deceived or Depraved, to *Choose*, by acting contrary to these Laws, to Destroy its own *Perfections*; as for *Necessary Existence* to *be able to destroy* its own *Being*. (*Demonstration*, 574)

Thus, for Clarke, the fact that nature's elements realize fitness relations is a function of God's perfect goodness and his unerring judgment in the *free* act of creation. Construed abstractly, fitness relations, or as Clarke sometimes refers to them 'proportions of things', are necessary and eternal, and God's wisdom and goodness are manifested in his choice to create a world according to the imperatives associated with these relations. However, the fact that created things *realize* such relations is necessary only relative to the wisdom and moral rectitude of God's creative choice.

In light of these considerations, it is important to stress that Clarke's notion of the necessity of fitness relations is not the expression of any form of cosmological determinism. On Clarke's view, the necessity according to which created objects realize fitness relations is *normative* in the sense that it is a function of the wisdom and goodness of God's choice, and not of any inner necessity in the objects themselves. Clarke brings this distinction into focus when he observes, on the one hand, that 'all things in the World appear plainly to be the most *Arbitrary* that can be imagined; and to be wholly the Effects, not of *Necessity*, but of Wisdom and Choice', and on the other hand that '[a] *Necessity* indeed of *Fitness*; that is, that Things could not have been Otherwise than they are without diminishing the Beauty, Order, and well-being of the Whole; there may be, and (as far as we can apprehend) there certainly is.' (*Demonstration*, 550) For Clarke, it is appropriate to say that God must 'of necessity... *Do* always what he *Knows* to be *Fittest to be done*,' but only when 'necessity' is taken to involve 'not a *Necessity of Fate*, but such a *Moral Necessity* as...[is] consistent with the most perfect Liberty.' (*Demonstration*, 572). For Clarke, necessities of fitness concern the ways things ought and ought not to interact, where these imperatives are understood as inhering in the relations that different things bear to one another: '[F]rom these *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.' (*Discourse*, 608)[5]

Clarke's characterization of the order of nature as embodying relations of fitness among its elements involves a vision of the universe as a just and equitable arrangement of all things. Indeed, Clarke treats equity as the central characteristic of the system, '[t]he *Rule of Equity* being nothing else but the *Very Nature* of Things, and their *necessary Relations* one to Another....' (*Demonstration*, 572) The relations that arise between things of fixed specific natures are what Clarke terms 'natural fitness' relations. As created beings imbued with fixed natures of their own, humans too are bearers of fitness relations. However, human beings differ from other natural

[5] For Clarke, the broad category 'things' includes physical things in the universe and their relations to each other, human-human relations, and human–divine relations. He is not careful to specify these variations. He usually refers to human relations when offering specific examples, however, his general discussions of fitness always refer broadly to the category of 'things' in the universe.

productions in possessing free will. As Clarke puts it, 'Man...is by *necessity*, (not in the *nature of Things*, but through *God's appointment*) a *Free Agent*. And 'tis no otherwise in his Power to cease to be such, than by depriving himself of *Life*.' (*Demonstration*, 566) For Clarke, the human capacity for free choice accounts for the specifically *moral* significance of fitness relations. Whereas beings lacking free will are effectively determined to concur in the fitness relations deriving from their natures, it is open to human beings to act either in accord with or against the imperatives of fitness that nature dictates. Clarke's account of how this can be so takes us to the heart of both his moral epistemology and his normative ethics.

