THE ETHICAL INTUITIONISM OF RICHARD PRICE

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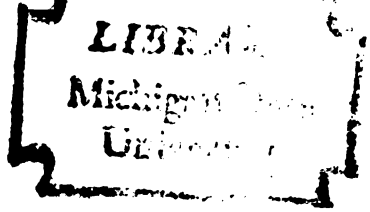

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ABSTRACT

THE ETHICAL INTUITIONISM
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by

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Body of Abstract

The mode of procedure has been to examine the ethical intuitionism of Richard Price as contained in his only philosophic work, A Review of the Principal Questions In Morals. Three purposes are undertaken: (1) to give an exposition of a complete encyclopedic account of Price's life and works; (2) to give an exposition of Price's epistemological and ethical theories; and (3) to give a brief comparison of certain Pricean ethical views with similar positions adopted later by Immanuel Kant.

Chapter I delimits the scope of the dissertation to these three purposes. Chapter II is concerned with an encyclopedic account of Price's life and works. Chapters III and IV expound Price's epistemology and his epistemology applied to morals. Chapter V is an exposition of his ethics. Chapter VI compares certain aspects of the ethical theories of Price and Kant. Chapter VII serves as a summary and criticism of certain views of Richard Price. It is discovered that while Price and Kant are quite similar in many ways, they are by no means identical.

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ABBREVIATIONS

References to the following works have been abbreviated as follows:

ACKCPR for A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason by N. K. Smith;
CKCPR for A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason by Louis White Beck;
DHC for "Discourse on Homage Due to Country" by Richard Price;
DLC for "Discourse on the Love of Country" by Richard Price;
DVMM for the Doctrine of Virtue by Mary J. Gregor;
EHC for Ethics and The Human Community by M. Rader;
ELSR for The Early Life of Samuel Rogers by P. W. Clayden;
FD for Four Dissertations by Richard Price;
IE for Introduction to Ethics by T. S. Jouffroy;
KEC for Kant and His English Critics by J. L. Watson;
KPCE for Kant's Pre-Critical Ethics by Paul A. Schilpp;
KS for Kant Selections, ed. by Theodore Meyer Green;
KTE for Kant's Theory of Ethics trans. by T. K. Abbott;
KTK for Kant's Theory of Knowledge by G. Bird;
LE for Lectures on Ethics trans. by Louis Infield;
MHSP for Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings;
MPRP for The Moral Philosophy of Richard Price by Lennart Aqvist;
OAR for Observations on the American Revolution by Richard Price;
ORP for Observations on Reversionary Payments by Richard Price;
PK for The Philosophy of Kant by J. L. Watson;
PM for The Principles of Morals by J. M. Wilson and T. Fowler;
PSR for The Poems of Samuel Rogers, with a Memoir by Samuel Rogers;
R for the Review by Richard Price;
TBF for the Torchbearer of Freedom by Carl Cone;
TE for Theory of Ethics by T. K. Abbott.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There is considerable difference of opinion as to the importance of Richard Price (1723-1791) in the history of philosophy. F. C. Sharp claims, for example, that "in clarity and in cogency of defence Price surpasses Kant."[1] Jouffroy notes "the intrinsic excellence of Price's exposition. . . ."[2] and claims that

> Price . . . proceeds like a master with clear and penetrating view, he grasps at once the essential difficulty and comes directly to the question which must be clearly stated before it can be solved.[3]

John M. Wilson and Thomas Fowler claim that Price clearly anticipated Kantian ethics.[4] Price's recent biographer, a historian, Professor Carl Cone, considers Price in most glowing terms and ". . . Kant's ethics . . . a development of Price's. . . ." (TBF 25) even though ". . . there is no direct evidence of his ever acknowledging an obligation to the Englishman." (TBF 25) John Laird holds Price to be a

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[1]"Hume's Ethical Theory and Its Critics," Mind, vol. 30 (1921), p. 163.

[2]Introduction to Ethics, Boston and Cambridge: James Munroe and Co., 1858, p. 252.

[3]Ibid.

[4]The Principles of Morals, Wilson, J. M. and Fowler, T., Oxford: The Clarendon Press (1886), p. 63.

British moralist of the first rank.[5] Hastings Rashdall agrees completely with Cone's and Laird's assessments of Price.[6]

D. D. Raphael, Price's editor in 1948, joins the thinkers who speak of Price's valuable thinking and who hold the view that Price was the doctrinal forerunner of Kant and of contemporary ethical intuitionism. (Rx) William K. Frankena told me in a private conversation that modern ethical intuitionism contributed little that was not already conceived by Price over 150 years earlier. In a doctoral dissertation written on Price in 1951, at Harvard, William Bernard Peach calls Pricean ethics the "culmination of eighteenth century rationalism."[7] Broad's article, "Some Reflections on Moral Sense Theories in Ethics," asserts,

> Until Ross published his book, The Right and the Good in 1930 there existed, as far as I know, no statement and defence of what may be called the "rationalistic" type of ethical theory comparable in merit to Price's. Price was thoroughly acquainted with the works of other great English philosophers and moralists, such as Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Butler, and he develops his own views in conscious opposition to those. . . .[8]

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[5] The Idea of Value, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1929), p. 183.

[6] Rashdall claims that Price's Review is ". . . the best book published in Ethics till quite recent times. It contains the gist of Kantian doctrine without Kant's confusion." See Theory of Good and Evil, I, London: Oxford University Press (1948), pp. 80-81.

[7] The Ethics of Richard Price, p. 100.

[8] Readings in Ethical Theory, New York: The Humanities Press, Inc., 1951, p. 362.

Carritt also acknowledges his indebtedness to Price in Ethical and Political Thinking in 1947. The most recent writer to acknowledge his gratitude to Price is Lennart Aqvist who wrote The Moral Philosophy of Richard Price, a book published at Uppsala, Sweden, in 1960. Aqvist deals with the relationship of Price to his predecessors and gives a semantic analysis of certain terms. Aqvist does not offer, however, a general exposition of Price's theory.

On the other hand, Price has had his unappreciative critics. Mackintosh holds that Price's Review "is an attempt to revive the intellectual theory of moral obligation, which seems to have fallen under the attacks of Butler, Hutcheson, and Hume, . . ."[9] Martineau avers that Price merely restates the views of Cudworth and Clark and contributes nothing original.[10] The historian, Leslie Stephen, expresses the opinion that Price is an indistinct writer and that his Review does not merit the effort it takes to read it.[11] In this case, as in the case of Carl Cone, the critic was an historian--not a philosopher.

Among the critics who praise Price, we have noticed Jouffroy, Wilson and Fowler, Sharp, Cone, Laird, Rashdall, Frankena, Peach, Broad, Raphael and Aqvist. Of these critics who commend Price, all are twentieth century

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[9]Progress of Ethical Philosophy, Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1845, p. 170.

[10]Types of Ethical Theory, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1901, p. 476.

[11]History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, 2 Vols., New York: Peter Smith, 1878, II, p. 3.

writers except Jouffroy, Wilson and Fowler. These thinkers belong to the nineteenth century.

On the other hand, those critics who disparage Price include Mackintosh, Martineau, and Leslie Stephen. Mackintosh, and Martineau were nineteenth century philosophers whereas Stephen (1832-1904), was a nineteenth century historian. It is readily apparent that Price is more highly regarded as a thinker by recent ethical theorists than by nineteenth-century critics. Just why this is so is a matter for speculation. It is possible, however, that many of the nineteenth century thinkers were so oriented toward what Fowler calls "a posteriori ethics," that they had little interest in reading Price seriously enough to become sympathetic toward his efforts. In the twentieth century, on the other hand, there has been a resurgence of intuitionism which cannot be ignored. The modern interest in intuitionism has been sufficient to arouse an interest in Price since many philosophers and historians regard certain features of his ethical system as similar to significant characteristics of modern intuitionism.

This present writer finds himself markedly drawn toward agreement with those who praise Price rather than toward those who disparage him. Price makes, in this writer's opinion, signal contributions to ethical theory and, moreover, he does so in a style and manner that, in certain respects, strike this writer as among the clearest he has encountered. This is not to say, however, that

Price is clear at every point even though his ultimate views and arguments were clear to himself and become clear to one who takes the time to study Price. Furthermore, it might be added that one does not necessarily have to agree with Price's position, as an intuitionist, to realize that interestingly enough he develops views which are similar to Kant's, even though he wrote prior to Kant, and influenced Ross in Ross's doctrine of prima facie duties. Price's editor, Raphael, comments concerning Price's similarity to Kant and Ross: ". . . his account of the objective content of the moral consciousness, which is so like Kant and even more like the system of Sir David Ross, is, I think, original." (R x)

Nevertheless, the purpose of this dissertation is not to reassess Price's place in the history of philosophy. Nor is it our purpose to evaluate the superiority of one philosophical system in the light of others. This study has three purposes. First, it will present an encyclopedic summary of the life and works of Richard Price--a summary which is based on historical documents as well as on facts derived from certain biographers. Second--and this is the major purpose--the dissertation will present an exposition of Price's principal epistemological and ethical doctrines as contained in his only ethical work, the Review. It will be seen that certain aspects of his doctrine of what can be known a priori in physics are outmoded in light of modern scientific advances. Finally, a

brief comparison and/or contrast of the ethical theories of Richard Price and Immanuel Kant will be undertaken. The interest motivating such a comparison of Kant and Richard Price is that Kant's views, similar to views expressed by Price much earlier in the eighteenth century, achieved universal recognition in philosophical circles throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Even today reactions for and against Kant are still occurring.

In order to prepare the reader for that which ensues, we shall offer at this point a preliminary statement of Price's ethical theory.

Price puts his epistemology first, because he thought that the ideas of right and wrong had to be viewed as ideas of the understanding; and as long as the empirical tradition--Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Hutcheson--remained unchallenged, this status would be unintelligible. Price believed that he must attack that general epistemological position <u>first</u>; <u>then</u> claim that among other simple ideas deriving from the understanding are to be listed the ideas of right and wrong. Price feels that the burden of the arguments against rationalism is that the process of <u>deduction</u> cannot supply us with any new ideas. Price agrees but contends that it is the intuition, not deduction, which is the direct source of these new ideas. It is the understanding, Price argues, which gives us our ideas of number, proportion, and also "identity and diversity, connexion, cause and effect, power, possibility and

and impossibility; and let me add, . . . of our ideas of right and wrong." (R 37)

But before we give a more detailed exposition of Price's ethical and epistemological views, let us turn to a consideration of the life and works of this relatively little known and too long neglected thinker in the history of philosophy.

CHAPTER II

THE LIFE AND WORKS OF THE REV. RICHARD PRICE, D.D., LL.D.

> Those who best knew him called Richard Price "good." To the cynic the word is soporific, but the cynic has no appreciation for Price's kind anyway. He was a good man in ideas, purpose, and conduct. (TBF 1)

> Few of his enemies . . . could find it possible to accuse him of having interested views. They had to concede the purity and sincerity of his beliefs. These qualities of Price's character impressed themselves upon his contemporaries. Even the orange women in the market stalls cried, as they saw his familiar form approaching on the white horse, "Make way! Make way for the good Dr. Price!" (TBF 3)

Such is Carl Cone's estimate of the "good" Dr. Price. Richard Price's sole philosophical work, the Review of the Principal Questions of Morals, clearly anticipates the modern school of thought known as ethical intuitionism. Editor D. Daiches Raphael's preface to Price's Review opens with the following statement:

> Richard Price was born in 1723 at Tynton, Glamorganshire, and died in 1791 at Hackney. A book of Memoirs of his life was written by his nephew, William Morgan, in 1815, and there is a good modern biography by Roland Thomas (Richard Price, Clarendon Press, 1924). (R ix)

The latter book is the biography of Price's life as a preacher. As an Arian Dissenter, Price pastored churches in London, Stoke-Newington, and Hackney for almost fifty years. His theological view was that although Jesus Christ died for the sins of all men who would believe in him, he was not of the same substance as God the Father. Furthermore, although Jesus Christ was deity, and hence

should be worshipped, he was not co-equal with the infinite God. Thus his view, although Unitarian, should be differentiated from the Unitarian view that holds that Jesus was merely a great humanitarian whose ethical precepts should be followed.

In addition to being a minister, Price was a mathematician, a statistician, an insurance expert, an economist, a tax expert, a political theorist and an ethical philosopher. He is regarded as the founder of modern life insurance. His Observations on Reversionary Payments and his tables of mortality based on Northampton registers provided the first sound statistical basis for payments by life insurance societies of annuities and other reversionary payments.

For a more thorough understanding of Richard Price, let us examine his background somewhat more in detail. The Torchbearer of Freedom, by Carl Cone, is my main biographical source.

Rees Price was a dissenting minister living in Bridgend near Cardiff in Wales. After the death of his first wife, he married Catherine Richards, a woman twenty years younger than himself and the daughter of a Bridgend physician. She and Rees Price had two daughters, Sarah and Elizabeth. Richard was their only son, born on February 23, 1723.

As a child, Richard was accustomed to daily family devotions that included scriptural readings, prayers, and

the singing of psalms.

Richard's first teacher was a family governess. Later, he studied under the tutorship of a neighbor named Peters, who eventually entered the ministry. Afterward, Richard entered a school in Bridgend, where he studied briefly under a tyrannical schoolmaster. Next, he attended school at Neath under the Rev. Joseph Simmons. Two years later, he withdrew from that school and entered the academy of Samuel Jones in Pentwyn in the shire of Carmartnen. This man Jones was an Arian minister. Under his teaching, Price accepted the views of this heterodox theological position. When Price's father learned of his son's heresy, he withdrew him from Pentwyn and sent him, in 1738, to an approved dissenting school, Talgarth Academy, in Breconshire. Here, at the age of 15, Richard Price studied logic and metaphysics, the classical languages, theology, pneumatology, Jewish and Christian antiquities, ethics, Scripture, and mathematics. Here was a curriculum similar to those available at Oxford and Cambridge, universities which did not admit Dissenters.

Rees Price died on June 28, 1739 and willed his son Richard 400 pounds. Richard promptly gave the entire sum to his mother so that she could care for herself and his two sisters. Richard continued his education at Talgarth, where his annual expense for tuition, room and board came only to five pounds. On June 4, 1740, Richard's mother died. Shortly thereafter, Price decided to enter the

ministry.

At the age of 17, Richard left Talgarth Academy and went to London. His uncle Samuel helped him to find a room, over a barber shop, and gave him money for his meager needs. Richard entered Coward's Academy in London, a school supported entirely by a trust fund of 150,000 pounds left by the late William Coward, a Dissenter who had died in 1738. Isaac Watts was a member of the Board of the Coward Trust. He befriended Price and helped him gain admission to the school, which was located in Tenter-alley, Moorfields, at London. Later, it was moved to Hoxton, where it remained until it closed in 1785. Price studied at Coward's Academy from 1740-1744.

Richard studied under John Eames, a man whom Isaac Watts called "the most learned man I ever knew." He had taught for over thirty years when he and Price met each other. Although he taught every subject in the curriculum, Eames's specialities were mathematics and science. Eames had become a member of the Royal Society through the influence of Isaac Newton.

Once, Price received a gift of ten pounds from a friend of the academy for his mathematical proficiency, a gift which he sent immediately to his two sisters.

When Eames became ill, in 1741, Price studied under James Densham. Under Densham, he became proficient in logic, geography, trigonometry, algebra, physics, conic sections, statistics and economics all in one winter.

At the academy Price studied Hebrew, several branches of philosophy, theology, oriental religion, economics, mathematics, anatomy, statistics, pastoral care, and elocution. Price's formal education was therefore thorough in spite of the harsh laws which made it impossible for a Dissenter to enter Oxford or Cambridge. The Toleration Act of 1689 discriminated against Roman Catholics, Unitarians, and Dissenters, but in spite of this discrimination, the Dissenter had it much better in Price's day than in those of his grandfather and his own father.

Upon his graduation from Coward's Academy in 1744, Price was ready to enter the ministry. He was ordained as a minister at the age of 21. Price became a family chaplain in the home of Streatfield, a rich Dissenter who lived in Stoke Newington, a suburban area four miles north of London. Price became a friend of the family of Sir Thomas Abney, one of the founders of the Bank of England and the Lord Mayor of London in 1700, and his elderly unmarried daughter, Lady Elizabeth. Price also made friends of the Rogers family, who attended his services. With Streatfield's permission, Price preached before several congregations.

Price was able to assist the Rector at the Presbyterian chapel of Dr. Samuel Chandler, the Old Jewry Chapel. Richard's uncle, Samuel Price, was a friend of Chandler's and influenced him to accept Richard. Dr. Chandler was a Bible scholar and a powerful, forceful preacher. He was

a liberal Calvinist who tolerated Price's Arianism. Although the two men agreed on politics, and had little difference on religion, they did not get along well with each other. It was claimed that Dr. Chandler resented the popularity which Price gained with the congregation. Chandler criticized Price's "Methodist fervency" in the pulpit. Price tried so intensely to correct his mannerisms that he fell into the opposite fault of restraint. Since the congregation disliked Price's new manner of preaching, Chandler fired him. Apparently Price never bore any ill will toward Dr. Chandler. Price himself realized his lack of grace and fluency in the pulpit. His raspy voice magnified his other faults as a speaker. Yet, later in life, he became a highly successful preacher because of the excellent subject matter of his sermons, his sincerity, humility, and his earnestness of demeanor. Also his audiences were much larger because of his later fame as a writer.

Price read methodically and widely during his chaplain apprenticeship and took excellent notes on his reading. His thoroughness in taking notes was shown by the accuracy of his writings, which were very well documented.

In 1756, Price's uncle, Samuel Price, and Streatfield both died. Each man remembered Price in his will. Richard inherited Streatfield's money and his Uncle Samuel's house in Leadenhall Street. Price used his money for his bare necessities, giving extensively to charity. He also

helped finance Joseph Priestly's scientific experiments. Priestly, a fellow Dissenter, and Richard Price became life-long friends.

In 1756, Price also met Sarah Blundell. They fell in love immediately and were married on June 16, 1757, in the Anglican Church, as required by the Hardwicke Marriage Act of 1753, a law which forbade marriage outside the Anglican rites. Sarah herself had inherited several thousand pounds and her father's house in Cheapside.

Price and his bride resided on a noisy street in Hackney, two miles northeast of London. Sarah remained an Anglican even though Richard was a Dissenting minister.

In 1758, the Prices moved to Stoke Newington, where they lived for the next thirty years. He pastored the Chapel on the Green as morning and afternoon preacher. In December 1762, he accepted the additional responsibility of evening preacher to the Presbyterian congregation in Poor Jewry Lane and gave up the afternoon service at Stoke Newington. The Poor Jewry congregation was splitting up because of internal strife. A short time later, Price rejected an offer from a large Presbyterian congregation at Lewin's Mead, Bristol. His rejection was based on his wife's desire to live nearer to London and its more intellectually stimulating atmosphere.

As already mentioned, Price was not an entirely successful preacher during his early years in the ministry. His thought was excellent but he was not a good speaker and

he lacked warmth. His appearance also detracted from his effectiveness. He was short, thinly built, had a determined chin, a long large nose, and heavy, black eyebrows. His hair became gray in his thirties. He could not restore unity to the splitting congregation at the Poor Jewry Chapel and his congregation at Newington was very small. In spite of these discouraging circumstances and thought of giving up, Price remained in the ministry because of his personal assessment of its importance.

In 1770 Price accepted the post of morning preacher at the Gravel-Pit Meeting House in Hackney, a position of considerable prestige. Also it was more attractive to Price since it had a larger and more harmonious congregation than did his prior appointments. Price resigned at Poor Jewry Lane and shifted the Stoke Newington service from morning to evening. His new appointment marked Price as a prominent and leading dissenting minister. By the time of the American Revolution, his churches were always filled and overflowing. Often so many people came that they could not find standing room.