For Clarke, moral agency depends on the possession of conscious intellect, under which heading, he includes 'reason' or 'rationality.' Reason is never carefully defined in Clarke's writing. However, it is consistently treated as a capacity in humans for recognizing necessary truths. To reason, such truths are 'manifest,' 'obvious' or, as Clarke puts it on one occasion, 'notoriously plain and self-evident.' (*Discourse*, 609) Reason accounts for the human ability to grasp the truth of axiomatic propositions such as *the whole is equal to the sum of its parts*, and to recognize as contradictory statements such as *a crooked line is as straight as a right one*. For Clarke, the perception of fitness relations is a special case of the rational intuition of necessary truths, and any denial that these relations hold is, for Clarke, tantamount to self-contradiction. Clarke claims, for example, that to deny that it is more fit for men 'to promote *the universal good and welfare of All*' than to contrive 'the *ruin and destruction of All*' would be epistemologically equivalent to 'deny[ing] the most obvious and known *Proportions* of *Lines or Numbers*...perversely contend [ing] that the *Whole* is not *equal to all its parts*, or that a *Square* is *not double to a triangle* of equal base and height.' (*Discourse*, 609) This conception of the rational transparency of fitness evaluations serves as the basis for Clarke's account of moral obligation. For Clarke, by the 'Understanding or Knowledge of the natural and necessary relations, fitnesses, and proportions of things, the *Wills*...of all Intelligent Beings are constantly directed, and must needs be determined to act accordingly.' (*Discours*e, 612) Just as the necessities of natural fitness pose a normative constraint on God's creative activity, so too do they pose a constraint on human conduct. However, unlike God, humans are possessed of neither an unerring intellect nor an unerring will. Although humans are naturally *capable* of discerning the obligations inherent in fitness relations and of acting upon them, they are nevertheless imperfect in both their intellect and their volition. Thus, the failure to observe the imperatives of fitness is a defect of those 'whose *Understandings* are either very imperfect, or very much depraved.' Likewise, the failure to act in accord with recognized fitnesses is a defect of those 'whose *Wills* are corrupted by particular Interest or Affection, or swayed by some unreasonable and prevailing Passion.' (*Discourse*, 612)

We shall see shortly that Hutcheson expressed serious reservations concerning the rationalism of Clarke's moral epistemology. However, before turning to Hutcheson's response to Clarke, it is worth emphasizing the complexity of Clarke's view of the role of human reason in morality. Although Clarke clearly views reason as the *epistemological* basis for discerning fitness relations and the moral laws consequent upon them, it is important to recognize that there is an equally pronounced *metaphysical* dimension to his view of reason in morality. For Clarke, human beings are *by nature* rational beings and, as such, rationality serves to define the *telos* of

fitness appropriate to human moral conduct. It is for this reason that Clarke characterizes moral wrongdoing not only as a species of intellectual error, but as a perversion of the order of natural relations realized in God's creation. According to Clarke, for rational beings to err morally is for them to act 'contrary to that Understanding, Reason and Judgment, which God has implanted in their Natures on purpose to enable them to discern the difference between good and evil. 'Tis attempting to destroy that Order, by which the Universe subsists.' (*Discourse*, 614) For Clarke, then, reason is not *just* the faculty by which humans discern their moral obligations. It is, equally, the natural basis upon which those obligations are founded. For this reason, Clarke maintains that it is 'as *natural* and (morally speaking) *necessary*, that the *Will* should be determined in every Action by the *Reason of the thing*, and *the Right of the Case*; as 'tis *natural* and (absolutely speaking) *necessary*, that the *Understanding* should submit to a *demonstrated truth*.' (*Discourse*, 613) For Clarke, the imperative to determine volition and conduct in accord with reason is an effect of the moral necessity inherent in the natural order.

Hutcheson on Clarkean Rationalism and the 'Supposition of a Moral Sense'