One of the young members of Price's congregation was a child named Samuel Rogers. In his book, The Poems of Samuel Rogers, Rogers writes concerning his childhood inspiration. It was an inspiration evoked by Joseph Priestley and Richard Price:

> Guides of my life! Instructors of my youth!
> Who first unveil'd the hallow'd form of Truth;
> Whose every word enlighten'd and endear'd,
> In age beloved, in poverty revered; (PSR 295-96)

> They in their glorious course the guides of Youth,
> Whose language breathed the eloquence of Truth;
> Whose life, beyond perceptive wisdom, taught,
> The great in conduct, and the pure in thought.
> (PSR 317)

Samuel Rogers also called Richard Price "one of the gentlest and purest spirits the eighteenth century produced." (ELSR 119)

Although his ministerial duties were of primary importance to him, Price nevertheless enjoyed throughout his adult life a considerable amount of leisure, which he could devote to study and to writing. In the early years of his ministerial apprenticeship, he made careful and methodical studies of Plato, Aristotle, Butler, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Hutcheson, Reid, Descartes, Cudworth, Malebranche, Clarke, and Balguy. Price was a slow, methodical worker, reading carefully rather than widely and superficially. He took elaborate notes upon his readings and pondered over them afterwards.

In 1758 the first edition of his only work in ethics, the Review of the Principal Questions of Morals, appeared. Subsequent editions were published in 1769, 1787, and 1948. Much more will be said about this book in Chapters III, IV, and V.

In 1759 Price published a pamphlet, Britain's Happiness. His Four Dissertations was published in 1767 with later editions in 1768, 1772, 1777 and 1811. That some of his works were published several times indicates the popularity of these writings. In addition to these writings

just mentioned, the diversity of Price's interests is indicated by the following titles: Observations on Reversionary Payments, published in 1771, 1772, 1773, 1783, 1792, 1803, 1812; Appeal to the Public on the National Debt, 1772; Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty, 1776; Additional Observations on Civil Liberty, 1777; Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution, 1777, 1784; Free Discussion of Materialism, 1778; A Sermon, 1779; Essay on Population, 1779; Facts: Addressed to Landholders, etc., 1780; State of Public Debts, 1783; Sermons on Christian Doctrine, 1786, 1788, 1794, 1815; Evidence for Improvement, 1787; and Discourse on the Love of Our Country, 1789.

Throughout Price's diversity of interests, as indicated by these writings, there is an implicit assumption that man has a right to liberty in the realm of morals, politics, religion, etc., a right that emanates from God himself. In his writings Price gives advice on how best to secure and maintain this "God-given freedom" in every area.

In his Review, Price was especially interested in combating the devastating, skeptical conclusions drawn by David Hume in his Inquiry into the Principles of Morals (1751). Price asserts:

> I do not care at all what follows from Mr. Hume's assertion that all our ideas are either impressions, or copies of impressions, . . . [this assertion] is, I think destitute of all proof; supposes when applied . . . the point in question. . . . (R 42-43)

Nevertheless Price, as did Kant at a later time, acknowledges his debt to Hume:

> . . . I cannot help adding . . . that I owe much to the philosophical writings of Mr. Hume which I studied early in life. Though an enemy to his skepticism, I have profited by it. By attacking with great ability, every principle of truth and reason, he put me upon examining the ground upon which I stood, and taught me not hastily to take anything for granted. (R 14)

It is interesting to note that after Hume read Price's Review, he asked the publisher Cadell to invite to dinner as many as possible of his literary opponents, including Price. The two men became inseparable friends and visited one another frequently in order to continue their philosophical discussions. Carl Cone comments that

> . . . Hume appreciated Price's efforts to blast his skepticism, for as a logician he simply had to proceed from his premises to his conclusions, and he was not at all happy over the spectacular and appalling effects of his skepticism upon both philosophy and religion. Then too, he welcomed Price's gentlemanly tone and conduct. (TBF 27)

Another interesting feature of Price's writings is his treatment of religion. In 1767, the first edition of his Four Dissertations was published by Cadell. These four were "On Providence"; "On Prayer"; "On the Reasons for Expecting That Virtuous Men Shall Meet after Death in a State of Happiness"; "On the Importance of Christianity, the Nature of Historical Evidence, and Miracles."

In "On Providence," Price attacked the Deistic view that God created the universe and stepped aside to let it go on without his intervention. Price held that

> The course of nature is nothing but his power, exerting itself everywhere according to fixt rules, in order to answer the best ends. (Four Dissertations, 173-4)

Price held that man is finite and therefore is "in the dark" concerning the purposes of Providence. (FD 160)

Price believed in and practiced prayer. Price held that prayer is a solemn address to God, the Governor of the world. He believed that in prayer we should express our gratitude, confess our sins, and request happiness for ourselves and others. We must pray regularly, Price maintained, in a "plain, serious, and simple" manner. (FD 304)

Finally, Price held that virtuous men would recognize their friends in Heaven. Thus we must live virtuously and establish friendships with good men. The whole matter of faith in a future life, itself, was miraculous. Thus Price believed that Hume's presupposition upon which he had discredited the nature of the evidence for believing in miracles should not be accepted. He held that Hume's presuppositions were themselves nothing but commitments of faith in a direction opposite to that of Price's.

Price agrees with anyone who would argue that miracles contradict the usual expectation of events. It is true for Price, however, that while miracles were improbable and could not be predicted, these events were

not impossible. Even though Hume's commitment of faith was to a contrary proposition, as Price argues, Price holds that it was equally tenable to place one's faith in the divine origin of the Bible and in the omnipotence of God. The "uniformity of nature" was an assumption without certain proof. Rather this principle of uniformity was only an assumption, based merely on a high degree of probability, according to Price. Any degree of probability, however great, could admit exceptions, Price contends.

In the first edition of the Four Dissertations Price attacked Hume's arguments as "poor sophistry." He apologized to Hume who read his book and promised to delete it from later editions. Hume received a copy of the second edition, published in 1768, and in a letter to Price he expressed "wonder at such scrupulosity in one of Mr. Price's profession," according to William Morgan's Memoirs.

Besides gaining for him the admiration of David Hume, the book also gained Price the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity from Marischal College, Aberdeen, on August 7, 1767. On April 24, 1781, Dr. Price, D.D., joined George Washington as both men received the honorary LL.D. degrees from Yale University. On January 30, 1782, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in Boston extended membership to Price. Price was elected a member of the American Philosophical Society of Philadelphia on January 28, 1785. In 1786 Harvard's President, President Joseph Willard

mailed Price a catalog of Harvard graduates in gratitude for the gift of Price's book, Observations on the American Revolution, to Harvard in 1784. In 1785, President John Wheelock of Dartmouth College also conveyed his gratitude to Price concerning Price's similar gift of a copy of this same book to Dartmouth.

No account of Price's life would be complete without some mention of his political views. Price believed that civil law should express the will of the supreme authority in the nation. The supreme authority, Price maintained, is the people which includes every individual. Thus obedience to law meant obedience to one's own will. Since it was self-determined, this would be a moral act. Furthermore, if law should express the will of the sovereign people, and if the good citizen always strove for freedom, then it would be immoral to fail to resist tyranny. Disobedience to law was wrong only when the law represented the will of the people. Obviously there are many difficulties to this revolutionary doctrine. Is it not possible that even in a given community the majority of the people might tyrannize over the minority in the expression of laws? Price considers neither the majority nor the minority. Needless to say, however, his views were received favorably both in France and in the United States by the apologists for the revolutions.

His Observations on the American Revolution strongly support the cause of American liberty in the Revolutionary War. Speaking of complete liberty Price says:

> The Author of nature has planted in the human mind principles and feelings which will operate in opposition to any theories that may seem to contradict them. . . . Overt acts of injustice, violence or defamation, come properly under the cognizance of civil powers. (OAR 30)

In a letter to Benjamin Rush dated June 26, 1783, Price says,

> . . . From a regard to the general rights of mankind and a conviction that all dominion of one country over another is usurpation and tyranny, I have always defended, as far as I have been able, the cause of America and opposed the late wicked war; and in doing this, I have gone thro' much abuse and some danger in this country. The struggle has been glorious on the part of America. . . . I think it one of the most important revolutions that has ever taken place in the world. It makes a new opening in human affairs which may prove an introduction to times of more light and liberty and virtue than have been yet known. This must be the consequence, if the United States can avoid the infection of European vices, and establish forms of government and a plan of political union that shall be perfectly favourable to a universal liberty, and prevent future wars among themselves. Should this happen, they will without doubt be the refuge of mankind, and a great part of the world will endeavour to participate in their happiness. I wish I was capable of advising and assisting them. Were I to attempt this what I should recommend, with particular earnestness, would be, a total separation of religion from state policy, and allowing an open field for improvement by a free discussion of all speculative points, and an equal protection, not only of all christians, but of all honest men of all opinions and religions. I see, with the greatest pleasure, that the new forms of government are in this respect liable to but few objections. (TBF 107-108)

In a letter to Benjamin Franklin dated April 6, 1784, Price expressed similar sentiments to those contained in

his other letters.

> Indeed I look upon the revolution there as one of the most important events in the history of the world. . . . (TBF 158)

In November 1785, when George Washington read a copy of Price's Observations on the American Revolution, he asked Benjamin Vaughan to extend his gratitude to Richard Price. The statement said,

> G. Washington presents his most respectful compliments to Dr. Price. With much thankfulness he has received, and with the highest gratification he has read, the doctor's excellent observations on the importance of the American Revolution, and the means of making it a benefit to the world. Most devoutly is it to be wished that reasoning so sound should take deep root in the minds of the revolutionists. . . . For the honorable notice of me in your address, I pray you to receive my warmest acknowledgments, and the assurances of the sincere esteem and respect which I entertain for you. (TBF 164)

Price believed that in order to preserve liberty, we must have men of virtue in governmental positions. These men must not allow national corruption to corrupt them. They must be bent on the goal of preserving freedom of expression. In addition to virtue they must have knowledge.

> Virtue without knowledge makes enthusiasts; and knowledge without virtue makes devils; but both united elevates to the top of human dignity and perfection. We must, therefore, if we would serve our country, make both these the objects of our zeal. (DLC 17)

> Ignorance is the parent of bigotry, intolerance, persecution and slavery. Inform and instruct mankind and these evils will be excluded. Remove the darkness in which they envelope the world, and their usurpation will be exposed, their power will be subverted, and the world emancipated. (DLC 24)

> If we see our country threatened with calamity, let us warn it. If we see our countrymen proud and insensible to the rights of mankind, let us admonish

> them. If the demon of corruption is poisoning the springs of legislation, and converting the securities of public liberty into instruments of slavery, let us point out to them the shocking mischief; and endeavour to recover them to a sense of their danger . . . and if no one would neglect the little in his power, much might be done. (DHC 3)

It might be said that Price's advice might be applied as effectively today as it could have been then.

It has already been remarked that Price was more than just a preacher, philosopher, and political theorist. Of great interest is his contribution to mathematics and life insurance. Mathematics had fascinated Price ever since his studies under John Eames.

Price's friend, the Reverend Thomas Bayes, died in April, 1761. Bayes had devoted himself to a particular problem in the doctrine of chances. Price completed the work and sent the finished product, the problem and its solution, to the council of the Royal Society on November 10, 1763. In December the paper was read before the society and published in the Philosophical Transactions. It was entitled "An Essay toward Solving a Problem in the Doctrine of Chances." Price's problem was as follows:

> Given the number of times in which an unknown event has happened and failed [to happen]: Required the chance that the probability of its happening in a single trial lies somewhere between any two [specified] degrees of probability that can be named. (TBF 38)

Price held that the solution gave only certain broad limits between which the probability lay and not the exact probability. It was impossible to find the exact

probability.

In 1764 Price submitted "A Demonstration of the Second Rule in the Essay towards the Solution of a Problem in the Doctrine of Chances," published in the Philosophical Transactions, Vol. LIII. This paper was an improvement over his first paper in that he attempted to narrow the limits of probability. As a result of this second paper, Price was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society on December 5, 1765. This was all the more a mark of distinction for Price since he was a Dissenter and the Royal Society seldom admitted anyone who was not an Anglican.

Most of Price's mathematical interests lay in the doctrine of probability as applied to life expectancy. His advice was sought by a group of men who were interested in the mathematical approach to life insurance. Thus he became involved with annuities, mortality tables, population, public finance and statistics.

Prior to Price there was no exact knowledge of the rates of mortality and life expectancy in England. Price's Observations on Reversionary Payments was published in 1771. Price had reviewed the literature available concerning insurance problems. His foremost authority upon this topic was Edmund Halley, the famous mathematician and astronomer who, in 1693, devised a table of mortality based upon statistics of births and funerals in Breslau from 1687 to 1691. His treatment of the subject was quite inadequate but showed an acquaintance with the major

aspects of the problem, according to Price. That the facts must be known about the life expectancies of all age groups was the most important issue involved. Before Price's book, Observations on Reversionary Payments, was published, Price had written a paper, "Observations on the Proper Method of Calculation of the Values of Reversions depending on Survivorships," which was published in the Philosophical Transactions in 1770. In his book, Price discusses the elimination of the national debt and his solution to the problem of the national debt, the "Sinking Fund," as well as the topics of annuities and reversionary payments. In the conclusion to his Observations on Reversionary Payments, Price expresses his hope that in the future more accurate records of vital statistics would be kept. These more accurate records would

> . . . give the precise law according to which human life wastes in its different stages; and thus supply the necessary data for computing accurately the values of all life-annuities and reversions. (ORP 211)

It should be pointed out that Price's contribution to the statistical side of life insurance was considerable and that his conclusion shows that he believed that if he had access to better statistical records, his method would have worked accurately. And indeed it would.

Consider Price's Table for Northampton Life Expectancy and mortality. Price calculated the life expectancy of a person born in Northampton as 28.83 years. In order to allow for migration the corrected figure was 26.41

years. His Northampton Table was used by the Equitable Insurance Company of the nineteenth century and the British government in its issuance of annuities in 1789. It was the case that Price's table overestimated the death rate during the younger ages and underestimated the death rate during the older ages. Price did not consider the large number of unregistered births and had no accurate figures on migration. Since Price's knowledge of these statistics was severely limited, it does not seem just to blame him for underestimating the average life expectancy. At the time his table was compiled, the life expectancy was most likely closer to thirty years than to 26.41. Equitable Life Insurance Company blamed Price for overcharging the English people over 2,000,000 pounds in eleven years! In fairness to Price, however, it must be said that his table was a vast improvement over previous tables. It is possible that the English people might have paid far more money unnecessarily had it not been for Price. His mistakes were due to a lack of adequate data and not to his procedures.

It is interesting to note that Price drew moral conclusions from his work in computing life expectancy. Price says that the worst scourges of mankind were

> . . . the off-spring of tenderness, the luxury, and the corruptions introduced by the vices and false refinements of civil society. . . . Let us then value more the simplicity and innocence of a life agreeable to nature; and learn to consider nothing as savageness but malevolence, ignorance, and wickedness. (ORP 280-81)

Price's own surveys of rural sections such as Holy Cross near Shrewsbury (a country parish in Brandenbury) and Pais de Vaud, as compared to urban areas such as London, Berlin, and Vienna, showed life expectancy to be greater in the rural areas. His conclusion was that man has freedom to choose in which area he would live and he says, therefore,

> Let us then, instead of charging our Maker with our miseries, learn more to accuse and reproach ourselves. (ORP 366)

Price's concept of the ideal society was a nation of small property holders and yeomen farmers, a concept similar to that held by his friend, Thomas Jefferson. People in the country were healthier than people who lived in cities for two reasons: they did not have the foulness of the city air, and the luxuriousness and irregularity of town life.

In addition to stimulation of subsequent work in the statistics of life insurance, Price's work became well-known in his own life time, with many beneficial results. Several annuity societies were dissolved because their officers discovered the inadequacy of their own plans. Many societies were reorganized and thus many investors were saved from financial losses, disappointments and hardships. In addition to attracting interest in England, Price's Observations on Reversionary Payments also attracted considerable interest in America. John Winthrop, a mathematics professor at Harvard, spoke of it and of its author in flattering terms. President Joseph

Willard, of Harvard, asked Price about the mortality rate among clergymen and professors. Price confirmed Willard's hypothesis that clergymen and teachers have a higher life expectancy than the average. He also showed that the life expectancy of the average woman is higher than that of the average man but that male births outnumber female births about 14-13. Also of some interest to the student of American History is the fact that a Continental Congressional subcommittee, composed of Hamilton, Madison, and John Rutledge, used Price as their authority on the commutation of half pay for military officers who retired. The issue was whether it was advisable to retire them with half pay for life or with full pay for six years. Eventually the United States adopted a policy of retiring its military officers with half pay for life. The records indicate that these Americans assumed their hearers to be thoroughly familiar with Price and that everyone respected his authority.

Price insisted that although unsound insurance schemes were a great evil, they were mere "bubbles" in comparison to the national debt. (ORP xx) This was the "Grand National Evil." This evil was "mortgaging posterity and funding for eternity." (ORP xx) His solution to the National Debt remained the all important "Sinking Fund." If the National Debt should remain, Price believed that it would impoverish the nation, destroy the moral fiber of the people, endanger the constitutional

system, and eliminate the spirit of liberty.

In some way this Sinking Fund was to utilize the powers of compound interest and a constant application of the annual surplus in addition to "the interest of all the sums redeemed by it, to the purpose of discharging the public debts." Both Chauncy and the Earl of Shelburne believed that Price had "clearly demonstrated how a nation that wanted to could avoid national bankruptcy." (MHSP 1903, 266-67)

In spite of having many friends on both sides of the Atlantic, Price also had his enemies, who were opposed to his support for the American and French Revolutions. Years after Price was dead, attacks were still being made upon him. In 1797 the Anti-Jacobin published the following poem:

> Let our vot'ries then follow the glorious advice,
> In the Gunpowder Legacy left us by Price,
> Inflammable matter to place grain by grain
> And blow up the State with the torch of Tom Paine.
> (TBF 197)

John Wolcot, who published under the pen name of Peter Pindar, wrote,

> There, in respect to Kings not over-nice,
> That Revolution-sinner Doctor Price:
> Whose Labours, in a most uncourtly style,
> Win not, like gentle Burke's, the Royal smile.
> (TBF 197)

Two months after Price's death, Horace Walpole wrote of the brutalities inflicted upon the royal family after the flight to Varennes as cruelties

> . . . which nobody but the French and Dr. Price could be so shameless as to enjoy. (TBF 198)

Of course, in fairness to Price, it must be said that he did not know of the excesses of the French Revolution. Price was far from being insensitive to man's inhumanity to man. This fact was apparently overlooked by those critics who were writing under the heat of overwrought and inflamed emotions. Consider another famous critic, the Rev. John Wesley. He was considerably kinder to Richard Price when he said that "Dr. Price is a very sincere man but sincerely wrong," and a man who "wrote with an upright intention." (TBF 83) Wesley criticized Price for the latter's support of the American Revolution. Wesley believed that since the colonists had religious freedom to worship in the established churches, and as much representation as many others throughout England, which was none, they had no just complaint for which to revolt. Fortunately Price's concept of liberty went much farther than that envisaged by John Wesley.

It must be said that the sentiments expressed by those in favor of Price by far outnumbered the others. This was especially true in France and in the United States. He was offered honorary citizenship in the United States, an offer which he rejected. In death as in life it is readily apparent that Price was a figure of considerable controversy.