Hutcheson devotes the second chapter of his *Illustrations on the Moral Sense* (hereafter referred to as *IMS*) to the criticism of Clarkean fitness theory. Commentators have rightly stressed the importance of Hutcheson's critique of Clarkean moral theory in the development of his own positive alternative – the theory of the moral sense. However, there are important questions to be asked about the scope of Hutcheson's critique. If, as Henning Jensen suggests, '[t]he [Clarkean] rationalist, as compared with the egoist, presents a theory which is much more offensive to Hutcheson as regards the relationship of morality to motivation,'[6] it might seem unlikely that there could be any substantial commonality between Hutcheson's outlook and Clarke's. Hutcheson's theory of the moral sense was clearly and explicitly opposed to egoistic accounts of morality. If moral rationalism was 'more offensive' than egoism to Hutcheson's way of thinking, then it might appear that Hutcheson rejected Clarke's rationalist framework from top to bottom. However, Hutcheson's actual comments on Clarkean fitness theory show him to be less dismissive than this view would suggest. In taking up Clarke's view that morality consists in relations of fitness, Hutcheson grants that 'the ingenious Author says nothing against the Supposition of a *moral Sense*.' (*IMS*, 157)[7] Moreover, he claims that the ensuing critique 'is not intended to oppose [Clarke's] Scheme, but rather to suggest what seems a necessary Explication of it; by shewing that it is no otherwise intelligible, but upon Supposition of a *moral Sense*.' (*IMS*, 157) There is perhaps reason to suspect that these overtures are too diplomatic, as aspects of the ensuing critique clearly do target Clarkean doctrines. However, Hutcheson's comment suggests, at the very least, that the discussion is undertaken in the spirit

[6] Jensen, Henning, *Motivation and the Moral Sense,* 68.

[7] All in-text references to the *IMS* refer to: Hutcheson, Francis, *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, with Illustrations on the Moral Sense* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2002).

of constructive criticism, and not with aim of completely undoing the 'scheme' of Clarke's moral philosophy.

Hutcheson's main worries regarding moral fitness theory are twofold: First, he argues that because the idea of a fitness relation results from our relating two or more things, such a relation cannot be something that inheres in the things themselves. Relations, he argues, 'are not *real Qualities* inherent in external Natures, but only *Ideas* necessarily accompanying our *Perception* of two Objects at once, and comparing them.' (*IMS*, 156) Thus, relations do not figure in the ontology of related objects. Rather, relations arise as a function of our *perception* of objects said to be related. Second, Hutcheson argues that fitness relations themselves are morally neutral. Without the assumption of a moral sense, it is obscure how an appreciation of moral good or evil can arise from the bare idea of a relation between things. In discussing the moral neutrality of relations, Hutcheson looks at what he considers the three basic types of relation: Relations between inanimate objects, relations between inanimate objects and rational agents, and finally relations between rational agents. As to the first type, Hutcheson argues that our knowledge of the relations involved yields only factual and instrumental insight, not moral insight. Such knowledge gives rise to powers of manipulation, but such manipulations are morally neutral so long as they have no reference to 'a *rational Agent's Happiness* or *Misery*.' (*IMS*, 158) Knowledge of the relations of inanimate objects to rational agents is, in itself, equally morally neutral: '[T]he Knowledge of [relations between inanimate objects and rational beings] equally puts it in one's Power to *destroy Mankind*, as to Preserve them. Without presupposing *Affections*, this Knowledge will not excite to one Action rather than another; nor without a *moral Sense* will it make us approve any Action more than its contrary.' (*IMS*, 158)

As neither beneficial nor destructive relations with inanimate objects are recommended to rational agents independently of the probationary 'affections' of the moral sense, it follows that, in themselves, thing-to-agent relations are morally neutral. Hutcheson pursues an essentially similar line of reasoning in arguing for the moral neutrality of agent-to-agent relations, although here, he stresses the moral indeterminacy of the notion of 'fitness' in particular:

> There is certainly, independently of *Fancy* or *Custom*, a *natural Tendency* in some Actions to give *Pleasure*, either to the Agent or to others; and a *contrary Tendency* in other Actions to give *Pain*, either to the Agent or others: This sort of *Relation* of Actions to the *Agents* or *Objects* is indisputable. If we call these Relations *Fitnesses*, then the most contrary Actions have *equal Fitnesses* for contrary Ends; and each one is *unfit* for the End of the *other*. Thus *Compassion* is *fit* to make *others happy*, and *unfit* to make others *miserable*. *Violation of Property* is *fit* to make Men *miserable*, and *unfit* to make them happy. Each of these is both *fit* and *unfit*, with respect to different Ends. (*IMS*, 158–159)