In February, 1791, while conducting a funeral service at Bunhill-Fields, Price caught a cold. In spite of his cold he conducted another funeral and his cold became more acute. On Sunday, February 20, 1791, Price preached his last sermon. The following Wednesday he had a high fever. In spite of all that his physician could do to help, Price became increasingly ill. His friend Joseph Priestly and others lamented that Price had neglected his cold in favor of preaching. Priestly, on March 11, rejoiced that Price was in no immediate danger. On March 25 there was hope that Price would recover. The London Chronicle for March 26-29 stated:

> Dr. Price lies dangerously ill at his house in Hackney. His complaint is a strangury. (TBF 199)

Priestly was worried when in April there seemed less chance to recover. Horace Walpole wrote that

> Dr. Price is dying . . . fortunate omen . . . for those who hope to die in their beds too. (TBF 199)

On April 18, 1791, Price became much weaker and shortly after midnight he died, "praising God for his goodness." (TBF 200) Contrary to his expressed desires, Price's friends gave him a public funeral. Joseph Priestley was one of his pallbearers and a dissenter named Rev. Kippis preached at the cemetery. On May 1, 1791, Priestley delivered the funeral oration at the Gravel-Pit Meeting House.

Commenting on these sermons, Carl Cone says,

> Their eulogies, like those that came from various societies in France, seem extravagant, but they were not unmerited, despite the verdict of history. For, unless he has the rare qualities of a Franklin, and some good fortune, a person such as Price is hardly likely to catch public fancy and win a hero's laurels in a revolutionary age. (TBF 200)

CHAPTER III

PRICE'S EPISTEMOLOGICAL THEORY

> There is nothing in this Treatise, which I wish more I could engage the reader's attention to, or which, I think, will require it more, than the first Chapter, and particularly the second Section of it. If I have failed here, I have failed in my chief design. . . . The point which I have endeavoured to prove in the last section of the Chapter I have mentioned, must appear so plain to those who have not much studied the question about the foundation of Morals, or who have not before viewed it in the light in which I have placed it, that, I fear, it will be difficult for them not to think that I have trifled in bestowing so much pains upon it. And indeed my own conviction is so strong on this point, that . . . it should be rendered necessary to use many arguments to shew, that right and wrong, or moral good and evil, signify somewhat really true of actions, and not merely sensations. (R 3-4)[1]

This is Price's original estimate of the seventeen pages in his only work in philosophy, his Review of the Principal Questions in Morals, the first edition, which contains his epistemological theory. In order to determine the origin of our ideas of right and wrong, Price first discusses the origin of ideas in general; he then applies that general theory to form an account of moral ideas in particular. In perhaps no other philosopher does the relationship of ethics and epistemology come out more clearly than in Richard Price's first edition of the Review.

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[1]The Preface from which this is taken is omitted from the original Third Edition. (R 3) Reasons for its omission are to be given later. (See pp. 53, 61.)

Price's epistemology insists that the senses are not the sole source of new ideas, but that reason, or intellect, or understanding, also contribute such ideas.

Price begins his argument by specifically taking exception to John Locke. He argues in support of his position by criticizing the "commonly held opinion" that "SENSATION AND REFLECTION have been commonly reckoned the sources of all our ideas: . . ." (R 17) Locke, who represents this view, was the object of Price's criticism because he was possibly the most prominent British proponent of this position and also because Price admires Locke's "excellent Essay." (R 17)

Price maintains that Locke is not

> . . . sufficiently clear or explicit on this subject. It is hard to determine exactly what he meant by sensation and reflection. (R 17)

Price does not overlook Locke's explanation of sensation and reflection. If by sensation

> . . . we understand, the effects arising from the impressions made on our minds by external objects; and by the latter, the notice the mind takes of its own operations; it will be impossible to derive some of the most important of our ideas from them. (R 17-18)

At this point, by implication Price points to another source of ideas. Why should these two faculties be considered the sole source?

Price emphasizes the fact that he is concerned "here almost constantly" (R 18n) with simple ideas and their origination. He is not concerned with complex ideas which

may be the product of imagination operating upon simple ideas otherwise derived.

In his criticism of Locke, Price says that Locke might have meant by sensation and reflection either (a) that all simple ideas are "derived immediately from these two sources . . ." (R 18) or (b) that these two so-called sources "furnish us with all these subjects, materials and occasions of knowledge, comparison, and internal perception." (R 18) Price gives the following arguments against these two possible interpretations.

Price argues that the proposition that all simple ideas are "derived immediately from these two sources," must be incorrect because some of the most important of our simple ideas cannot be thought of as arising in sensation, nor even in reflection. Price holds that both reflection and

> Sense presents particular forms to the mind; but cannot rise to any general ideas. It is the intellect that examines and compares the presented forms, that rises above individuals to universal and abstract ideas; . . ." (R 19)

The proposition that these two so-called sources "furnish us with all these subjects, materials and occasions of knowledge, comparison and internal perception," (R 18) may at first glance and in some manner of speaking be true. Perhaps initially these two sources do provide ". . . us with all these subjects, materials and occasions of knowledge, comparison and internal perception." (R 18) Price avers, "This, however, by no means renders them in

any proper sense, the sources of all our ideas." (R 18) Although Price holds that the mind is possessed of another faculty, namely, the understanding, he notes that it is not apparent that Locke considers the mind to be possessed of any other faculty than sensation and reflection. Only by the faculty of the understanding do we discern truth, compare all the objects of thought, and judge of them. But even more important is the fact that the understanding "is a spring of new ideas." (R 18)

Let us consider first that the understanding is a faculty distinct from those of sensation and reflection, and second that the understanding "is a spring of new ideas," (R 18) all of which are simple.

At the outset, Price largely ignores any possibility that the faculty of the understanding might be identified with that of reflection or of imagination. He argues mainly that the understanding is distinct from the faculty of sensation. But his disregard of the other possibility does not continue to the end, as we shall note after a consideration of the preliminary arguments by which he plans to establish that the understanding is distinct from sensation.

In his consideration of the imagination, Price claims it to be "a faculty allied to sense." (R 21) Price also says that "All that can be pictured in the imagination, as well as that we take notice of by the senses, is indeed particular." (R 30) The understanding,

in contrast to the imagination, is concerned with the general and abstract.

In reverting to reflection, he observes that he has

> . . . not said that we have no idea of power, except from the understanding. Activity and self-determination are as essential to spirit, as the contrary are to matter; and therefore inward consciousness gives us the idea of that particular sort of power which they imply. (R 26)

And later, when Price considers the possibility of classifying ideas into "original" and "subsequent," he says,

> The former are conveyed to us immediately by our organs of sense, and our reflexion upon ourselves. (R 38)

In both cases, he likens reflection to sensation and contrasts it with the understanding.

Before we consider what ideas Price holds to originate in the understanding, it is necessary to clarify the kind of faculty Price considers the understanding to be.

Price speaks of two distinct acts of the understanding, intuition and deduction. (R 18n, 40) He also insists that it is the intuition, rather than deduction, which is the source of ideas, while

> Tis plain, on the contrary, that those writers, who argue against referring our moral ideas to reason, have generally the latter only in view. (R 18n)

Both of these acts of the understanding, however, are grounds for belief. In addition to intuition and deduction (argumentation), Price enumerates feeling as a third ground for belief. (R 97-98) From feeling (immediate consciousness) ". . . we acquire the knowledge of our own

existence, and of the several operations, passions, and sensations of our minds." (R 97) Finally, Price adds memory. (R 97)

In describing intuition, the second ground of belief, Price says,

> The second ground of belief is intuition: by which I mean the mind's survey of its own ideas, and the relations between them, and the notice it takes of what is or is not true and false, consistent and inconsistent, possible and impossible in the natures of things. It is to this, as has been explained at large in the first chapter, we owe our belief of all self-evident truth; our ideas of the general, abstract affections and relations of things; our moral ideas, and whatsoever else we discover, without making use of any process of reasoning.--It is on this power of intuition, essential, in some degree or other, to all rational minds, that the whole possibility of all reasoning is founded. To it the last appeal is ever made. Many of its perceptions are capable, by attention, of being rendered more clear; and many of the truths discovered by it, may be illustrated by an advantageous representation of them, or by being viewed in particular lights; but seldom will admit of proper proof.--Some truths there must be, which can appear only by their own light, and which are incapable of proof; otherwise nothing could be proved, or known; in the same manner as, if there were no letters, there could be no words, or if there were no simple undefinable ideas, there could be no complex ideas.--I might mention many instances of truths discernible no other way than intuitively, which learned men have strangely confounded and obscured, by supposing them subjects of reasoning and deduction. One of the most important instances, the subject of this treatise affords us; and another we have, in our notions of the necessity of a cause of whatever begins to exist, and our general ideas of power and connexion; And, sometimes, reason has been ridiculously employed to prove even our own existence. (R 97-98)

Whenever ". . . intuition fails us, . . .", (R 98) we can turn to deduction (or argumentation). (R 98) Deduction, however, cannot reveal new truths. New truths

originate only in intuition. (R 18n, 40) All knowledge not ascribed either to feeling or intuition is to be imputed to argumentation. (R 99) Beliefs, Price holds, admit of degrees of certainty, whether based on deduction or on intuition. Even intuition ". . . is sometimes clear and perfect, and sometimes faint and obscure." (R 99)

> Intuition is not always incompatible with argumentation, though, when perfect, it supersedes it; and when imperfect, is often incapable of receiving any aid from it; and, therefore, in such cases, ought to be rested entirely on its own evidence. Every process of reasoning is composed of intuitions, and all the several steps in it are so many distinct intuitions; which, when clear and unquestionable, produce demonstration and certainty; when otherwise, give rise to opinion and probability. Nothing would be a greater advantage to us, in the search of truth, than taking time often to resolve our reasonings into their constituent intuitions; and to observe carefully, what light and evidence attend each, and in what manner, and with what degree of force, they infer the conclusion. Such a custom of analysing our sentiments, and tracing them to their elements and principles, would prevent much error and confusion, and shew us what degree of assent is due to the conclusions we receive, and on what foundation our opinions really stand. (R 100)

To continue, we return to the way in which Price demonstrates the mode of interaction of experience and intuition in argumentation or deduction. He refers us to the discovery of the existence of matter.

> Immediate feeling discovers to us our own organs, and the modifications of them. These the soul perceives by being present with them.--We have the ideas of matter, and of a material world; and we, therefore, see intuitively the possibility of their existence; for possibility of existing is implied in the idea of every object; what is impossible being nothing, and no object of reflexion. We are conscious of certain impressions made upon us. . . . We touch a solid substance, and feel resistance. We see certain images drawn on our organs of sight, and know they are acted

> upon by <u>something</u>. What is more incredible, than that all the notices conveyed to us by our senses, and all the impressions made upon them corresponding in all respects to the suppositions of an external world, and confirming one another in numberless ways, should be entirely visionary and delusive? . . . Analogy and intuition . . . immediately inform us what is fact, and produce conviction which we cannot resist.--In short it is self-evident that a <u>material world</u>, answerable to our ideas, and to what we feel and see, is <u>possible</u>. We have no reason to think that it does not exist. (R 101-102)

In the same vein, Price says,

> All ideas imply the <u>possibility</u> of the existence of correspondent objects; and our belief of the <u>actual</u> existence of the objects of sense, we may resolve . . . into impressions on our senses <u>forcing</u> belief at the moment of the impression, in a manner we cannot explain. (R 281, Note C)

It might be said that Price fails to recognize sufficiently the <u>interaction</u> and <u>mode</u> of interaction of experience and intuition in the argumentation or deduction. This failure is especially applicable to the interaction and mode of interaction of feeling, intuition and deduction (argumentation). What is initially considered to be self-evident often requires further confirmation and/or restrictive modifications by subsequent feeling and deduction (argumentation). The final judgment may contain elements of each of the three grounds for belief and cannot be referred exclusively to any one of these grounds. Nevertheless, Price's failure at this point should not be taken as evidence that his epistemological theory has no merit. His ethical theory, for which he attempts to lay the epistemological groundwork, may have value in spite of shortcomings of his epistemological theory of intuition.

Also, his employment of the grounds for belief in an attempt to refute skepticism has been of historical interest because similar attempts have been made from the time of Socrates and the Sophists. Price's ultimate appeal in Note C, as will be seen later in this chapter, is to God, who is responsible, in some way, for all our knowledge.

In continuing his employment of the grounds for belief in connection with a general refutation of skepticism, Price holds that it is human nature to believe favorable evidence and discount the unfavorable evidence. That one doubts presupposes evidence which is being doubted.

> Doubting supposes evidence; and there cannot, therefore, be any such thing as doubting, whether evidence itself is to be regarded. A man who doubts of the veracity of his faculties, must do it on their own authority; that is, at the very time, and in the very act of suspecting them, he must trust them. As nothing is more plainly self-destructive, than to attempt to prove by reason, that reason deserves no credit, or to assert that we have reason for thinking, that there is no such thing as reason. (R 92)

Any man who argues against the veracity of his faculties must trust them in order to impugn them. This is a contradiction which is "self-destructive."

A third argument takes the following form:

> Let it be considered then farther, that it is impossible what is not true, should be perceived. Now, it is certain, that there is a great variety of truths which we think we perceive; and, the whole question consequently, is, whether we really perceive them, or not. The existence of absolute truth is supposed in the objection. Suspicion of our faculties and fear of being deceived evidently imply it; nor can we deny, that it exists, without contradicting ourselves; for it would be to assert, that it is true, that nothing is true. The same may be said of doubting whether

> there is any thing true; for doubting denotes a hesitation or suspense of the mind about the truth of what is doubted of; and, therefore, a tacit acknowledgment that there is somewhat true. . . . So impossible is universal scepticism. (R 93)

Consider the situation of one who should announce, "Truth is a myth"--and by so saying imply that we ought to believe what he says is an example of truth, i.e. is true. In general, this pragmatic predicament is that of one whose attitude in announcing or resolving or proposing is negated by the content of his announcement or resolution of what is set forth as proposed. The imperative to avoid self-contradiction and, by implication, to accept analytic statements whose contradictory is always a self-contradiction is the simplest form of it. The laws of logic are recognizable by this fact, that the negate of any one of them is a self-contradiction. The thought is that in connection with imperatives of doing, pragmatic contradiction is the counterpart of purely logical contradiction. Pragmatic contradiction is the more general form of the predicament of the skeptical repudiation of rational imperatives. Also purely logical contradiction is itself a form of pragmatic contradiction, as will appear when thinking and proving are considered as types of activity directed to a purpose.

Price also uses the following argument:

> . . . there may be a set of rational beings in a state of necessary and total deception, and to whom nothing of truth and reality ever appears; though this be absolutely impossible, and the same as I have before observed, with supposing them to be void of

> all intellectual perception, and inconsistent with the very idea of their existence, as thinking and reasonable beings; yet granting this, we cannot help thinking, that it is not the case with us; and that such beings can by no means think and perceive as we do. . . . What things seem to us, we must take them to be; and whatever our faculties inform us of, we must give credit to.--A great deal, therefore, of the scepticism, which some have professed and defended, can be nothing but affectation and self-deception. (R 97)

Thus Price holds that we think and act in light of the belief that something can be known. If we did not have this justification, the belief that something can be known, why should we act or think? Thus it is necessary that there be grounds of knowledge.

Price also considers the argument that, if it is true that a person is mistaken once, it may be possible that he is always mistaken. Price's rejoinder to this skeptical argument takes the following form:

> Do not you really know, that you are not deceived, when you think, that if equals are taken from equals, the remainders will be equal? Can you entertain the least doubt, whether the body of the sun is bigger than it appears to the naked eye? or is it any reason for questioning this, that you once may have thought otherwise? Is it reasonable, because you have judged wrong in some cases, through ignorance, haste, prejudice, or partial views, to suspect that you judge wrong in all cases, however clear? Because, through bodily indisposition or other causes, our senses sometimes misrepresent outward objects to us, are they for ever to be discredited? . . . Because one man imposed upon us, are we to conclude that no faith is due to any human testimony? or because our memories have deceived us with respect to some events, must we question whether we remember right what happened the last moment? (R 95-96)

Price exclaims that

> Conclusions of this sort, (strange as they may seem) have been actually drawn; and it has been asserted,

> that because in adding together a long series of numbers, we are liable to err, we cannot be sure that we are right in the addition of the smallest numbers; and, therefore not in reckoning twice two to be four. (R 96 n)

This, and a second argument, that certainty diminishes to nothing by compounding the fallibilities of experience and the fallibilities of our faculties, Price calls strange reasoning. Price says that it

> . . . proves just the reverse of what was intended by it. For let it be acknowledged, that the consideration of the fallibility of our understandings, and the instances in which they have deceived us, necessarily diminishes our assurance of the rectitude of our sentiments; the subsequent reflection on the uncertainty attending this judgment which we make of our faculties to its first strength, our original assurance; because the more precarious a judgment or probability unfavorable to another appears, the less must be its effect in weakening it. (R 96 fn.)

Price supplements his argument with another comment:

> How trifling, then is it to alledge against any thing, for which there appears to be an overbalance of evidence, that, did we know more of the case, perhaps we might see equal evidence for the contrary. It is always a full answer to this, to say; perhaps not.--What we are wholly unacquainted with, may, for aught we know, make as much for any of our opinions, as against them. (R 96-97 fn)

Price also argues that our perceptions "must correspond to the truth of things." (R 94) Error is due, not to perception, but to the lack of perception. Perceptions always indicate, i.e. "correspond to the truth of things," and therefore, indicate knowledge--not error.

The second ground for belief, intuition, is further treated by Price in a Neoplatonic fashion (similar to

Cudworth's treatment of intuition)[1] by the use of the analogy of the directness of intuition to sight:

> As bodily sight discovers to us visible objects, so does the understanding (the eye of the mind, and infinitely more penetrating) discover to us intelligible objects; and thus, in a like manner with bodily vision, becomes the inlet of new ideas.--
> 'Tis obvious, that the ideas now meant presuppose certain subjects of contemplation, of whose natures, connexions, and qualities they are perceptions. (R 38)

It has been mentioned earlier that Price's epistemological inquiry is motivated by his desire to lay the foundation for a claim that our ideas of right and wrong originate in reason or the understanding, instead of in a "moral sense." To what extent Price regards speculative and moral reason as two distinct exercises of the same faculty is indicated by the following remark:

> The understanding may be very properly considered, as either moral or speculative. Our speculative understanding is evidently capable of infinite improvement; and therefore our moral understanding must be so likewise; for these being only different views of the same faculty, must be inseparably connected. . . . (R 225)

Like the Cambridge Platonists, Price takes the analogy between understanding (intuition) and sense (e.g. bodily sight) very seriously.

> . . . it is plain that one sense cannot judge of the objects of another; the eye, for instance of harmony, or the ear of colours. The faculty therefore which views and compares the objects of all the senses, cannot be sense. (R 20)

> . . . the power which judges of the perceptions of the senses, and contradicts their decisions; which discovers the nature of the sensible qualities of

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[1] The Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality (Dublin, John Donne: 1731), pp. 25-40.

> objects, enquires into their causes, and distinguishes between them, must be a power within us which is superior to sense. (R 19)

One side of the analogy is that the senses make decisions as well as present sensible ideas. The sense of sight, for example, presents the particular color brown and also decides that this color is located in space or in this particular desk. The decision-making thus approaches judgment.

Now consider the other part of the analogy that the understanding (intuition) is "a source of ideas." Price holds that the understanding judges. It judges by affirming and denying certain propositions. These propositions are composed of terms into which they are analyzable. While some terms originate in sense, imagination, or reflection, other terms, the general and the abstract, originate in the intuition.

Price considers general and abstract ideas, and others also, as having their origin or source in the understanding.

Other ideas of which Price claims the intuition to be the source are extension, duration, necessity, possibility, solidity, space, causation, and substance. (R 21-27) These ideas are not derived from experience. They form the constituents of certain propositions whose truth can be determined a priori. (R 35) It is interesting that Raphael comments that ". . . Price is really groping toward the problem of the synthetic a priori proposition." (R xvi) Raphael adds that "Price asked us to note

'that by ideas, I mean here almost constantly simple ideas, or original and uncompounded perceptions of the mind.' But his list of physical notions strays far from this original intention." (R xvii)

Price thinks that it is quite easy to discover the true origin of the ideas which he discusses. (R 29) Intuition is their source. It would be difficult to "try to deduce them from the common sources . . ." However, ". . . this is the very conclusion some have drawn." (R 29) These "common sources" (according to these mistaken writers), include sense, reflection and experience of constant conjunction.

Since the senses fail to present us with any of these ideas, and since we not only have such ideas, but find that these ideas involve necessity, their origin must lie in some faculty other than the senses. Price joins the Cambridge Platonists, Ralph Cudworth and Henry More, in holding that these concepts of cause and effect and these other ideas, space and duration, etc., are presupposed in the mind's judgment of sense perception and not derived from them.

We have noticed that Price opened his consideration of epistemology by taking exception to the position of Locke. He holds that it is absolutely necessary to establish his view that the understanding contributes new ideas, which include moral ideas. Price's attack is first directed against the empiricist contention that general

ideas are constructed from particulars by comparing, connecting, and generalizing. Following Plato's Theaetetus and Cudworth's The True Intellectual System of the Universe, Price holds the highest type of knowledge is concerned with archetypes, which Cudworth calls universals and Plato calls forms. Whereas sense experience applies mainly to the less perfect knowledge of particulars, "Instinct is a still lower and more imperfect means of supplying the same defect of knowledge." (R 28-29) But with respect to universal ideas,

> . . . if we have no such ideas, or if they denote nothing real besides the qualities of our own minds; I need not say into what an abyss of scepticism we are plunged. (R 29)

Furthermore,

> . . . our abstract ideas . . . most properly . . . belong to the understanding. They are, undoubtedly, essential to all its operations; every act of judgment implying some abstract or universal idea. Were they formed in the mind in the manner generally represented, it seems unavoidable to conceive that it has them at the very time it is supposed to be employed in forming them. Thus; from any particular idea of a triangle, it is said we can frame the general one; but does not the very reflexion said to be necessary to this, on a greater or lesser triangle, imply, that the general idea is already in the mind? How else should it know how to go to work, or what to reflect on? (R 29-30)

David Hume held that when we discovered a resemblance among several objects that we often behold we may apply the same name to each object regardless of the differences we may observe in the degree of their quantity and quality. (Treatise, I, VII) Price's rejoinder stipulates,

> That the universality consists in the idea; and not merely in the name as used to signify a number of particulars resembling that which is the immediate object of reflexion, is plain; because, was the idea to which the name answers and which it recalls into the mind, only a particular one, we could not know to what other ideas to apply it, or what particular objects had the resemblance necessary to bring them within the meaning of the name. A person, in reading over a mathematical demonstration, certainly is conscious that it relates to somewhat else, than just that precise figure presented to him in the diagram. But if he knows not what else, of what use can the demonstration be to him? How is his knowledge enlarged by it? Or how shall he know afterwards to what to apply it? (R 30)

Thus a particular idea is simply incapable of representing other particulars of the same species. Should resemblance be considered a condition for subsumption in a class, it may be said that a universal concept must be present to determine the degree of resemblance of a particular image for its inclusion in a class. The condition of subsumption is not a matter of mere caprice. Price charges that Hume (R 29n) and other nominalists who deny that we have any abstract ideas, run into "a capital error" in that they "confound the understanding with the imagination and deny reality and possibility to every thing the latter cannot conceive, however clear and certain to the former." (R 31-32) The imagination is closely allied to the senses whereas the understanding is distinct.

> All that can be pictured in the imagination, as well as all that we take notice of by our senses, is indeed particular. And whenever any general notions are present in the mind, the imagination, at the same time, is commonly engaged in representing to itself some of the particulars comprehended under them. But it would be a very strange inference from hence,

> that we have none but particular ideas. As well almost might we conclude, that we have no other notion of anything than of its name, because they are so associated in our minds that we cannot separate them; or of the sun, than as a white, bright circle, such as we see in the heavens, because this image is apt to accompany all our thoughts of it. (R 30)

To sum up Price's argument against empirical views on universals, we can do no better than to quote Price as he refers to Cudworth with obvious approval:

> (1) The opinion that universal ideas are formed out of particular ones, by separating common from individuating circumstances, this writer, . . . [Cudworth] rejects. . . . And the other opinion (2) that they are only <u>singular</u> ideas annexed to a <u>common</u> term; or, in other words, names without any meaning; (held formerly by those, who were therefore called <u>Nominalists</u>, and of late revived). . . is . . . false. . . . (R 31)

Thus Price holds that neither Locke in the first case, nor Hume (and Berkeley) in the second case, are able to explain the concept of "resemblance" within the framework of their own epistemological theories. According to Price, universal concepts must be independent of the senses and of necessity originate in the understanding.

After having enumerated several ideas which he believes to originate in the understanding, Price classified all simple ideas. (R 38) Before proceeding with Price's classification of ideas, however, it seems appropriate to turn to a couple of other matters pertinent to a better understanding of Price.

Raphael believes that although Price rejects nominalism, Price ". . . is not . . . prepared to embrace a

theory of innate ideas such as Cudworth's." (R xiv) That Raphael has incorrectly interpreted Price at this point will become obvious as we continue. It will be seen that Price adheres quite closely to Cudworth. Cudworth's epistemology is summed up by Fowler and Wilson in a short statement sufficient for our purpose in the Principles of Morals.

> Cudworth's system admits of a brief and easy statement. The main thesis of his 'Treatise concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality' is that there exist in the mind of man a number of ideas . . . entirely independent of sense and matter, not derived from the external world, either directly or indirectly, but part of the furniture, so to speak, of the mind itself. These ideas are immutable, for they are common to all minds, being of the very nature or essence of mind, so that it would be a contradiction in terms to speak of any mind as being without them. Moreover, they are eternal, for they have existed from all eternity in the mind of God, even when there was no other mind in existence. Amongst these ideas are the ideas of 'Moral Good and Evil, Just and Unjust,' which are, therefore, eternal and immutable, not 'alterable by mere Will or Opinion,' even though that Will be the Will of God himself. (PM 37)

To support his misinterpretation of Price's relationship to Cudworth, Raphael also calls attention (R xv) to Price's footnote:

> According to Dr. Cudworth, abstract ideas are implied in the cognoscitive power of the mind; which, he says, contains in itself virtually (as the future plant or tree is contained in the seed) general notions of all things, which are exerted by it, or unfold and discover themselves as occasions invite and proper circumstances occur. This, no doubt, many will very freely condemn as whimsical and extravagant. I have, I own, a different opinion of it; but yet, I should not care to be obliged to defend it. It is what he thought, Plato meant by making all knowledge to be Reminiscence; and in this, as well as other respects, he makes the human mind to resemble the Divine; to which the ideas and comprehension of all things are

> essential, and not to be derived from any foreign source. . . . what is true of mind in general, and particularly of that first and all-disposing mind from which all inferior minds sprung and of which they participate, 'tis reasonable to think true, in a lower degree also of these inferior minds, and of their ideas and knowledge. (R 31)

Although Price is in complete agreement with Cudworth, (R 30-31) the theory of innate ideas had become so unpopular in his own time, mainly by reason of Locke's attack upon innate ideas, that Price did not care to be obliged to propose and defend the theory of innatism. (R 31)

If the Neoplatonic position should be fitted to the view that ideas are immediate objects of the understanding when it thinks, then what the mind sees are its own ideas,[1] its own modifications, and the relations which these ideas have to each other such as certain truths or propositions.

Price not only greatly admired Cudworth but also Dr. Thomas Reid, D.D., a persistent and very early critic of Hume. In certain instances, however, Price objects to both Hume and Reid. In one instance, Price exclaims, "I am always mortified when I find, that my sentiments are different from those of . . ." Dr. Reid. (Note C, R 280) Note C begins by quoting Price's footnote on page 39.

> 'It should be observed, that I have all along endeavoured to avoid speaking of an idea as an image in the mind of the object we think of. A writer of

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[1]For Price, 'idea' has two uses. (1) Its proper use is to signify the act of apprehending, which act is a modification of the mind and (2) Its improper use, but a use difficult to get along without, is 'idea' as the object of apprehension. (R 39n)

deep reflexion has charged this language with laying the foundation of all modern scepticism. See Dr. Reid's Enquiry into the human mind on the principles of common Sense.'

I am always mortified when I find, that my sentiments are different from those of the writer to whom I have now referred. Mr. Hume makes the immediate object of the mind in perception to be the same with perception itself, and thus annihilates all external existence. Dr. Reid, if I understand him, asserts (in his Enquiry, &c. and also in his Essays on the intellectual powers of man) that there is no such object, and thus seems to me to annihilate all perception. When we investigate the properties of triangles or circles, are there not objects, independent of our minds, then present to them? We call these objects ideas. This word generally signifying the apprehension or conception of an object, it is improperly used to signify the object itself of conception; but the poverty of language obliging us to this, it must be excused; and care must be taken not to be misled by it, as I think Mr. Hume and some other writers have been.

In such instances we call, I have said, the objects present to our minds, ideas. If ideas have no existence, and nothing is present to our minds when we contemplate these objects, does it not follow that we then contemplate nothing? The same enquiry may be made with respect to our perception of external objects. These objects themselves not being present, if perceived, they must be perceived by ideas of them. Nor will it follow from hence, that we can have no assurance of the existence of external objects. All ideas imply the possibility of the existence of correspondent objects; and our belief of the actual existence of the objects of sense, we may resolve into impressions on our senses forcing belief at the moment of the impression, in a manner we cannot explain. And this may be done to more advantage on the supposition of ideas than without it. For scepticism seems to be less favoured by supposing that, in perception by our senses, there is something distinct from the mind and independent of it really perceived, than by supposing that there is nothing then perceived. . . . The truth . . . would carry us higher than we are willing to go, and imply a presence of the Deity with us and dependence upon him more close and constant and necessary, than we are apt to suspect or can easily believe. (R 281, Note C)

It is explicit that, in R 39n, Price rejects the definition of idea as "the object of conception" in favor of the definition of idea as "the apprehension or conception of an object." This is the act of apprehending or conceiving. In the long quotation from R 281, Note C, he seems to reject Reid's view that there is no object, properly speaking, but only the mind's act. So Price prefers to call this object an idea in this note. These "ideas imply the possibility of the existence of correspondent objects: and our belief of the actual existence of the objects of sense, . . ." and impressions force "belief at the moment of the impression. . . ." His appeal to Deity, in the last sentence of Note C, reinforces the interpretation of Price as a Neoplatonist. It would seem that Price appeals to God as the cause for our belief in the actual existence of the objects of sense. Furthermore, Price would agree with the view of Plotinus and Cudworth that each finite human mind is a copy of the divine mind and that certain particular universal ideas of the human mind are replicas of the archetypal ideas in the divine mind. These replicas in the finite human mind are elicited from potential to actual ideas through sense experience. And since God's existence is necessary, i.e. the divine mind which constitutes the world of ideas is a necessary existence, and each mind's existence is merely contingent, Price is able to conclude that the "presence of the Deity with us and dependence upon him [is] more close and constant and necessary, than we are apt to

suspect or can easily believe." (Note C, R 281) The implication is that knowledge of ideas would be impossible without Deity, even though he does not explicitly say this.

To reiterate, we have noticed the stress with which Price emphasizes our dependence upon Deity and his interesting definition and uses of 'idea.' Before turning to Price's classification of ideas, Price makes another interesting comment on the definition of 'idea.'

Although Price prefers not to call sensations ideas, but to restrict the definition of idea "to the mind's conception or notice of any object.", (R 39n) he still follows the tradition of calling it one kind of idea. (R 38) This we shall note in his classification of ideas.

Furthermore, Price has tried ". . . to avoid speaking of an idea as an image in the mind of an object we think of." (R 39) There is no image of the object, only the act of imaging, i.e. the act of conceiving. In sensation, secondary and tertiary qualities exist only in the mind--not in external objects. Price's definition of idea is similar to Kant's differentiation between percept and concept. His definition of idea excludes what Kant would call "percept" and restricts the definition to the counterpart of the Kantian concept.

It is interesting to note that Lennart Aqvist is in agreement with our analysis of Price's definition of idea. Says Aqvist,

> Price distinguishes the following four senses in which the term "idea" had been used in his time:
> (Def I1) I is an idea of something, x=def I is an awareness of x.
> (Def I2) I is an idea of x=def I is a (mental) image of x.
> (Def I3) I is an idea=def I is the object or content of a sensation (e.g., a certain colour, taste, or sound).
> (Def I4) I is an idea=def I is the immediate object of the mind in thinking, of an act of thinking.
>
> Price emphasizes that he takes the term "idea" in the first sense, defined in (Def I1), this being "its most just and proper sense." (MPRP 58)

Hume, Berkeley, and Locke are represented by "Def I2," "Def I3," and "Def I4," respectively. Aqvist also points out that "Awareness of x," may "mean, either, (i) "occurrent or actual awareness of x," or (ii) dispositional awareness of x," i.e. "disposition to be actually aware of x." Finally, Aqvist says that Price observes that "the proper division of our ideas would be, according to their different objects . . . (R 39n, MPRP 59)

In his division of ideas, Price proposes two, independent, methods of classification of simple ideas.

His first classification is the division of simple ideas into "original and subsequent." (R 38)

I. Simple ideas are divisible into the following categories:

   A. Original ideas ". . . are conveyed to us immediately by our organs of sense, and our reflexion upon ourselves." (R 38)

   B. Subsequent ideas ". . . presuppose other ideas, and arise from the perception of their natures and relations." (R 38)

Without explaining why, Price declares, "But I prefer, on several accounts, . . ." the second scheme of division. Some conjectures on Price's preference will be made later.

II. Simple ideas are divisible into the following categories:

A. "First, Into those implying nothing real without the mind; that is, nothing real besides its own affections and sensations." (R 38)

1. "The First, Into those that denote the immediate effects of impressions on the bodily senses without supposing any previous ideas, as all tastes, smells, colours, &c. . . ." (R 38)

2. ". . . and those that arise upon occasion only of other ideas; as the effects in us of considering order, happiness, and the beauties of poetry, sculpture, painting, &c." (R 38)

B. "Secondly, Into those which denote something distinct from sensation; and imply real and independent existence and truth." (R 38)

1. "The Second class may be subdivided into such as denote the real properties of external objects, and the actions and passions of the mind: . . ." (R 38)

2. ". . . And those, which I have described as derived immediately from intelligence." (R 39)

Price concludes his classification of ideas with the explanation that

> By the notices conveyed to the mind through the organs of the body, or its observation of the necessary attendants and concomitants of certain sensations and impressions, it perceives the figure, extension, motion, and other primary qualities of material substances. By contemplating itself, it perceives the properties of spiritual substances, volition, consciousness, memory, &c. (R 38-39)

Several comments might be made on Price's classification of ideas. Both schemes of classification, I and II,

indicate a division of ideas into original and subsequent. This division is explicitly mentioned by Price in I. It is implicit in IIA. It might be maintained that, if Price had really thought his theory through, his third edition would not admit of the division of original from subsequent and of the division of simple from complex. It seems that every idea would be simple and probably original. But this clearly is not what Price intended. This leads us to consider, in the main, Price's theory as he intended it to be interpreted, and as it was expounded, in the first edition of the Review.

To continue, it is usually the case that complex ideas of type IIA1 or even ideas of type IIB are complex ideas which are composed of simple ideas of type IIA1 and others of IIB, etc. Also Price has subdivided IIB into the ideas denoting the real properties of external objects, such as figure, extension, and motion, and those denoting the real properties of spiritual substances, such as volition, consciousness, and memory. His second division of what we have called IIB, IIB2, includes ideas derived immediately from intelligence.

Just what the ideas are, which are derived immediately from intelligence, Price does not explicitly say, but with the rise of these ideas, in class IIB2, knowledge occurs.

> After the mind, from whatever possible causes, has been furnished with ideas of any objects, they become themselves objects to our intellective faculty; from whence arises a new set of ideas, which are the perceptions of this faculty. Previously to this,

> whatever ideas we may be furnished with, nothing is understood. Whatever subjects of knowledge there may be in the mind, nothing is known. (R 39)

This paragraph suggests two possible interpretations. This first interpretation is that what we call class IIB2 contains propositional ideas either partly or entirely. Or it is possible, and this seems more plausible, that IIA1 is composed of ideas of particulars, i.e. ideas of particular properties of particular external objects and ideas of particular properties of particular minds. If interpreted in this way, then class IIB2 would consist of the general and abstract ideas of figure, motion, power, substance, cause, volition, etc. Of course it is also possible that Price would assent to the view that class IIB2 combines both of our interpretations, i.e., it would consist of general and abstract ideas in the form of propositional ideas--all of which would be simple. It must be remembered that in Price's time propositions, which we consider to be complex, were thought to be simple. Even though this seems to be a strange failure on Price's part to distinguish simple ideas from propositions when he speaks, for example, of "true ideas," Price is not to be criticized too strongly for his failure. It was a failure common at his time.

It might be added that if class IIB2 is deemed to contain abstract and general ideas exclusively, then in this class would be found the replicas of the archetypes which have existed eternally and immutably in the mind of

God, the Neoplatonic view to which Price subscribes but does not wish to defend.

A comparison of Price's alternative schemes of classification reveals that what Price calls original ideas, class IA, is identical to IIA1 in his second scheme of classification. Furthermore, what Price calls subsequent ideas in his first scheme, IB, subsumes what we have called IIA2, IIB1, and IIB2 in his second scheme of classification. Perhaps Price prefers his second classification of simple ideas over the first since II allows for a more thorough explanation and differentiation between subclasses of original and subsequent ideas. Either view, however, could admit a Neoplatonic interpretation even though Price does not refer explicitly to this fact. His treatment of the classification of ideas is not only brief, it is somewhat obscure. Even though his treatment of ideas is open to criticism, his preface to his first edition of the Review, as we have seen, calls attention to the importance of his treatment of the epistemology of ideas in setting the stage for his proposal of an ethical theory. (This preface, however, is not included in the original Third Edition.)

CHAPTER IV

EPISTEMOLOGY APPLIED TO MORALS

Price opens Chapter I, Section I, of his Review with an attack upon Hutcheson's theory of the moral sense. (R 13) This moral sense, "different from reason, . . . renders certain actions pleasing and others displeasing to us." (R 14) Price claims that if Hutcheson's view were correct,

> . . . our ideas of morality . . . have the same origin with our ideas of the sensible qualities of bodies, the harmony of sound, or the beauties of painting or sculpture; that is, the mere good pleasure of our Maker adapting the mind and its organs in a particular manner to certain objects. (R 15)

And, according to this view, virtue would become merely a matter of taste. (R 15) Right would become an agreeable emotion and wrong would be perceived as merely a disagreeable emotion.

> Tis therefore, by this account, improper to say of an action, that it is right, in much the same sense that it is improper to say of an object of taste, that it is sweet; or of pain, that it is in fire. (R 15)

Price holds that Hutcheson's view of the moral sense must be rejected since the moral qualities of rightness and wrongness are objective qualities of actions and not merely qualities of our minds.