That a given action is 'fit' to produce a particular end, then, is no indication of the action's moral status, from which Hutcheson concludes that 'The bare *Fitness...to an End*, is not the Idea of moral Goodness.' (*IMS*, 159)

Both Hutcheson's observation concerning the ontology of relations and his claim to the effect that 'instrumental fitness' (for want of a better term) is a morally neutral

concept are calculated to suggest that postulation of the moral sense is necessary to imbue relations with moral significance. For Hutcheson, relations between rational agents please us when they are relations involving benevolence. But the moral approbation that attaches to benevolence arises due to the sensory faculty that both recognizes benevolence as a form of beauty and raises the appropriate sentiments of moral approbation. Hutcheson argues that Clarke's theory fails for the very reason that it does not explain why a perceived relationship would have moral significance. Hutcheson's critique of fitness theory would therefore appear to be quite thoroughgoing. Fitness relations, as such, are insufficient for grounding human morality. However, as we have seen, Hutcheson does not intend his critique to oppose Clarke's 'scheme', but rather to motivate what is, by his lights, a 'necessary Explication of it.' What, then, are the aspects of the Clarke's scheme that Hutcheson wishes to leave intact, and how does his own elaboration of the moral sense provide what is necessary by way of explication?

The answers to these questions are difficult to cull from Hutcheson's comments on Clarke's theory taken on their own. In the *Illustrations*, Hutcheson's invocation of the moral sense could easily be interpreted as simply *substituting* a kind of moral subjectivism for the teleological objectivism of Clarke's theory of natural fitness relations. For instance, after arguing that the fitness of a means to an end does not generally amount to a morally significant relationship, Hutcheson considers whether or not we can reasonably talk of *fit ends* independently of the possible means of attaining them. Hutcheson reasons that the notion of a morally fit end must involve the idea of an *ultimate* end, as any end that is deemed fit only in relation to a further end will be morally neutral for the same reason that means–ends relations generally are. He then argues that the idea of fitness as applying to ultimate ends can only signify a 'simple idea' which 'must be the *Perception of some Sense*', and he concludes that 'we must recur, upon this Scheme too, to a *moral Sense*.' (*IMS*, 250) If, as Hutcheson argues, the very notion of a fit end presupposes the agent's possessing a moral sense, and acquiring a simple idea deriving from that sense, it might appear that Hutcheson takes the fitness of ends to be subjective only insofar as the fitness of the end actually *consists in* its being sensed as fit. This line of interpretation is further encouraged by Hutcheson's comments on those rationalists who take the idea of fitness to be a complex (and thus definable) idea rather than a simple one. In addressing the definition of moral fitness as the '*Agreement* of and *Affection, Desire, Action or End*, to the *Relations of Agents*' (*IMS*, 159), Hutcheson finds that the only notion of *agreement* that adequately coheres with the formula is one that characterizes it in terms of the moral approval of the observer. For Hutcheson, to say that an action, affection, or end 'agrees' to a relation of agents can only signify that the action, affection or end 'is *approved* by every *Observer*, or raises in him a *grateful Perception*, or moves the Observer to *love* the Agent', all of which is 'the same with the Notion of pleasing a *moral Sense*.' (*IMS*, 160) Here too, it is tempting to read Hutcheson in subjectivist terms, i.e., as suggesting that the moral rectitude of an action, affection, or end consists purely in the character of observers' responses as determined by the moral sense.