> . . . granting that we have perceptions of moral right and wrong, they must denote, either what the actions, to which we apply them, are, or only our feelings; and the power of perceiving them must be, either that power whose object is truth, or some implanted power or sense. If the former is true, then is morality equally unchangeable with all

> truth: If on the contrary, the latter is true, then is it that only which, according to the different constitutions of the senses of beings, it appears to be to them. (R 16)

Price rejects the latter conclusion. Price holds that right and wrong are applied to actions and that morality is equally unchangeable with truth.

The second part of Price's attack is levelled against

> . . . schemes which found morality on self-love, on positive laws and compacts, or the Divine will; they must either mean, that moral good and evil are only other words for advantageous and disadvantageous, willed and forbidden. (R 16)

Price holds that right and wrong actions are not right and wrong merely because they are commanded or forbidden by the will of God, or because they produce good or harm, but these actions are either right or wrong because of an opinion "concerning them and our consequent approbation or disapprobation of the performance of them." (R 16) Were this not true, the result could be tautologies: "obeying a command is right" would express no more than that ". . . obeying a command, is obeying a command." (R 17) and "producing happiness is right," no more than ". . . producing happiness is producing happiness." (R 17) Price concludes that right is prior to all laws, wills, compacts, and actions which are denoted as right.

> . . . all laws, will, and compacts suppose antecedent right to give them effect; and, instead of being the constituents of right, they owe their whole force and obligation to it. (R 17)

Finally, Price holds, the power that perceives the distinctions of right and wrong is the

understanding. (R 17)

Here lies Price's entire justification for his emphasis on general epistemology that was expounded in the preceding chapter of the present dissertation. Price applied his epistemology to the metaphysics and science of his time in order to show that certain ideas, which he considers simple, originate in the understanding in its intuitive employment. These ideas include such ideas as cause, duration, and substance. Just how Price can hold that the idea of cause is simple in spite of his own analysis which maintains that power is an ingredient in the idea of cause, is difficult to understand. It seems that he should have maintained that the idea of cause, according to his own theory, would be complex instead of simple.

Price's epistemological theories are subject to many criticisms. His uncritical acceptance of a duality of the substances and the resultant view that secondary qualities have no existence outside the mind, and his covert Neoplatonic assumptions, etc., upon which his classification of ideas is based (R 21-40), are especially open to criticism. In spite of these faulty presuppositions which most modern philosophers would reject, his application of epistemology to morals is not necessarily spurious.

What his epistemology does is to provide a theory of knowledge which is consistent with his ethical theory. His theory of knowledge, if accepted, would make the attack on Hutcheson and Hume in ethics at least feasible.

For example, in contrast to Locke and Hume, Price maintains that certain ideas originate in intuition--not in reflection. These ideas include our ethical ideas of right and wrong as well as other ideas such as cause, power, substance, duration, equality, etc.--the ideas of metaphysics. Thus he asserts that Hume and Hutcheson are mistaken when they claim that these ideas originate in a moral sense or in reflection instead of the understanding.

When Price begins to apply his epistemology to ethics, he remarks, "Tis a very necessary previous observation, that our ideas of <u>right</u> and <u>wrong</u> are simple ideas, . . ." (R 41) Furthermore, since our ideas of right and wrong are simple ideas, they ". . . must therefore be ascribed to some power of <u>immediate</u> perception in the human mind." (R 41) This power of immediate perception, says Price, would have to be either sense, reflection or the understanding. Price argues that their origin could not be either sense or reflection and, therefore, must be the understanding.

(1) To persuade the reader that the ideas are simple, Price says no more than that

> He that doubts this need only try to give definitions of them, which shall amount to more than synonymous expressions. (R 41)

(We have to recall that such definitions as "acting rightly is doing what leads to happiness" or "acting rightly is doing what God commands" have already been ruled out as invalid on the ground that these statements

have a significant content that may be judged true or false, whereas if these were valid definitions, the statements would amount to no more than trivial tautologies: doing what leads to happiness is doing what leads to happiness; and doing what God commands is doing what God commands." (Cf. p. 63, supra.)

What does Price mean by affirming that the definitions "shall amount to no more than synonymous expressions"? Since the thinking of that age presumed that any valid definition (definiens) is synonymous with the expression defined, the key words in Price's remark must be the words "no more than." Price must be claiming that the definiens will be found not to be complex in the sense of discriminating simpler constituents in a complex idea; it will then be "no more than" a synonymous expression.

An example could be, "acting rightly is acting in accordance with duty."

If this dissertation were concerned with critical evaluation, two issues would demand attention: the adequacy of Price's conception of definition to support such arguments as this, and the reconciliation of Price's views with those of G. E. Moore.[1] It is noteworthy that both Price and Moore use almost identical arguments centering on definitions and synonymy, in the first place to prove that valuational terms are not reducible to such concepts

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[1] Philosophy of G. E. Moore, p. 664, and Mind (nos. 211, 213, 215, 216), Principia Ethica, pp. 9, 10, 16, 17.

as happiness or God's will, and in the second place to demonstrate the simplicity of the concepts of good or right. Moore chooses good as the simple concept; Price--as we have seen--chooses right. But each presumes that the unchosen idea is definable in terms of the chosen one. Does this imply that each regards his unchosen term (which is the other's chosen term) as "no more than" a synonym for his chosen term? Or does it imply that he regards his unchosen term as one denoting a complex idea? The shared theory of definition would seem to dictate that one of these alternatives must be elected. But if so, then the shared arguments from that theory of definition cannot be valid in both applications, the one by Moore for 'good' and the other by Price for 'right.' Yet the applications are so similar that there seems no ground on which to decide which philosopher's application is valid and which one's is invalid. It is to be noted, however, that however interesting these observations are, this dissertation is not concerned with evaluation of Price.[1]

(2) Taking it now as established that the ideas of right and wrong are simple, Price proceeds to consider what is the source of these ideas. He undertakes to get

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[1]Cf. MPRP, Lennart Aqvist, 51-53, 119-120, 120n. Says Aqvist, "My suggestion, . . . is that "synonymous" be taken in the sense of "logically (strictly) equivalent" . . . If this be done, . . . the argument cannot be used against any definition, including correct ones." (MPRP 119)

at this by noting that "we have a power immediately perceiving right and wrong." (R 41) By this, he does not mean that every action can be immediately perceived to be right, wrong, or morally indifferent; rather only that some actions are so perceived:

> There are, undoubtedly, some actions that are ultimately approved [i.e. immediately perceived to be right], and for justifying which no reason can be assigned; . . . (R 41)

He claims that this must be the case in the same way and for the same reason as that

> . . . there are some ends, which are ultimately desired, and for chusing which no reason can be given. Were not this true; there would be an infinite progression of reasons and ends, and therefore nothing could be at all approved or desired. (R 41)

Yet at this point, the similarity between right and desire ends. Each is a simple idea and each is on some occasions directly experienced instead of being generated by reason. But desire is a subsequent idea of sense, whereas--it is to be argued--right is an idea with its source in the understanding.

Price expresses a hope (R 41) that his earlier excursion into epistemology, "to show that the understanding is a power of immediate perception, which gives rise to new original ideas," will have already removed "the main obstacle" to the reader's acknowledgment that the understanding is the power which immediately perceives right and wrong. But not resting content with this hope, Price proceeds to adduce three lines of argument which he trusts

will "more explicitly and distinctly . . . evince what I have asserted . . ." (R 41)

The first argument is merely to the effect that the ideas of right and wrong could have this origin.

> . . . First, Observe, that it implies no absurdity, but evidently may be true. It is undeniable, that many of our ideas are derived from our INTUITION of truth, or the discernment of the natures of things by the understanding. This therefore may be the source of our moral ideas. It is at least possible, that right and wrong may denote what we understand and know concerning certain objects, . . . (R 41)

Price next refers to common sense to show that those moral ideas originate in the understanding.

> . . . Secondly, I know of no better way of determining this point, than by referring those who doubt it to common sense, and putting them upon considering the nature of their own perceptions.--Could we suppose a person, who, when he perceived an external object, was at a loss to determine whether he perceived it by means of his organs of sight or touch; what better method could be taken to satisfy him? There is no possibility of doubting in any such cases. And it seems not more difficult to determine in the present case.
>
> Were the question; what that perception is, which we have of number, diversity, causation or proportion; and whether our ideas of them signify truth and reality perceived by the understanding or impressions made by the objects to which we ascribe them on our minds; were, I say, this the question; would it not be sufficient to appeal to every man's consciousness?--These perceptions seem to me to have no greater pretence to be denominated perceptions of the understanding, than right and wrong. (R 43-44)

Common sense is almost introspection in Price's use of the phrase. It is sense (not sensation) applicable to all the ideas deriving from the various senses. Therefore, it is not one of them. But common sense may be in error with respect to its application of the true ideas it elicits.

Further, Price continues to appeal to common sense in the use of introspection. Introspection (common sense) in some form or other, would seem to be the only means by which to identify the simple ideas of intuition. It is not, however, the means by which to establish their application.

Price continues to argue that since our ideas of right and wrong are simple, they could not have been either derived or compounded from other ideas. These ideas of right and wrong are not complex. Furthermore, he holds, these ideas could not be derived from a sense. It would be very difficult even to conceive how a person could

> . . . impartially attend to the nature of his own perceptions, and determine that, when he thinks gratitude or beneficence to be right, he perceives nothing true of them, and understands nothing, but only receives an impression from a sense. (R 44)

Again Price argues,

> . . . Thirdly, . . . if right and wrong denote effects of sensation, it must imply the greatest absurdity to suppose them applicable to actions: That is, the ideas of right and wrong and of action, must be incompatible; as much so, as the idea of pleasure and a regular form, or of pain and the collisions of bodies.--All sensations, as such, are modes of consciousness, or feelings of a sentient being, which must be of a nature totally different from particular causes which produce them. A coloured body, if we speak accurately, is the same absurdity with a square sound. We need no experiments to prove that heat, cold, colours, tastes, &c. are not real qualities of bodies; because the ideas of matter and of these qualities, are incompatible.--But is there indeed any such incompatibility between actions and right? Or any such absurdity in affirming the one of the other?--

> Are the ideas of them as different as the idea of a sensation, and its cause? On the contrary; the more we enquire, the more . . . it will appear to us, that we express necessary truth, when we say of some actions, they are right; and of others, they are wrong. (R 46-47)

Throughout all of his efforts to demonstrate that right and wrong are simple ideas having their origin in the understanding, Price has proceeded as though there were no need to say to what it is that these ideas are applicable. Indeed the Review opens with a concentration of attention on "the actions of moral agents" and our

> . . . three different perceptions concerning them, which are necessary to be carefully distinguished.
> The first, is our perception of right and wrong. The second, is our perception of beauty and deformity. The third we express, when we say, that actions are of good or ill desert. (R 13)

Price goes on to say that of all actions, we are led to form some opinion, of some that they are right, of some that they are wrong, and of the others that they are neither right nor wrong, that is, they are indifferent.

Price never speculates as to whether other things than actions might be classified as (morally) right or wrong, but his equation of right with "fit to be performed" and of wrong with "unfit to be performed" (R 13) would seem to imply that these ideas of right and wrong are meaningfully applied only to actions, or at least only to contemplated or possible actions.

References to actions and possible actions continue to appear throughout the Review. Yet it is not until page 50 that he first considers the important question,

"what is an action?" Even at this late juncture, this important question is treated almost in an aside or as a digression:

> No will . . . can render . . . any action right, that is not so in itself; meaning by action, not the bare external effect produced, but the ultimate principle of conduct, or the determination of a reasonable being, considered as arising from the perception of some motives and reasons and intended for some end. (R 50-51)[1]

The principle determines the type of action regardless of the external effects produced. These effects may be the same or different. Only the principle determines whether the action is good and obligatory or indifferent.

> The . . . matter of the action is indeed the same; but nothing is plainer, than that actions in this sense the same, may in a moral view be totally different according to the ends aimed at by them, and the principles of morality under which they fall. (R 51)

Consider a promise. An indifferent action becomes obligatory as a result of a promise. The promise only alters

> . . . the connexion of a particular effect; or to cause that to be an instance of right conduct which was not so before. (R 51)

Apart from the promise, the action would remain the same--indifferent--since the "nature of things" (R 51) cannot be altered by "our own will or breath." (R 51)

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[1]Price later gives a second definition of "Action." "Action" is by definition, ". . . the real event, or external effect produced." (R 185) This definition will be important in Chapter V.

There is a close connection between how Price must treat this question (i.e., what options are open to him) and the presupposed acceptance on his part of a dualism of matter and mind, i.e. of "material substances" and "spiritual substances." Says Price, the mind

> . . . perceives . . . primary qualities of material Substances. . . . it perceives the properties of spiritual substances, . . . (R 38-39)

This theory of substances is generally disregarded by modern philosophers as a weakness, as it is indeed a weakness of Price's theory.

Price notes that it is common for people to ascribe to things the qualities which are properly their own sensations, e.g., secondary qualities. But the difference between secondary qualities and moral ideas, Price argues, is precisely the fact that the understanding can discover the incompatibility between body and sensible quality, whereas no such incompatibility between action and moral ideas is discoverable. Moreover, Price holds, everything has ". . . a nature or essence, . . ." of ". . . which it is the proper province of the understanding to perceive; . . ." (R 48) The understanding is the ultimate judge of each ". . . thought, sentiment, and subject, . . ." (R 48) It also judges actions, "ends and events . . ." Price thinks it would be ". . . impossible for any person, without some hesitation and reluctance, to reply . . . that they are all essentially indifferent, and that there is

no one thing fitter to be done than another." (R 48) From Price's words, "fitter to be done," it may be implied that some actions are "more or less" right when compared to others. Furthermore, the lesser the degree they are right, the greater the degree they are wrong. This problem will be taken up again in the next chapter when "Heads of Duty" are discussed.

Turning again to Price's view of the moral properties of actions, we read,

> . . . all actions, undoubtedly, have a nature. . . . This may be, that some of them are right, others wrong. But . . . if no actions are in themselves, either right or wrong, or any thing of a moral nature and obligatory nature, which can be an object to the understanding; it follows, that, in themselves, they are all indifferent. . . . But are we not conscious, that we perceive the contrary? (R 49)

Thus, Price concludes that the understanding intuitively judges the moral properties of actions. We know by reflection that moral judgments are not judgments of feeling, Price avers, so they must be judgments of objective properties of actions. In an attempt to clinch his argument, Price asserts,

> But to return; let any one compare the ideas arising from our powers of sensation, with those arising from our intuition of the natures of things, and enquire which of them his ideas of right and wrong most resemble. On the issue of such a comparison may we safely rest this question. (R 44)

Apparently, Price believes that since the moral ideas of right and wrong resemble other ideas which he maintains originate in the understanding, not sense, such as cause, identity, etc., they must have the understanding as a common origin. Moral judgments cannot be reports about our feelings. In order to declare that an action is right or wrong, there must be something in the nature of the action which we understand to be morally right or wrong. For Price this is known by intuition.

Then the question arises as to whether there is a difference between the existence of intuited ideas and the applying of these ideas. Price's view that some simple ideas enter the mind via the understanding, specifically via intuition, should be separated from his views that simple ideas that enter the mind through intuition are true, that is to say they do truly characterize (some) objects in the universe; that we may mistakenly apply these simple ideas which have entered the mind through intuition even though the intuited simple idea does have valid (true) applications; and his view that the understanding, in the form of intuitive judgment, also insures that certain of these applications of intuited ideas are valid (true). Price, who refers to Hutcheson's "Moral Sense Theory," claims that Hutcheson has failed to prove that the moral sense is the power perceiving the ideas. It must be added that Price has not proved that the existence of the concepts of right and wrong are known

a priori by reason. Many philosophers could disagree with one another concerning the manner of knowing the concepts of right and wrong without rejecting ethical enquiry.

Since by reflection we know that moral judgments are not judgments of feeling, they must be judgments of objective properties, according to Price. If the moral qualities of actions were not objective, then the moral notions of right and wrong would be absolutely unintelligible. Right and wrong cannot apply to sensation or to feeling. They are completely independent of these factors since it would be absurd to hold that the moral rectitude of an action would increase or remit proportionally with modification one's sensation or feeling. Price argues for the objective status of moral actions by comparing them to "relations between given quantities," to "the equality of numbers" (R 47) and "the figure of bodies."

Price's editor, Raphael, indicates that if we take Price literally it would imply that Price is using the language of Physics, a science which does not deal with morality, and that consequently this is a curious and inconsistent feature of Price's Review. (R xlvi-xlvii) It seems to me that Raphael has completely missed Price's point. Price's entire thesis holds that the notions of morality are discoverable in the same way that the truths of science are discerned, i.e. by the understanding. Furthermore, Raphael seems to be unaware of Price's definition of action (R 50-51), discussed earlier in this

chapter. Price argues that whereas the understanding can discover the incompatibility between body and sensible quality, no such incompatibility between action and moral ideas is discoverable.

In conclusion, Price has shown that in order to maintain ethical inquiry, we are determined to consider moral judgments as either true or false. To consider them as reports of private feelings or emotions is a misunderstanding of the objective moral nature of actions. If the skeptic should hold that his moral judgments are illusory, it is for him to explain why we are all not under this illusion. Moreover, for Price, all moral judgments are to be explained on the basis of intuited ideas. Other specific features of his ethical system will be examined in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

AN OUTLINE OF THE ETHICAL THEORY OF RICHARD PRICE

Turning to the ethical theory of Richard Price, we note that it reflects the rationalism exhibited in his epistemology. Jouffroy also attests that Price's theory is a system of moral rationalism. In his criteria for what he conceives to be moral rationalism, Jouffroy explains,

> The common characteristic of all possible rational systems is, that they consider the idea of <u>good</u>, as it is found in the moral judgments of common sense, an <u>a priori</u> conception of reason. . . . they all agree that it is communicated neither by instinct nor by experience, but that it emanates from intuitive reason. Another dogma, held in common by all rational systems, is, that to the idea of good, as conceived by reason, is immediately attached the idea of obligation; so that, whenever we conceive of any thing as good, we know at once that it ought to be done. . . .
>
> They differ from each other, however, in this, that some consider the idea of good as simple and irreducible, while others do not. (IE 246, 247)

As we know from previous chapters, Price's major consideration in epistemology is the origin of the ideas of <u>right</u> and <u>wrong</u>. Even though 'right and wrong' is synonymous with 'moral good and evil' (R 4) throughout most of the <u>Review</u> Price is concerned with the ideas of right and wrong. That Jouffroy did not mention Price's extensive concern with the ideas of right and wrong indicates that he did not fully represent Price's view. Nevertheless, Jouffroy does give an interesting--if only partial--division of Richard Price's ethical theory.

Jouffroy's analysis of Price's view is a three-fold division. First, Jouffroy speaks of Price's concern with the epistemology of the moral ideas of good and evil. We have already called attention to the fact that Price's major consideration is with the origin of the moral ideas of right and wrong, which only in passing he identifies as moral good and evil. Then Jouffroy states,

> The remainder of his work is principally devoted to two subjects; first, to a description of the actions in which we discover moral goodness; and secondly, to an examination of the difference between absolute virtue and practical virtue, . . . (IE 272)

Although Jouffroy adds, "I have not time to exhibit Price's doctrine upon these two . . . questions." (IE 272), his statement at least suggests one possible method of procedure in formulating an exposition of Price's ethics.

Another writer suggests a similar division of Price's ethical theory.[1] Although it is not his purpose to give a lengthy exposition of Price's ethical theory, in keeping with Jouffroy's approach, Peach suggests that Chapter VIII, entitled,

> Of the Nature and Essentials of Virtue in Practice, as distinguished from absolute Virtue; and particularly of the Intention accompanying the Practice of Virtue, and the Principle of Action in a virtuous Agent as such. (R 7)

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[1]Peach, William B., The Ethics of Richard Price, p. 294. Also see MPRP, by Lennart Aqvist, whose semantic analysis deals mainly with action, "The virtue of Actions," and "The virtue of agents" in Chapters II and III, respectively, for a similar approach to interpreting Price's ethics.

contains the essential core of Price's theory of ethics and that Chapters II, III, IV, and IX (in part) support VIII.

We have already noticed in the two preceding chapters of this thesis that the very heart of Price's rationalism is that reason, i.e. the understanding, is the source of the ideas of right and wrong. This corresponds to the first division of Jouffroy's analysis of Price, except, as we mentioned, he misrepresents Price as having a primary concern with the ideas of good and evil. That it is reason, not sense, which is the source of perception of these moral ideas, is consistent with the view of most thinkers of the rationalistic tradition.

If we continue to follow the Peach-Jouffroy approach to Price, it might be implied that not every chapter would be equally important in understanding Price's theory of ethics. Furthermore, an exposition should place heavy emphasis upon Price's major views, and upon certain elucidating and supporting passages of the Review which pertain directly to his major doctrines. Peach believes that Chapters II, III, IV, and part of IX, support the most important Chapter, VIII. This would mean that perhaps Chapters V, VI, VII, and X, are not too important in understanding Price. Respectively, these chapters are entitled,

> Of the Reference of Morality to the Divine Nature, the Rectitude of our Faculties, and the Grounds of Belief. (R 7, V)

> Of Fitness, and moral Obligation, and the various Forms of Expression, which have been used by different Writers in explaining Morality. (R 7, VI)
>
> Of the Subject-matter of Virtue and its principal Heads and Division. (R 7, VII)

and,

> The Account of Morality given in this Treatise applied to the Explication and Proof of some of the principal Doctrines and Facts of Natural Religion; particularly, the moral Attributes of God, his moral Government, and a future State of Rewards and Punishments. (R 8, X)

From the title of Chapter VIII, we notice the words, ". . . Virtue in Practice, as distinguished from absolute Virtue; . . ." Also in Chapter VIII, Price stipulates that knowledge of right and wrong motivates conduct. In order to support the distinction between "practical" and "abstract" virtue and the claim that the knowledge of right and wrong motivates conduct, Price states in rationalistic fashion, that there is a necessary connection between knowledge of the natures of certain objects and actions. He also considers our sentiments of beauty and ugliness, our preference for happiness over misery, our approvals and disapprovals, the divisions (heads) of virtue, God's nature as the source of virtue, and the essentials of a good and bad character.

We have already noticed that our Chapter IV corresponds to what Jouffroy calls the first division of Price's ethics. In Chapter IV of this dissertation we considered that Price holds that moral ideas of right and wrong

originate in intuition. Price avers that unless they originate in intuition there could be no objective morality. Then it might be asked how Price relates morality to the various other factors which he considers to be parts of man's physical and moral nature?

These factors suggest an exposition of Price's ethical theory by a consideration of the following topics:

(1) The Relation of Morality to Instincts, Desires, and Affections, and Beauty and Deformity of Actions.

(2) The Relation of Good and Ill Desert to Morality, and Virtuous Act vs. Virtuous Agent.

(3) The Relation of Right, Wrong and Obligatory. What Determines Right, Wrong and Indifferent?, Absolute vs. Practical Virtue. The Chief "Heads of Virtue," and Rule vs. Act Morality.

(4) Degrees of Virtue and Degrees of Right and Wrong.

(5) Essentials of A Good Character.

While it is true that this list does not exhaust every doctrine presented by Price in his Review, it is nevertheless designed to present his principal ethical doctrines. Some of the doctrines in the Review would be more appropriately considered in a thesis on Natural Religion. Also it should be pointed out that while many of the views might be construed to resemble similar views espoused by classical philosophers, such as Aristotle, for example, to undertake a thorough comparison with Aristotle would be beyond the scope and purpose of this thesis as set forth in Chapter I. On the other hand,

one may note many similarities to the ethical views of Immanuel Kant. A brief examination of some of their similarities will be made in Chapter VI in accordance with the purpose stated in Chapter I.

Turning again to Price's ethical theory, in accordance with our outline, the first topic to be considered is (1) "The Relation of Morality to Instincts, Desires, and Affections, and Beauty and Deformity of Actions." Throughout this chapter, "morality" is intended to mean "rational morality" in which reason, in its intuitive employment, perceives "rectitude for the sake of rectitude" (however imperfect finite reason's perception of rectitude may be) as the only moral motive. Much more will be said about this principle as the chapter unfolds.

(1) Relation of Morality to Instincts, Desires, and Affections, and Beauty and Deformity of Actions.

In Chapter II of his Review, Price points out that although men through even "The lowest degrees of reason . . . discover moral distinctions in general; . . ." (R 61), it is nevertheless ". . . necessary that the rational principle, or the intellectual discernment of right and wrong, should be aided by instinctive determinations." (R 61-62)

Price holds that although our desires to perform right actions are rational desires, i.e. desires which are motivated by reason's perception of rectitude as the sole moral motive even though this perception by finite reason is imperfect, "urgent passions" often interfere with these

rational desires. (R 62) An unaided rational desire is subject to the dictates of mere reason which are too "slow and deliberate," and too weak to compel right action. Therefore, Price continues, God has annexed ". . . to our intellectual perceptions sensations and instincts, which . . ." (R 62) gives the dictates of reason greater weight and force.

It is not until the third chapter, however, that Price proposes a series of definitions which amounts to a classification of desires according to their origin.

> I. Affections: ". . . the desires founded on the reasonable nature itself, and essential to it; such as self-love, benevolence, and the love of truth. (R 74)

As examples of affections, Price dwells at greatest length on self-love and on benevolence. Yet he lists or speaks briefly of these other affections: ambition (R 69), curiosity (R 69), love of knowledge (R 73), of truth (R 73), and of honour (R 73).

Also in Chapter III, Price holds two main theses:

i. While some desires have their origin or cause in an instinct, i.e. in an "implanted propension" (R 69, 74, et al.), others have their origin in reason or the understanding. (R 70 et seq.)

ii. It is false to hold that private good is the only ultimate object of desire. (R 74 et seq.)

While these two major theses and many subordinate theses pave the way for the claim that moral worth attaches

only to such actions[1] as proceed from affections, i.e. desires having their origin in reason, these theses also refer to instinct, implanted propension, which when considered alone, does not give rise to actions of moral significance.

By referring to instinct, Price leads us to a second classification of desires.

II. Appetites: "those tendencies within us that are merely instinctive, such as hunger, thirst, etc." (R 74)

Price completes his classification of desires by turning to passions.

III. Passions: Affections that are ". . . strengthened by instinctive determinations." (R 74)

An example of a passion is parental affection (R 76), which derives from rational benevolence strengthened by instinctive parental love.

Price notes in the same paragraph that usage of the words defined is not entirely consistent. (R 74) For example, the words 'appetite' and 'passion' are often used indiscriminately to indicate merely instinctive desires. Also, we have already referred to Price's use of "urgent passion," (R 61) in Chapter II, where he claims that it interferes with rational desires (affections). This example illustrates his own lack of strict adherence

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[1]It is interesting to note Price's two senses of action. "Sometimes we mean by them, the determinations or volitions themselves of a being, of which the intention is an essential part: And sometimes . . . the real event, or external effect produced." (R 185)

to his definition of passion. And again, the widely used expression 'parental affection' commonly indicates--as already noted--what Price classifies as a passion rather than an affection.

Price's inclusion in his classification of passions--rational desires strengthened by instinct--provides the occasion for remarking, again, on the benevolence of God. Price briefly refers to "Our Maker" (R 62). In Chapter III (R 76-78), he elaborates that a good, wise, and benevolent God has implanted such strengthening instincts within our natures, the better to assure that action will conform to that which is rationally good. It must be emphasized, though, that instincts alone produce desires of no moral significance.

Instinctive desires include hunger, thirst, etc. These instinctive desires are tendencies within us which Price calls <u>appetites</u>. It is a mere instinct to desire to eat or drink. Instinctive desires are essential to the well being of the human organism. Since they are automatic aspects of human nature, this type of instinct has no moral significance. There is no moral choice involved, for example, in eating and drinking enough to sustain one's life. While it is true that a human being may refrain from eating for seventy days, and refrain from drinking water (fluid), for four days, without dying, there seems to be a limit beyond which merely instinctive desires may not be fulfilled without the cessation of life. A person must

fulfill these instincts or else he dies. On the other hand, a moral agent who is confronted by a moral decision (whose finite reason perceives rectitude as the moral motive), may choose to act rightly or wrongly. And unless the desire to act rightly is founded on the reasonable nature itself, and not on merely instinctive desires, it has no moral significance. This topic will be considered again in a later chapter on a comparison of Price's ethics to Kant's ethics and in part in a later section of this chapter.

Price's entire discussion of desires and instincts has been preceded by barely more than the merest acknowledgment of certain general principles, nor have their theoretical consequences been elaborated.

These principles might be stated as follows:

i. Men, not being perfectly or completely rational, sometimes fail to discern a rational good. (R 170)

ii. Desires, both rational and instinctive, vary in strength, from time to time, from person to person, and from desire to desire. (R 171)

iii. Every affection (read, desire) ". . . has its particular end." (R 69)

iv. "No being who knows what happiness and misery are can be supposed indifferent to them, without a plain contradiction. Pain is not a <u>possible</u> object of desire; nor happiness, of aversion." (R 70)

v. ". . . a being <u>purely</u> reasonable . . . would perceive VIRTUE, and possess affection to it, in proportion to the degree of his knowledge." (R 70, 71)

vi. 'Better,' as in 'Happiness is better than misery,' denotes a simple idea, perceived by reason, and is undefinable; in the same sense that 'greater' in 'The whole is greater than a part' denotes a simple idea and is undefinable. Both of these ideas denote truth, apprehended by reason. (R 71)

The upshot is that if reason perceives that an object is good, or one object is better than another (an example of a simple idea, perceived by reason, and undefinable), such as happiness is better than misery, this perception amounts to the possession of an affection (rational desire) for its particular end (happiness), the good, or better object. In an exclusively rational being--such as God--the strength of this desire will be proportional to the clarity of the perception. But in beings who are not exclusively rational and not perfectly rational--such as human beings--the existence of the perception entails the existence of the corresponding affection or desire, but the strength of the desire--i.e., the strength of its power to generate corresponding action--will be weak in comparison with the strength of conflicting instinctive desires which, like affections, are subject to variation. In spite of the fact that desires vary from time to time, from person to person, and from desire to desire (R 171), rational desires determine that actions be virtuous. That all right actions originate from rational desires, raises the question of whether reason also determines our

judgment of whether these actions are beautiful or deformed.

Price says that in addition to our perception of right and wrong, we have two other perceptions. "The second, is our perception of beauty and deformity." (R 13) and "The third we express, when we say, that actions are of good or ill desert." (R 13) To the second perception, we turn at this time. The third perception is to be considered in a later section.

> We often say of some actions, not only that they are right, but that they are amiable; and of others, not only that they are wrong, but odious and shocking. Everyone must see, that these epithets denote the delight; or on the contrary, the horror and detestation felt by ourselves; and, consequently, signify not any real qualities or characters of actions, but the effects in us, or the particular pleasure and pain, attending the consideration of them. (R 57)

"To behold virtue, is to admire it." (R 59) To behold virtue, such as goodness, faithfulness, justice, and gratitude, expressed in actions, is to approve of it and one admires its excellence and beauty. To behold vice such as cruelty, treachery, injustice, and ingratitude, expressed in actions, is to disapprove of them and it is to perceive their deformity. It is impossible, Price holds, to behold a good action without love or respect arising toward the agent. We have pleasant feelings of order, utility, peace of mind, etc., which are merely in our own minds. These feelings we impute to reality as the beauty of virtue. Contrary feelings of disorder, a disturbed mind, inutility, etc., we impute to reality as

deformity of actions or the ugliness of vice.

Reason, the understanding, compares and judges characters to be beautiful and deformed.

> It is not possible for a man to consider inanimate nature and life, the brutal and the rational powers, or virtue and vice, with a perfect indifference, or without preferring one before the other in his esteem. (R 68)

Man will always consider the agent who performs virtuous, beautiful actions to be of moral character, whereas the agent who performs the brutal (deformed) actions is considered to be of vicious character.

(2) The Relation of Good and Ill Desert to Morality and Virtuous Act vs. Virtuous Agent

The third perception of a moral agent, according to Price, is expressed ". . . when we say, that actions are of good or ill desert. . . ." (R 13) ". . . there is no perception of our minds which it becomes us more to attend to. . . ." (R 83) This perception of actions meriting good or ill desert is capable of being considered in two ways. Price first considers it

> . . . merely, as a principle of the natures which God has given us, or a determination interwoven with our frame, . . . (R 83)

His second consideration states that

> . . . as a necessary perception of reason, it proves with the evidence of demonstration what the supreme reason will do; what laws and rules it observes in carrying on the happiness of the universe; and that its end is, not simply happiness, but 'happiness enjoyed with virtue.' (R 83)

Price seems to accept as axiomatic that if virtue merits reward, and if vice merits ill desert, that God will reward the virtuous and punish the vicious with ill desert. This expectation was commonly accepted in Price's time although there are two independent principles involved: (1) Virtue deserves happiness and vice deserves ill desert, and (2) The virtuous may expect happiness and the vicious may expect ill desert. While (2) is not intuitively obvious, Price holds that (1) is a moral perception of the understanding. (R 13, 83) In Price (2) is a principle derived from natural theology (R 296) whereas (1) is a principle of morality. Whereas (1) is capable of being included in a system of deontological ethics, (2) might serve a utilitarian system. As a utilitarian, hypothetical command, it might be stated, "If you want a reward, you must act virtuously.", or "If you want ill desert, you must act viciously." Any consideration that (2) could be logically deduced from (1) would be impossible without extra-logical, theological, considerations. Even if the virtue of prudence should be introduced into the argument, as Price does, it is still a matter to be reserved for natural theology and a system of teleological ethics--not a deontological system.

In this life Price notes that there is a propriety in making those happy who practice virtue and in discountenancing the vicious. ". . . <u>good</u> and <u>ill desert</u> belong

. . . to the agent. It is the agent alone, that is capable of happiness or misery; and . . . it is he alone that properly can be said to deserve these." (R 79) An agent characterized by vice is of intrinsic demerit whereas an agent characterized by virtue is always worthy of reward. An agent's character is the determining factor of his merit or demerit.

> When we say, a man deserves well, we mean, that his character is such, that we approve of shewing him favour; or that it is right he should be happier than if he had been of a contrary character. We cannot but love a virtuous agent, and desire his happiness above that of others. Reason determines at once, that he ought to be the better for his virtue.--A vicious being, on the contrary, as such, we cannot but hate and condemn. (R 79)

It may be asked, "What determines an agent's character?" An agent's character is determined by the ultimate principle of his conduct. This ultimate principle of conduct, his motive, determines his merit or demerit. "Rectitude for the sake of rectitude" is the highest possible motive, the reward of which is the good desert it merits. Vice, to the contrary, merits ill desert. It produces aversion in us to consider the opposite:

> . . . virtue, conceived as having demerit; and vice, as well-deserving and rewardable. . . . Is there nothing in any of them repugnant to the natures of things?" (R 84)

The virtuous, then, according to Price, merit eternal happiness whereas the wicked merit eternal punishment. (R 253-265)

In keeping, however, with the distinction between our two principles, (1) and (2), it does not necessarily follow that the virtuous may necessarily expect eternal happiness and the vicious eternal demerit, as we have already indicated. Principle (1), however, raises another issue, the question of how to distinguish between a virtuous agent, who merits reward, and a virtuous act performed by the agent.

It is true that virtue generally refers to character, not to particular acts. Yet Price did not adhere to this usage. Instead he confuses the issue by applying the epithet "virtuous," to both agent and action. (R 184) If he had merely stated that people are virtuous, acts right and/or wrong, and that virtue deserves a reward, and that it is not acts but people who are rewarded, this confusion would have been eliminated.

We have already mentioned, however, that Price uses <u>action</u> in two senses. The first sense of action involves only the intention which determines the volitions of the agent, and the second sense of action means "the real event, or external effect produced." (R 185) It is the first sense of action which characterizes the agent as virtuous. The virtue of an agent is determined solely by his intention which determines his volitions. Finally, ". . . an agent cannot be justly denominated <u>virtuous</u>, except he acts from a consciousness of rectitude, and with a regard to it as his <u>rule</u> and <u>end</u>." (R 184)

On the other hand, when considering virtue of action, Price claims,

> . . . no particular intention is requisite; for what is objectively right, may be done from any motive good or bad; and therefore, from hence alone, no merit is communicated to the agent; nay it is consistent with the greatest guilt. . . . (R 184)

When speaking of the virtue of the agent, Price declares,

> On the contrary, to the other the particular intention is what is most essential. When this is good, there is so far virtue, whatever is true of the matter of the action; for an agent, who does what is objectively wrong, may often be entitled to commendation. . . . (R 184)

This quotation shows clearly that Price refers to action in the second sense, i.e. action as "the real event or external event produced." (R 185), whereas the first quotation clearly utilized the first meaning of action, i.e. as the intention. (R 185) Although an act may be objectively right regardless of the purity or impurity of the motive, it may be considered subjectively right only because it is done from a good motive. The given action may be subjectively right and objectively wrong. Even when this is the case, the agent is virtuous because he has acted from a pure (good) intention. The virtuous agent merits good desert. The virtuous act is called right. Price sums up,

> The epithets right and wrong are, with strict propriety, applied only to actions; but good and ill desert belong rather to the agent. It is the agent alone, that is capable of happiness or misery; and therefore, it is he alone that properly can be said to deserve these. (R 79)

It is interesting to note that only in the case of the infinite Deity, who is omniscient, will the subjective right and objective right always coincide. With finite rational agents, this is not necessarily the case. To the contrary, a finite rational being can and sometimes does act contrary to his knowledge of rectitude. Unlike the infinite being, finite beings are capable of performing not only right acts, but acts which are often odious and shocking.

(3) The Relation of Right, Wrong and Obligatory, What Determines Right, Wrong and Indifferent?, Absolute vs. Practical Virtue, and The Chief "Heads of Virtue," and Rule vs. Act Morality

Price holds that finite beings, unlike the infinite being, are capable of performing either right or wrong actions of moral significance. Price would never consider a wrong action to be obligatory. Most moral philosophers would agree with Price on this issue. In fact many moral philosophers would also agree with Price that moral agents are always obliged to refrain from morally wrong actions. Not all philosophers, however, would agree with Price's view which restricts the scope of wrong actions, from which moral agents are obliged to refrain, exclusively to what Price calls subjective wrong. Nor would every moral philosopher distinguish between subjective and objective senses of right and wrong. For Price, it is possible that an action may be subjectively wrong, i.e., originate from an immoral intention and

nevertheless be objectively right. It is also possible that an action may originate from a moral intention and be objectively wrong. In Price's view, however, when speaking of actions which we are obliged to omit, he is speaking exclusively of subjectively wrong actions.