While Hutcheson's comments in the *Illustrations* go some way toward explaining his insistence that the morality of fitness presupposes the operation of

a moral sense, they are far less illuminating with regard to those aspects of the Clarkean scheme that Hutcheson did not wish to disturb. Hutcheson's Clarkean affinities are particularly obscure on the subjectivist interpretation we have just considered, as this reading suggests that Hutcheson's engagement of fitness theory preserves virtually nothing of the objective teleology that lies at the heart of Clarke's moral outlook. By the same token, this reading leaves it unclear how Hutcheson could claim that Clarke 'says nothing against the Supposition of a *moral Sense*.' (*IMS*, 157) At least with respect to the role that the subjectivist interpretation accords to Hutcheson's moral sense in the constitution of fitness relations, it would seem that Clarke's objective teleology speaks against this supposition very strongly indeed. There is, however, a different way of approaching Hutcheson's claims on behalf of the compatibility of Clarke's system and his own theory of the moral sense. Hutcheson's theory of the moral sense is best understood otherwise than as a subjectivist view of morality. His overarching theory of the 'internal sense' (of which the moral sense is a sub-species) is far more clearly invested in an objective teleology than the subjectivist reading would suggest.[8]

Internal Sense, Beauty, and The Metaphysics of Order

Hutcheson's moral sense theory forms part of his broader theory of the 'internal sense.'[9] As Hutcheson describes it, the internal sense consists in a capacity for

[8] While this is not a new reading of Hutcheson it has been the subject of some debate, most notably in David Fate Norton's response to Norman Kemp Smith. In his seminal work, *The Philosophy of David Hume*, Kemp Smith offers what is arguably the more 'standard' subjectivist interpretation of Hutcheson's moral theory, according to which Hutcheson views moral judgments as non-cognitive and purely sensory, in a way analogous to secondary-quality ideas. He concludes that for Hutcheson, moral judgements are involuntary and bear no connection to the extra-mental world on which they are based, standing, as Kemp Smith puts it 'in a merely *de facto* connexion to their antecedents.' (26) Moral judgments, on this account, are based on the 'manifest' world and not on any mind-independent reality.

Fate Norton replies that Kemp Smith has simply 'misread' Hutcheson (Fate Norton, David, *David Hume: Common Sense Moralist, Sceptical Metaphysics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982) 59). Norton points most notably to the fact that Hutcheson was concerned more with the refutation of skepticism than he was with refuting rationalism, and that it is this former motivating concern that Kemp Smith has not sufficiently appreciated in his reading of Hutcheson. Norton argues that for Hutcheson moral ideas are, like ideas of duration and number, representative concomitant ideas. In the very same way that events in the physical world are known via affective states, moral events are known via the feelings they raise in us. They are ideas that arise when we perceive actions or affections of agents that are, for Hutcheson, clearly mind-independent. The case for Hutcheson's moral realism is strengthened by the teleological assumptions upon which his theory rests. As Norton points out, the natural affections arising from our perceptions of events in the world are intrinsically bound up for Hutcheson with the providential order of a divine and benevolent creator. This is a point I take up in the last section of this paper.

[9] While at times Hutcheson does seem to think of the moral sense as somehow distinct from the internal senses (e.g., of beauty, honor, and harmony), he will also, at times, use 'internal sense' as a banner heading that includes the moral sense. Hutcheson generally discusses moral sense in terms entirely analogous to those he uses in reference to the internal senses of beauty, honor and harmony: they are all internal (as opposed to external senses), they all involve perceptions attending complex ideas, and each particular sense approves relevant instances of order and disapproves relevant instances of disorder; or, as Hutcheson puts it, they all approve 'uniformity amidst variety'. In fact, Hutcheson seems to presuppose much of his internal sense theory in his discussion of the moral sense.

recognizing and approving of beauty in its various forms. For Hutcheson, these forms include the harmony of natural and artificial aesthetic productions, the order and systematicity of scientific theories, and the interpersonal harmony arising from the practice of virtue. In all cases, the sense of beauty consists in the appreciation of uniformity amidst variety, and the idea of beauty consists in the economy and order that is found in complex ideas or, more accurately, in the objects of such ideas. Thus, for Hutcheson, beauty itself is the quality of uniformity discovered amidst variety: 'The Figures which excite in us the Ideas of Beauty, seem to be those in which there is *Uniformity amidst Variety*....[W]hat we call Beautiful in Objects, to speak in the Mathematical Style, seems to be in a compound *Ratio* of *Uniformity* and *Variety*: so that where the *Uniformity* of Bodys is equal, the Beauty is as the *Variety*; and where the *Variety* is equal, the Beauty is as the Uniformity.' (*Inquiry I*, 2.3)[10]

Hutcheson's theory is founded upon the basic observation that, 'all Men are better pleas'd with *Uniformity*...than *the contrary*...and are pleas'd with its more complex Kinds, both *Original* and *Relative.*' (*Inquiry I*, 6.4) According to Hutcheson, there are many different types of creatures in the universe, all seemingly attracted by different things. Animals, because their senses differ from our own, are attracted to things that humans tend to find distasteful. Hutcheson grants that on this basis, it might seem '[t]hat the Constitution of our Sense so as to approve *Uniformity*, is merely arbitrary in the AUTHOR of our Nature; and that there are an infinity of *Tastes,* or *Relishes* of *Beauty* possible.' (*Inquiry I*, 5.1) However, rather than taking this as an argument for general relativism with respect to the perception of beauty, Hutcheson maintains that the adaptation of creatures to environments they find agreeable is itself a sign of the orderly plan of a designer:

> [A]s there are an Infinity of *Forms* possible into which any System may be reduc'd, an Infinity of *Places* in which Animals may be situated, and an Infinity of *Relishes* or *Senses* in these Animals is suppos'd possible; that in the immense Spaces any one animal should by Chance be plac'd in a System agreeable to its Taste, must be improbable as *infinite* to *one* at least: And much more unreasonable is it to expect from Chance, that a multitude of Animals agreeing in their Sense of *Beauty* should obtain *agreeable Places*. (*Inquiry I*, 5.1)

For Hutcheson, the orderliness and harmony of nature is not only reflected in the adaptation of animal species to their environments. Evidence of design also derives from the apparent uniformity of inanimate physical phenomena. The regular and uniform movements of the planets, the regular cycles of the seasons, the great diversity *and* regularity of light and shade, mountains and valleys, plants and animals all suggest that uniformity *is* a fact of nature. In fact, if there were no designing force governing the universe as a whole, the cosmos would more likely, 'resolve itself into an *irregular Form*, than a *regular.*' (*Inquiry I*, 5.2) For Hutcheson, then, the universe is not simply *interpreted* as uniform by human beings. The universe *is* uniform, and is created so by God. The universe offers manifest evidence of uniformity in its structure and in its motions; it exhibits a

[10] All in-text references to *Inquiry I* and *Inquiry II* refer, respectively of the first and second treatise, to: Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry Into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue in Two Treatises, Fourth Edition* (1738) (Reprinted, England: Gregg International Publishers, 1969).

'harmonious Form,' (*Inquiry I*, 5.21) desired by God and humans for its overall beauty. In support of what is obviously a quite traditional form of the argument from design, Hutcheson writes that 'the Strength of this Argument is increased always in proportion to the Degree of *Beauty* produc'd in *Nature*, and expos'd to the View of any *rational Agents*; since upon Supposition of a *Benevolent* DEITY, all the apparent *Beauty* produc'd is an Evidence of the Execution of a *Benevolent Design*, to give him the Pleasures of *Beauty.*' (*Inquiry I*, 5.18) For Hutcheson, the divine order of the universe requires that all creatures act in a manner that maintains and promotes harmonious uniformity. All sentient creatures are fitted with external and internal senses appropriate to their needs and environments. To this extent, what is *found* beautiful is relative to a creature's special sensory capacities. Hutcheson explains that, 'there are many Objects which seem no way beautiful to Men, and yet other *Animals* who seem delighted with them.' He continues as follows: '[T]hey may have *Senses* otherwise constituted than those of Men, and may have the Ideas of Beauty excited by Objects of a quite different Form. We see Animals fitted for every Place; and what to Men appears rude and shapeless, or loathsome, may be to them a *Paradise*.' (*Inquiry I*, 2.1) However, it is not mere chance that makes beavers prefer dams and humans prefer the comforts of a house. God has fitted all creatures with the appropriate senses to ensure that what they desire will contribute to the general uniformity in the universe. All creatures are, thus, drawn to that which is appropriate to them, and this is all part of God's grand design.