When considering right actions, Price likes to think of them as obligatory but at this point he encounters difficulties. For example, he considers benevolence to be right and obligatory. Yet when benevolence is applied to a particular action, it may be right but not obligatory. This example arises when principles compete in their relation to a particular act. A moral virtue (head of duty) such as prudence may compete with the virtue of benevolence. This interference produces more than one possible action in a given situation which might be called right in the subjective sense. Obligation fails to apply, therefore, except to actions which we are obliged to omit,[1] i.e. those actions which are subjectively wrong. Finally, when virtues such as benevolence and prudence conflict, the ultimate appeal is to intuition of the right action between alternatives. Right and obligation are the same only in the sense that it is right to omit actions which are subjectively wrong.

Turning to the question, "What Determines Right, Wrong and Indifferent?" Price argues that all actions are

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[1]See G. E. Moore's Ethics, Chapter 3, for a similar conclusion.

subsumed under one of these three headings. An act is right, wrong, or indifferent depending on its relation to one or more of the heads of virtue. These heads of virtue include piety, gratitude, justice, veracity, benevolence, and prudence. These heads of virtue suggest the question, "what is virtue?" In order to set the stage for what is to be considered in this section a few definitions are in order.

Although Price does not explicitly define some of his terms, certain definitions might be formulated from the way in which he uses the terms.

i. Virtue =df the attachment to rectitude as a rule and an end. (R 184)

ii. Virtuous agent =df an agent disposed to be governed by the motive of rectitude for its own sake, i.e. as a rule and end (R 184), as rectitude's perception by finite reason.

iii. Virtuous act =df an act which proceeds from the agent's intention of adhering to rectitude as rule and end, (the only moral motive) as perceived by reason. (R 184)

In attempting to define right acts, Price refers to two types:

i. Subjectively right act =df an act which proceeds from the agent's motive to adhere to reason's perception of rectitude for the sake of rectitude.

ii. Objectively right act =df an act (the real event produced), which adheres to rectitude, in the absolute

sense, regardless of whether it proceeds from rectitude as the moral motive of the finite agent.

It appears from the proposed definitions, that a virtuous act is always subjectively right. It also follows that a virtuous agent is one who produces acts which are subjectively right, i.e. performs acts which are virtuous. It also appears that an agent who produces an act which is called objectively right may not necessarily be virtuous even though the act itself may produce laudable results. The agent may have acted from mere instinct or from inclinations without the moral motive of rectitude for the sake of rectitude. The objectively right act is in part similar to what Price intends by ABSTRACT virtue, as we note later.

i. ABSTRACT virtue =df ". . . a quality of the external action or event. It denotes what an action is, considered independently of the sense of the agent." (R 177)

Price also refers to PRACTICAL virtue.

ii. PRACTICAL virtue =df virtue of actions which ". . . has a necessary relation to, and dependence upon, the opinion of the agent concerning his actions." (R 177)

Once more, then, if we apply our definition of virtue to its two types, Abstract and Practical we might clarify Price's definitions of Abstract and Practical Virtue. According to our clarification of what Price intends, but does not explicitly say, we might adopt the following definitions:

i. Abstract Virtue =df "a quality of external action or event" which conforms absolutely to rectitude "independently of the sense of the agent."

ii. Practical Virtue =df the virtue of actions which depends on the conformity or the attachment of the agent's intention of performing actions adhering to rectitude, as perceived by the agent's finite reason, as rule and end according to the agent's opinion of rectitude. It appears, then, that abstract and practical virtue are similar to objective right and subjective right respectively.

Before we apply our proposed definition of virtue to each of the heads of duty, the distinction between "Absolute (Theoretical) Virtue and Relative (Practical) Virtue" will be expanded.

We cannot conceive of

> . . . a rational agent void of all moral judgments, incapable of perceiving a difference, in respect of fitness and unfitness to be performed, between actions, and acting from blind propensions without any sentiment [or opinions, which Price uses as the synonym for sentiments] concerning what he does. (R 48-49)

Since, Price says, we have the ideas of right and wrong, and may make erroneous judgments, it is necessary to distinguish theoretical from practical virtue. Price distinguished these two from one another in Chapter VIII.

At this point, we recall the two senses of action.

> . . . there are two views or senses, in which we commonly speak of actions. Sometimes we mean by them, the determinations or volitions themselves

> of a being, of which the intention is an essential part: And sometimes we mean the real event, or external effect produced. (R 185)

These two senses of action are of utmost importance in the delineation of Price's distinction between absolute and practical virtue. The first definition of action as ". . . the determinations or volitions . . . of which the intention is the essential part . . ." applies to practical virtue. (R 177) The second definition of action as ". . . the real event, or external effect produced." applies to Abstract (absolute) virtue. (R 177) The theoretical (abstract, absolute) sense of virtue relates to the actual circumstances. This is objective, absolute virtue which corresponds to practical virtue only "with respect to a being possessed of infinite knowledge and power . . ." (R 185) where the two senses of action always coincide. Practical virtue of actions, or fitness, relates to the agent's opinion of the circumstances.

> . . . there is a sense in which it may be said, that what any being, in the sincerity of his heart, thinks he ought to do, he indeed ought to do, and would be justly blameable if he omitted to do, though contradictory to what, in the former sense, is his duty. (R 177-178)

This is subjective, relative, practical virtue. Although we never have the complete knowledge required for performing the act that absolute virtue demands, we are required to act upon the partial knowledge we have and, hence, we must rely subjectively on finite, partial knowledge in order to make our decision as to how to act. The fact

that an agent may make a mistake as a result of his imperfect knowledge does not mitigate the obligatoriness of the practical action. Nor does it imply, as someone might object, that an action may be both right and wrong at the same time, and in the same sense. Price argues,

> Moral agents are liable to mistake the circumstances they are in, and consequently, to form erroneous judgments concerning their own obligations. But, when they are . . . mistaken, it is not to be imagined, that then nothing remains obligatory. It would be trifling to object to this, that it implies, that an action may, at the same time, be both right and wrong; for it implies this only, as the rightness and wrongness are considered in different views. A magistrate who should adjudge an estate to a person whose right it appears to be, upon a great overbalance of evidence, would certainly do right in one sense; though, should the opposite claimant, after all, prove to be the true proprietor, he would as certainly do wrong in another sense. (R 177-178)

Since an agent is capable of erring, Price thinks this fact somehow implies the objectivity of a right act apart from the agent's misconception of it. However, it should be pointed out that an important duty incumbent on the agent is that he should inform himself as well as possible as to his duty before he acts. Then, if he follows his conscience, there is "no sense in which" the agent may "contradict rectitude." (R 178)

> Our rule is to follow our consciences steadily and faithfully, after we have taken care to inform them in the best manner we can. (R 179)

Consider the example of the Apostle Paul. Paul, through religious zeal, to use Price's terms, "commits the most shocking barbarities, imagining he hereby does God service . . ." before his conversion. After his conversion,

Paul realized how wrong he had been. In spite of his misdeeds, he did not "contradict rectitude." He had a mistaken perception of rectitude but he followed his conscience.

The emphasis upon abiding by the dictates of conscience implies that, in matters of conscience, no man should ever be restricted. No government, no army, no institution, or person, should have the right to oblige another person to act against his private judgment. (R 180) If anyone should have the right of dominion over another conscience, Price holds, it would be the same as to have the right or power to oblige that agent to do wrong. "Every man ought to be left to follow his conscience because then only he acts virtuously." (R 180)

Practical virtue presupposes <u>freedom of the will or liberty</u>.

> The <u>liberty</u> I here mean is the same with the power of <u>acting</u> and <u>determining</u>. And it is self-evident that where such a power is wanting, there can be no moral capacities. . . . Virtue supposes determination, and determination supposes a determiner; and a determiner that determines not himself, is a palpable contradiction. Determination requires an efficient cause. If this cause is the being himself, I plead for no more. If not, then it is no longer <u>his</u> determination; that is, he is no longer the determiner, but the motive, or whatever else any one will say to be the cause of the determination. (R 181-182)

Liberty is deemed prerequisite for practical virtue since no man should be held morally responsible for what he had no power to avoid. Of course it is true that <u>often</u> men are held legally responsible for what is unavoidable but

unfortunately it is not always the case that moral and legal demands are identical.

Ability to perform acts of practical virtue also demands intelligence. The agent must have the intellectual ability to discern, ". . . to perceive good and evil; and without this perception, there can be no moral agency. . . . But though liberty does not suppose intelligence, yet intelligence plainly supposes liberty." (R 183) All inferior orders possess liberty of self-motion and activity. Inferior orders, however, do not have the intelligence necessary for practical morality.

Third, to perform acts of practical virtue, a moral agent must always act ". . . from a consciousness of rectitude, and with a regard to it as his rule and end." (R 184) Whereas "Liberty and reason constitute the capacity of virtue," (R 184) there must also be the intention to act from a consciousness of rectitude as his rule and end, which constitutes practical virtue in a character. (R 184) The perception of right and wrong excites to action and it (rectitude for the sake of rectitude) is the supreme motive.

Thus the practical virtue of acts necessitates these characteristics for the agent: liberty, intelligence, and the knowledge, i.e., the consciousness of rectitude as the agent's rule and end. Ultimately, there is no true, practical, virtue of the act unless the agent's intention is pure.

Finally, while it is true that a virtuous agent may perform acts which are right (characterized by practical virtue) because they conform to the agent's perception of rectitude, from the fact that the agent's knowledge of rectitude is only partial in comparison to the infinite rational being's concept of rectitude, it is obvious that with the use of common sense the act might have been different and still have been called practically virtuous.

Assuming that our proposed definition of virtue is correct, it might be asked how it applies to the heads of virtue? We mentioned that the heads of virtue include piety, gratitude, justice, veracity, benevolence, and prudence. If considered one by one, they might be defined as follows:

i. Piety =df the disposition to be governed by the motive of rectitude in honoring and worshipping God according to an agent's opinion of rectitude as reason perceives it to be. (R 138)

ii. Gratitude =df the disposition to be governed by the motive of rectitude, as perceived by reason, in being grateful to benefactors. (R 152)

iii. Benevolence or Beneficence =df the disposition to be governed by the motive of rectitude, as perceived by reason, in promoting the happiness of others as that happiness is perceived and intended by the moral agent. (R 151)

iv. Prudence =df the disposition to be governed by the motive of rectitude, as perceived by reason, in achieving the duty to promote one's own happiness as he perceives his happiness to be. (R 148)

v. Veracity =df the disposition to be governed by the motive of rectitude, as perceived by reason, to tell the truth as one perceives it. (R 153)

vi. Justice =df the disposition to be governed by the motive of rectitude, as perceived by reason, so as never wrongfully to appropriate from another the fruit of his labor. (R 157-169)

We have mentioned that ultimately the answer to the question, "What Determines Right, Wrong and Indifferent?" is the relation of action to one or more of the heads of virtue. (1) Price classifies actions as examples of one or more "heads of virtue," with the intuitive judgment that these heads of action are heads of virtue. (2) He holds that a particular action may be classifiable under several heads of virtue and vice (not Price's term) such as, an act is benevolent but dishonest. (3) He also notes that right and wrong vary with degree as applying to actions insofar as they are classified under the heads of virtue according to the circumstances involved. (4) Finally, he claims that a resultant calculus of degrees or composition of forces (not Price's terms) eventuates in the individual action being (via its multiple classification) in the end right, in the end wrong, or in the end morally

indifferent.

We have noted that Price holds that the heads of virtue may compete (interfere) with each other. Just how they compete is an important question. In its solution is to be found the problem of rule intuitionism vs. act intuitionism.

The key to understanding Price in terms of these two types of intuitionism is found in the fact that Price has a deontic system in the virtues of Piety, gratitude, justice, veracity, benevolence and prudence. However, the virtues of benevolence and prudence introduce teleological considerations. (R 166) To promote another person's or one's own happiness is to be concerned with consequences. In other words, the teleologist does x (an act promoting happiness) because it promotes happiness. The deontologist such as Price does x (an act promoting happiness) because he perceives it as his duty. The Pricean thus justifies the rightness of his act by an ultimate appeal to duty or the law of rectitude rather than by an appeal to happiness. If one asks the teleologist why one should promote his or another's happiness, he could give no further justification. But the Pricean would answer "because it is my duty."

But while the Pricean and the teleologist would disagree on what is the proper ultimate motive (whether regard for duty or regard for happiness is the proper motive),

when it comes to a decision between choosing a particular act of prudence or benevolence, they would both appeal to the consequences. And often an act of veracity has consequences which promote happiness or misery in which case the act is subsumed under both the heads of veracity and benevolence or veracity and prudence. Thus the opportunity for interference between these heads of duty arises. Generally conflicts will be between two different sets of virtues.

While some men attempt to reduce the "whole of virtue to benevolence," Price avers that it cannot be done. This attempt to reduce the whole of virtue to benevolence is motivated by ". . . that love of uniformity and simplicity which inclines men thus to seek . . ." (R 138) Is it possible that Price himself, however, is not open to a similar criticism, since he attempts to reduce virtues to six aspects of the one all inclusive virtue?

We have already extended our definition of virtue as "the attachment to rectitude as a rule and end," to each of the six heads of duty, each of which is a mode of conduct which, Price simply says, is known to be virtuous by intuition.

Price states that these six "heads of virtue"

> . . . all run up to one general idea, and should be considered as only different modifications and views of one original, all-governing law. (R 165)

Earlier, on the same page, Price explains what he calls the universal law. It is,

> . . . the universal law of rectitude, though in the abstract idea of it always invariably the same, must be continually varying in its <u>particular</u> demands and obligations. (R 165)

Rectitude

> . . . is the same authority that enjoins, the same eternal reason that commands in them all. Virtue thus considered, is necessarily <u>one</u> thing. (R 165, also fn. 165, reference to <u>Meno</u>)

Certainly, in what Price calls the general idea of virtue, we note he considers it to entail the six heads of virtue. Furthermore, the six heads of virtue, as we have defined them, have a direct relationship to the agent's perception of rectitude in the particular cases, "and the situations of agents and objects . . ." (R 165), which are constantly changing. The general idea of virtue, then, might be interpreted as the attachment to reason's perception of the universal law of rectitude as a rule and an end. The six heads of virtue would be, according to Price, six different aspects of conformity to the universal law of rectitude as reason perceives rectitude as its rule and end. Just how virtue can be considered a simple, intuited, idea instead of a complex idea, when it entails simple ideas of the six heads of duty, is a question similar to the one which arises from Price's other claim, which we noted in Chapter III, that <u>cause</u> is a simple idea and yet contains the idea of <u>power</u>. Furthermore, the implication is that Price considers these heads of virtue to be intuited as self-evident modes of virtuous conduct. This is quite difficult to accept in light of the fact

that they often interfere with each other. (R 166) Price asserts to the contrary,

> The principles themselves, it should be remembered, are self-evident; and to conclude the contrary, or to assert that there are no moral distinctions, because of the obscurity attending several cases wherein a competition arises between the several principles of morality, is very unreasonable. (R 168)

and,

> . . . though the heads of virtue before-mentioned agree thus far in requiring the same course of action, yet they often also interfere. Though upon the whole, or when considered as making one general system or plan of conduct, there is a strict coincidence between them, yet in examining single acts and particular cases, we find that they lead us contrary ways. (R 166)

We have already noticed that Price considers the problem of whether rightness or wrongness is evident with reference to classes or kinds of actions or motives--giving general principles or rules--or whether only the moral character of particular actions is known by intuition. The former is now commonly known as "rule morality," the latter as "act morality." Price deals with the problem by considering the multiple bearing of several heads of virtue on one act.

We have noticed also that Price holds that all heads of duty are modifications of the same thing--virtue. For example, "An act of justice may be also an act of gratitude and beneficence; and whatever any of these oblige us to, that also piety to God requires." (R 166)

Price holds that these duties ". . . to gain assent, need only to be understood." Their truth "appears as

irresistibly as the truth of those which are the foundation of Geometry." (R 169) When we consider particular cases, however, these principles often interfere with one another. The principle of self-love often interferes with that of benevolence. Moreover, these two principles interfere with others in particular cases. Price's solution holds,

> . . . in order to discover what is right in a case, we ought to extend our views to all the different heads of virtue, to examine how far each is concerned, and compare their respective influence and demands; and that at the same time they often interfere; a second source of insuperable difficulties will appear. It is not alone sufficient to satisfy us that an action is to be done, that we know it will be the means of good to others: we are also to consider how it affects ourselves, what it is in regard to justice, and all the other circumstances the case may involve must be taken in, and weighed, if we would form a true judgment concerning it. In reality, before we can be capable of deducing demonstrably, accurately and particularly, the whole rule of right in every instance, we must possess universal and unerring knowledge. It must be above the power of any finite understanding to do this. (R 170)

It seems that after due consideration of the different heads of duty, and all other circumstances, we are to intuit what reason perceives to be right in the given situation even though the action may not be objectively right. The action may not be objectively right since as finite beings we are incapable of deducing the whole rule of right in every instance. Only the infinite being with universal and unerring knowledge could be objectively right in every instance. The virtue of the finite being is assured, however, if his motive which determines the

action conforms to his perception of rectitude as applied to the particular case.

It seems that Price's virtues of piety, gratitude, justice and veracity constitute a system of rule intuitionism whereas his virtues of beneficence and prudence constitute a system of act morality.[1] Earlier we mentioned that Price's ethics in his six heads of virtue was deontological even though the consideration of benevolence and prudence introduces teleological considerations. The competition of virtues would seem always to be between these two sets of virtues, and between prudence and benevolence.

At the end of Chapter VII, Price considers the objection to intuitionism which is based on the considerable difference in the moral practices in different ages and countries. Price says, ". . . the diversity of men's sentiments concerning moral matters . . ." is explained as practical errors of men which have ". . . plainly arisen from their speculative errors; from their mistaking facts or not seeing the whole of a case." (R 171)

Men err in judgment, imagination, and reasoning. Men would not hold that others have no speculative reasoning powers because they arrive at false opinions. Price holds that education, custom and prejudice all darken the

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[1]The introduction of beneficence and prudence in Price's ethical system allows for teleological considerations. Insofar as any system of ethics allows for rules as the sole consideration of whether an act is right or wrong, however, it is deontic. More will be said on this topic in Chapter VI.

action of reason, and that moral judgments differ with age, maturity, and circumstances. These factors account for a lack of uniformity of agreement between intuitionists. This lack of uniformity of agreement seems to be one of the weaker spots in ethical intuitionism. Price, however, offers as interesting an explanation for this weakness as any intuitionist with which I am acquainted.

Nevertheless, it is to be remembered that in spite of the fact that intuitionism is subject to criticism, Price maintains the view that practical errors have resulted from speculative errors, "mistaking the facts, or not seeing the whole of a case." (R 171) Thus the degree of practical virtue of the rational agent is directly proportional to "the degree of regard or disregard, of attachment or the want of attachment to truth and rectitude . . ." (R 200) as the agent perceives them to be.

(4) Degrees of Virtue and Degrees of Right and Wrong

> . . . 'the degree of regard, of attachment or the want of attachment to truth and rectitude evidenced by actions, is what determines the judgment we make of the degree of moral good and evil in them.' External actions are to be considered as signs of the motives and views of agents. We can, in general, infer the latter from the former with sufficient certainty. But when this happens to be impracticable, we are rendered incapable of forming any judgment of the merit or demerit of actions. (R 200-201)

The major discussion of "degrees of virtue" is found in Chapter IX. However, certain references to "degrees of virtue" are to be found in other parts of the Review. In order really to understand what Price intends by "degrees

of virtue," our proposed definition of virtue and the distinction between virtuous acts and virtuous agents should be recalled. These proposed definitions are listed below:

Virtuous agent =df an agent disposed to be governed by the motive of rectitude for its own sake, i.e. as a rule and end (R 184), as rectitude is perceived by reason.