The teleological aspect of Hutcheson's thinking has an obvious precedent in Clarke's fitness theory. Just as Clarke appeals to nature-relative fitness relations as evidence of benevolent design, so Hutcheson invokes the species-relativity of the perception of order, and the associated pleasures, as indicative of the will of a supreme designer. Indeed, Hutcheson takes it that the association of pleasures with particular instances of order (or 'form') is itself indicative of the divine will: '[T]he *Pleasure* is not the necessary result of the *Form* itself, otherwise it would equally affect all Apprehensions in what species soever; but depends upon a voluntary *Constitution*, adapted to preserve the *Regularity* of the *Universe*, and is probably not the Effect of *Necessity*, but *Choice*, in the SUPREME AGENT, who constituted our *Senses*.' (*Inquiry I*, 8.4). According to Hutcheson, then, beauty 'has always some relation to the *Sense* of some Mind.' (*Inquiry I*, 2.1) God has made his creatures such that they find pleasure in the type of order appropriate to their natures. That creatures should take pleasure in one rather than another kind of order is, in a certain sense, arbitrary, as any such coordination of pleasures with species is the effect of God's choice. However, as God's choices aim at the overall harmony of his creation, such coordination is itself governed by considerations of appropriate order. For example, Hutcheson proposes that if humans were attracted to irregular objects and particular, as opposed to general, truths, 'beside the endless Toil this would involve us in, there must arise a perpetual Dissatisfaction in all rational Agents with themselves; since *Reason* and *Interest* would lead us to simple *general Causes*, while a *contrary Sense* of *Beauty* would make us disapprove them.' (*Inquiry I*, 8.5)

Hutcheson's theory of moral sense is best viewed as a further articulation of the broader theory of the internal sense. Like the internal sense more generally, the moral sense detects and approves of the beauty associated with complex ideas arising in the mind. But the moral sense is, according to Hutcheson, directed toward

one kind of beauty in particular, namely, the beauty of an agent's benevolent motives. Benevolent motives raise positive, approving ideas in the perceiver. That the moral sense naturally approves benevolence indicates what our duty is as created rational beings. For Hutcheson, the moral sense, like the internal sense, is designed by God to ensure universal harmony: Just as all sentient creatures are drawn to specific kinds of order, which they find beautiful and which are appropriate to their natures, benevolence is a principle of order especially appropriate to human beings. Thus, the creator '*has made* Virtue *a* lovely Form.' [*Inquiry* (I and II), 'Preface,' xiv] Hutcheson claims that '[o]ur *moral sense* shews [benevolence] to be the highest Perfection of our Nature; what we may see to be the *End* or *Design* of such a Structure, and consequently what is requir'd of us by the Author of our Nature.'[11] Indeed, Hutcheson suggests not only that benevolence is the natural object of human moral approbation, but that it is in virtue of possessing the specific nature of human beings that we are able to appreciate benevolence as a worthy moral object. And what goes for benevolence goes for 'virtue' in general: 'if anyone likes these descriptions better, he may call Virtue, with many of the Antients, "*Vita secundum naturam*;" or acting according to what we may see from the constitution of our Nature, we were intended for by our Creator.'[12]

To act benevolently is to act in accord not only with our own divinely created human natures, but more than this, it is to act in accord with the 'wise Order of Nature,' considered as a whole. (*Inquiry II*, 2.6) Hutcheson understands human benevolence within the wider context of the nomological natural order, within which, each created thing has a role to play in maintaining the entire structure. This is nicely illustrated in his comparison of the cosmological significance of human benevolence to that of gravitation. As Hutcheson explains it, gravitational attraction is not only de facto stronger when bodies are in closer contact, but that this be the case 'is as necessary to the Frame of the Universe, as that there should be any *Attraction* at all.' (*Inquiry II*, 5.2) If physical things act contrary to the principle of gravitation, the regularity of all motion in nature would be threatened. In the very same way, humans are required to follow their natural impulses to maintain the natural order. For Hutcheson, our love of benevolence is 'exceedingly necessary to the Order and Happiness of Human Society.' (*Inquiry II*, 5.2) This is significant for Hutcheson's teleological account, as human happiness is required for the system as a whole to function according to God's plan. According to Hutcheson, as 'the whole *Frame* of *Nature*...seems...plainly contriv'd for the *Good* of the *Whole*...casual Evils seem the necessary concomitants of [a] Mechanism designed for prepollent [i.e. predominant] *Good*.' (*Inquiry II*, 7.13) Hutcheson's account comprises both social and personal happiness, and thus, his view of the moral obligation of benevolence is not restricted to benevolence towards others, as he also asserts that we are obligated by nature to attend to feelings of self-love as well. The reason for this is, again, the maintenance of the natural order. According to Hutcheson, care for the self is

[11] Francis Hutcheson, *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, with Illustrations on the Moral Sense* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2002): *Preface*, 8.

[12] Ibid.

'absolutely necessary for the *Good* of the *Whole*' and a lack of self-love, he writes, 'would be *universally pernicious.*' (*Inquiry II*, 3.5)

Concluding Remarks

Hutcheson's insistence on the moral sense as the foundation of moral normativity seems to be trying to address the failure of Clarke's theory to explain why the bare recognition of fitness relations should be *felt* as carrying a normative weight. The moral sense turns certain types of natural relations into morally significant relations for the simple reason that *sentiment*s of moral approval or moral disapprobation attend the very operation of the moral sense. However, it is important to recognize that Hutcheson sees his notion of the moral sense as being broadly *compatible* with fitness theory. Indeed, there is a sense in which he sees moral sense theory to be a natural development of fitness theory rather than a wholesale replacement. As I have shown above, Clarke understood fitness as a rationally transparent relation – one that is recognized and approved by the rational faculty of moral agents. Hutcheson, in emphasizing the 'affections' involved in such a judgment, suggests what Clarke's theory is lacking – an account of how fitness relations can 'impress' us as being morally significant. However, once the moral sense is assumed, the characterization of morally significant relations in terms of fitness becomes unproblematic. Indeed, from the perspective of moral sense theory, the notion of fitness coincides with the notion of 'pleasing a *moral Sense.*'

Hutcheson and Clarke are both working to establish an epistemology that makes moral laws intuitively certain while maintaining a metaphysics of morality that relates moral law to the general teleological order of the universe (a feature of Hutcheson's that is often overlooked in the literature). Hutcheson responds to rationalist moral systems (especially Clarke's) by arguing that morality is based on an essentially *sensory* appreciation of moral phenomena – with a special 'moral sense' accounting for both our capacity for recognizing moral imperatives and for the feelings of approbation that accompany our recognition of properly moral behaviour. This does not mean that Hutcheson rejects rationalistic moral theory altogether. He maintains a commitment to the moral metaphysics found in someone like Clarke; his system is aimed rather at their exclusive reliance upon reason as the basis of moral epistemology. I have shown how Hutcheson's moral sense theory is meant to enrich rationalist accounts, not to dismiss them. Hutcheson never denies the role of reason in morality. However, he does not see how reason alone could account for the *moral* significance of relations. Although, Hutcheson is standardly taken to be an anti-rationalist, his response to Clarke, considered within the context of his teleological metaphysics, would seem much more clearly to represent his anti-skepticism. This helps not only to make sense of his mitigated critique of Clarke's fitness theory, but also serves to enrich our understanding of the significance of his teleological writings.