Virtuous act = df an act which proceeds from the agent's intention of adhering to rectitude as rule and end, (the only moral motive) as perceived by reason. (R 184)

Turning again to degrees of virtue, Price thinks that men who neglect their duty to God are less virtuous than those who do their duty to God. Similarly, individuals who neglect their duty to other men, or to themselves, are more or less virtuous depending upon the degree of neglect (omission) or commission of their duty.

> Whatever good any person does, or whatever degree of real virtue he possesses, he is sure, in some way or other, to be the better for. (R 144)

> True and genuine virtue must be uniform and universal. Nothing short of an entire good character can avail to our acceptance. (R 165-166)

Partial virtue of an agent, says Price, is defective and inconsistent. (R 165) If a person lives in neglect of any one of his duties, this person is a

> . . . rebel against reason, and an apostate from righteousness and order, as if he neglected them all. . . . To transgress in one point (I mean habitually and wilfully) is to throw off effectually our allegiance, and to trample on the whole authority . . . (R 165)

Price holds that the

> . . . virtue of an agent is always less in proportion to the degree in which natural temper and propensities fall in with his actions, instinctive principles

> operate, and rational reflexion on what is right to be done, is wanting. (R 195)

In other words, Price is saying that since other considerations diminish the degree of attachment to the only moral motive, rectitude for the sake of rectitude, the virtue of an agent is diminished to a proportionate degree. Similarly, it might be maintained, an action, i.e. an external event, which originates from considerations other than the moral motive alone, rectitude for the sake of rectitude, is not a virtuous action (an action which is subjectively right). Even though this action should prove to be objectively right, it would merit little praise.

> When secular interest, love of fame, curiosity, resentment, or any of our particular propensions conspire with virtue in exciting to an action, it is in the same proportion virtuous as the apprehension of its rectitude influenced to it, which can never be accounted much, when the action is known to fall in with the bent and humour of our minds and the current of our passions. (R 201)

Unless the action were motivated by an attachment to rectitude (the degree of attachment being directly proportional to the degree of virtue of the action), it would have no moral worth. However, if <u>all</u> temptations should fail to hinder our determination to perform an action because it is right, "the virtue must be greatest." (R 201) Complete attachment to the motive of rectitude for the sake of rectitude, as perceived by reason, renders the virtue of the agent "the greatest." Furthermore, that action which originates from this motive, in spite of all temptations to the contrary, would likewise "be greatest."

On the other hand, ". . . the same circumstances which diminish the virtue of any action, increase the vice in omitting it, and vice versa." (R 202) Thus Price puts virtue and vice on a more or less qualitative continuum.

Price takes exception to Hutcheson's method for computing degrees of virtue.

> It may be worth observing, how very deficient Dr. Hutcheson's manner of computing the morality of actions is. . . . he gives us this general Canon. 'The virtue is as the moment of good produced, diminished or increased, by the private interest concurring with or opposing it, divided by the ability.' (R 208-209)

Price holds that Hutcheson has tried to maintain that benevolence is the whole of virtue and has omitted the virtues of promoting private happiness and duty to Deity.

> If, instead of benevolence, we substitute, in the rules he has given, regard to right, or attachment to virtue and duty, they will, I think, be in the main just. (R 209)

Ultimately, the degree of virtue of an agent (like the degree of virtue of an act), is directly proportional to the agent's degree of rational attachment to his perception of rectitude and inversely proportional to the degree in which propensities, inclinations, and instincts operate to reinforce his attachment to what is right to be done.

The degree of virtue of an agent does not depend upon the difficulties and inconveniences attendant to performing actions which are subjectively right, although these difficulties often show defects in the character.

Now it may be asked whether it is possible for any finite rational being to be completely virtuous. From the standpoint of virtue as practical, it might be possible. From the standpoint of a subjectively right action, that an agent may always act according to reason's perception of rectitude as the sole motive, it is possible. From the standpoint of objectively right actions, however, it is impossible. Except an agent could have an infinite knowledge, and be perfectly rational, he could not have a perfect knowledge of rectitude. Thus Price had to distinguish between two types of virtue, "Absolute Virtue," and "Practical Virtue." This distinction was made in order to explain that even a finite rational being is capable of being considered virtuous. This distinction will be expounded in a following section.

We have noted that a consideration of "Degrees of Virtue" leads Price to consider "Degrees of Right and Wrong."

While "Degrees of Virtue and Vice" apply both to agents and actions, "Degrees of Right and Wrong" apply only to actions. It is actions which are either right or wrong.

We have already proposed tentative definitions of subjectively right act and objectively right act. Only the act which is subjectively right is a virtuous act. According to our definition, we defined a right act in its two senses as follows:

i. Subjectively right act =df an act which proceeds from the agent's motive to adhere to reason's perception of rectitude for the sake of rectitude.

ii. Objectively right act =df an act (the real event produced) which adheres to rectitude, in the absolute sense, regardless of whether it proceeds from rectitude as the moral motive.

Right and wrong vary with degree as predicable of actions insofar as they are classified under the heads of virtue and vice, according in part to the circumstances which further qualify and classify the actions. Price, it should be said, uses right and wrong as synonyms for fitness and unfitness, respectively.

> From the different natures, properties, and positions of different objects result necessarily different relative fitnesses and unfitnesses; different productive powers; different aptitudes to different ends, and agreements or disagreements among themselves. What is there absurd or exceptionable in saying, likewise, that from the various relations of beings and objects, there result different obligations of conduct. (R 128-29)

Fitness is a variable property, like weight or number. Just as some things are heavier than others and the objects in some sets more numerous than those in other sets, so some actions are more fit than other actions; also, if we compare a certain fit (i.e., right) action with another unfit (i.e. wrong) action, it will sometimes be the case that the fit action is more fit than the unfit action is unfit. In other words, there are degrees of rightness and wrongness. But this does not make right and wrong to be relational properties. They are, according to Price's use of "right" and "wrong," absolute rather than relational

properties.

Of course, what determines the degree of rightness or wrongness of an action might include the relation of the moral agent to certain other objects; i.e., the circumstances. E.g., one and the same (kind of) action vis á vis a certain child might be more fit if the agent was the child's father than it would be if the agent was not a relative of the child. But that the determinants of rightness include relations and circumstances does not make rightness to be a relational property. It is still an absolute (but variable, i.e. more and less) property of actions.

All actions are right only to the degree to which they correspond to rectitude, as the agent perceives rectitude to be his end and rule, for a given act. To the degree that actions are influenced by other considerations, they are correspondingly less right and more wrong. Only the being who possesses infinite knowledge will always perform actions in which the degree of rightness will complete (100% right). Also only this infinitely rational being is capable only of acts where the subjective and objective senses of right will always be the same. This is true since only this infinitely rational being is capable of perceiving rectitude perfectly in every action.

(5) Essentials of a Good Character

Although only the being who is infinitely rational and powerful perceives rectitude perfectly, in order to have good character, a finite moral agent should be reasonable and disposed to be governed by his perception of rectitude as his sole moral motive. When inferior propensities and appetites overpower reason, vice results. The stronger our perception of rectitude becomes, the stronger the character becomes as reflection increasingly and more carefully judges, examines, directs, and controls the appetites and propensities. Acting according to reason's perception of rectitude should be the finite moral agent's governing motive for his entire life. Only by obedience to the law of rectitude, as perceived by reason, is the agent characterized as virtuous. Only then is it possible most fully to develop the truly highest and noblest character.

> If then we would know our own characters, and determine to which class of men we belong, the good or the bad; we must compare our regard to everlasting truth and righteousness with our regard to friends, credit, pleasure, and life; our love of God and moral excellence with our love of inferior objects, the dominion of reason with the force of appetite and find which prevail. Until the rational part gets the victory over the animal part, and the main bent of the heart is turned towards virtue; until the principles of piety and goodness obtain in some degree the supremacy, and the passions have been made to resign their usurped power, we are within the confines of vice and misery. (R 218)

> . . . the ruling passion . . . denominates the character. The ruling love of power, fame, and distinction, denominates a man ambitious; the ruling love of pleasure, a man of pleasure; of money, a covetous man. And in like manner, the ruling love of God, of our fellow-creatures, and of rectitude and truth, denominates a man virtuous. (R 219)

Price gives four criteria of how we may know that the love of virtue, essential to good character, is predominant in us. (1) If virtue and conscience rule within us, they will present themselves as objects of thought most frequently and unavoidably. It becomes the utmost consideration in settling all our schemes and resolutions. (2) The predominance of virtue will be exhibited in "actual practice, or in the course of the life and conversation. . . . The strength of inward affections is always in proportion to their effects on the external conduct." (R 220) A good character is never one in which virtue is partial.

(3) "In order to determine whether the love of virtue is predominant in us, it is proper further to enquire, what degree of delight we have in it." (R 222)

(4) Another characteristic of good character is ". . . a constant desire to improve." (R 224) A good character becomes increasingly better as the degree of superiority of the attachment to reason's perception of rectitude increases.

> True goodness must be a growing thing. All habits by time and exercise gain strength. It is not to be imagined, that he has sound principle of virtue in him, who is not concerned about confirming them to the utmost, and obtaining a total victory over all the enemies of his happiness and perfection. (R 224)

Price adds that he has a "melancholy prospect of the condition of mankind." (R 230) The majority of mankind is neither truly good nor truly bad. "True goodness . . . is by no means so common as we could wish; and that indifference and carelessness which we see in a great part of mankind, must be utterly inconsistent with it." (R 230) Since true goodness is not widespread, it is obvious that Price expects the majority of mankind to perform actions that may be right to a degree, wrong to a degree, depending upon the degree of indifference and carelessness of each moral agent.

Finally, it might be noted briefly that for both Price and Aristotle, in the formation of good character, habituation is important. Also both men hold that one who practices virtue derives pleasure from it if virtue becomes a stable part of his character. But an important difference ends their similarities.

Whereas Price holds that it is the duty of reason to perceive rectitude as a motive to moral action, Aristotle defines virtue as a disposition or habit which enables an agent to perform a certain act well. Also with respect to certain virtues, piety, gratitude, justice and veracity, Price has a deontological system of ethics whereas Aristotle's system is the "arctetic" type of ethics which avoids rules and principles. For Aristotle, the concept of duty as an attachment to reason's perception of rectitude would be completely foreign.

Much more might have been said about Price, especially with respect to the relation of morality to the Divine Nature, God's Moral Government, etc. But these are doctrines of natural religion and not of ethics. Although much more might have been said about Price's similarities to several classical philosophers, which we noted earlier was not properly the topic for this dissertation, as delineated in Chapter I, we have also noted several similarities of Price's views to those of Kant. In keeping with one of our purposes, a brief treatment of some of these similarities will be given in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI

PRICE AND IMMANUEL KANT

In previous chapters we have noticed a number of similarities between the views of Richard Price and Immanuel Kant. In Chapter I, several writers were quoted who commented on the similarities between the two philosophers. Fowler and Wilson express agreement with those writers who discern similarities between Price and Kant.

> Those who are familiar with the writings of Kant (which are posterior to those of Price) will recognise many points of resemblance, both in the fundamental ideas and in the modes of expression. Amongst these are the exaltation of reason; the depreciation of the affections; their unwillingness to regard the 'partial and accidental structure of humanity,' the 'mere make and constitution of man,' as the basis of morality, in other words to recognise ethical distinctions as relative to human nature; the ultimate and irresolvable character of the idea of Rectitude; the notion that the Reason imposes this idea, as a law, upon the Will, becoming thus an independent spring of action; liberty or 'the power of acting and determining;' the importance attached to Reason as a distinct source of ideas; and, it may be added, the discrimination (so celebrated in the philosophy of Kant) of the moral (or practical) and the speculative understanding (or reason).[1]

In addition to these similarities of doctrine, other similarities of background have been suggested by Professor Henry S. Leonard:

(1) Price was born in 1723. Kant was born in 1724. So they are as near to being contemporaries as any two philosophers could be.

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[1] Principles of Morals, p. 70.

(2) They are both making rationalist reactions to the views of David Hume, so in a sense they have a common aim, both in epistemology and in value theory. Kant tells us that it was "Hume who awoke me from my dogmatic slumber."[1] Similarly, Price states,

> . . . I owe much to the philosophical writings of Mr. Hume which I studied early in life. Though an enemy to his skepticism, I have profited by it. By attacking with great ability, every principle of truth and reason, he put me upon examining the ground upon which I stood, and taught me not hastily to take anything for granted. (R 14)

(3) On the other hand, even though contemporaries and possessed of a common aim, Price's reaction antedates Kant's by twenty to thirty years:

Price		Kant	
Review,	1st edition--1758	Critique of Pure Reason	--1781
	2nd edition--1769	Prolegomena	--1783
	3rd edition--1787	Metaphysics of Morals	--1785
died	--1791	Critique of Practical Reason	--1790
		died	--1804

(4) I know of no evidence that Price was acquainted with Kant's work, either in epistemology or in ethics, nor that Kant used or knew Price's work. At least this conclusion seems tenable after a check of the indexes of the complete works of Kant, in several editions, fails to disclose any reference to Richard Price. Finally, no less an authority on Kant than Lewis Beck White, in his book, A Commentary

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[1] Critique of Pure Reason, p. 12.

on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason, asserts, "There is no evidence that Kant knew of . . . Price." (CKCPR 41n) Thus, even though Price and Kant were contemporaries and both thinkers reacted to Hume, who was

> born 1711, and published his
>
> Treatise--1738,
>
> Inquiry Concerning Knowledge--1748,
>
> Enquiry Concerning Morals--1751,
>
> and died--1776,

their reactions were completely independent of one another. But their reactions were near enough to the time of Hume so as not to be seriously affected by intervening reactions[1] and/or developments.

It is impossible to be certain concerning the reason why Price anticipates similar positions developed in Kant in so many respects. One reason may be their common Protestant backgrounds.[2] Schilpp claims,

> So far from finding Kant's early Pietistic up-bringing a handicap for the development of his more fruitful ethical ideas, we discovered that it was largely responsible for Kant's deep sense of the worth of the

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[1]It is noteworthy that both men also reacted to Hutcheson, Shaftesbury, Locke and Berkeley in addition to Hume.

[2]Rader, Melvin, Ethics and the Human Community, p. 144. "Reared in a pious family, he was deeply imbued with the spirit of Protestant ethics and religion. . . . In his insistence that every human being is an end in himself, he expressed in philosophical terms the Christian doctrine of the infinite intrinsic worth of the human soul . . ." It would seem, then, that this claim by Rader, supported by Kelsen and Schlipp, deserves to be noticed.

> individual man as a self-conscious and responsible moral agent, and for his growing recognition of the social implications in this doctrine of the dignity of human nature. (KPE 88)

Hans Kelsen goes even further in his claim that Kant's ethical theory

> . . . can be regarded as the most perfect expression of the classical doctrine of natural law as it evolved in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on the basis of Protestant Christianity.[1]

Also Kelsen asserts that Kant's personality was so deeply rooted in Christianity that he was unable to emancipate himself completely from metaphysics.[2]

While it is true that many thinkers of the eighteenth century had a Protestant background, not every thinker was as deeply influenced by Protestant Christianity as Kant and Price. Both men, for example, originally intended to become ministers. Although Kant revolted in part against his Pietistic training, many of its principles were influences in the formulation of his theory of ethics. Much more could be said to support this contention, such as their reverence for the Bible, as indicated by their respective testimonies concerning it as well as their quotations from it. In spite of all these similarities, however, the fact remains that both men were able to develop a system of secular ethics almost totally independent of revealed religion. Price, it is true, discusses piety as one of the "chief heads of duty." He goes much farther

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[1] General Theory of Law and State, trans. A. Wedberg (Harvard: Cambridge, Mass., 1949), p. 444.

[2] Ibid., p. 445.

in his sermons by claiming that the "God of Natural Religion is the God of Christianity."[1] Incidentally, Immanual Kant also speaks of our relationship to God:

> Our bearing towards God must be characterized by reverence, love and fear--reverence for Him as a holy lawgiver, love for his beneficent rule, and fear of Him as a just judge. We show our reverence by regarding His law as holy and righteous, by due respect for it, and by seeking to fulfill it in our disposition. We may honour a person outwardly, but reverence springs from the disposition of the heart. The moral law is in our eyes worthy of the highest esteem and honour. When, therefore, we think of God as its author, we must honour Him in terms of supreme moral worth, and while we may be struck with wonder in contemplating God and overawed by His greatness and infinity, while we may be conscious of our littleness before Him, our reverence can take no other than the moral form. (LE 97)

Turning to certain features of their ethical systems, we note that many doctrines of Price and Kant are quite similar. Many superficial comparisons of these two theories might be made. In order to go into any degree of depth, however, it is necessary to restrict the issues to be treated to a small number. These issues include the similarities of Price and Kant on the relation of duty and inclination, deontology, and the conflict of the duties, especially of veracity with prudence and benevolence.

We have already noted in Chapter V that Price insists that an action which springs from instinctive desire has no moral significance. This view is essentially identical to Kant's view. Kant's view is illustrated by

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[1] A Sermon at Hackney, p. 17.

reference to the concept of duty.[1]

According to Kant, only when a rational agent performs an action from pure respect for duty is his action considered moral. Inclination is never the determining ground of a moral action. The virtuous rational agent is resolved to act from duty regardless of his inclination. It is not the case that he does his duty only if he happens to be inclined to this particular action. It is possible that his inclination may be in accordance with duty--not always counter to duty. It is the case, however, that if the person should act from inclination, and it by chance coincides with duty, that action is of no moral significance. The action is called amoral. It is neither moral nor immoral. Many writers have misinterpreted Kant as holding that an action done from duty must always militate against inclination and, therefore, be unpleasant. This is definitely a misinterpretation of Kant's ethics.[2] The position which Kant holds is that the coincidence of action with inclination is not of moral significance. It is whether the action originates from duty alone, aside from any consideration of inclination as a motive, which determines the moral value of the action. On the other

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[1]It is assumed that the reader will be acquainted with Kant's major ethical works such as his Metaphysics of Morals and the Critique of Practical Reason. This allows the writer to utilize Kant's Lectures on Ethics which are very important, but not well known, in part of this chapter.

[2]M. Reader, Ethics and the Human Community, pp. 143-159.

hand, if an action is contrary to duty, it is considered immoral. Kant, like Price holds that only with respect to the "holy will," will duty and inclination always be identical. With the wills of finite agents, however, inclination is often contrary to duty. Moreover, men are characterized by freedom and are not predetermined to obey the universal moral law of rectitude.

Price is very close to the position of Kant on the relation of inclination to duty. In illustrating his position, Price gives an example which was also used by Kant. Perhaps the most Kantian passage in Price's entire Review is the following:

> . . . instinctive benevolence is no principle of virtue, nor are any actions flowing merely from it virtuous. As far as this influences, so far something else than reason and goodness influences, and so much I think is to be subtracted from the moral worth of any action or character. . . . the tenderness of parents for their offspring, a fond mother's exposing her life to save her child, and all actions proceeding from the nearer attachments of nature appear to have as much less moral value, as they are derived from natural instinct, and less attended with reflexion on their reasonableness and fitness. As long as this reflexion is wanting, it is in a moral account indifferent, whether the action proceeds, from moral affection or any other affection. (R 191-192)

Kant also speaks of the example of the mother whose duty it is to love and care for her child. If the mother loves and cares for her child from mere inclination and affection, however commendable the action may be, it has no moral significance. (TE 282) Herein the inclination corresponds to duty. Duty, however, is not the motive. However, if the

woman loves and cares for her child because it is her duty, not merely because of inclination or instinct, even though inclination corresponds to duty or even if it conflicts with duty, the action is considered moral; not amoral as in the case where inclination corresponds to duty, nor immoral where inclination conflicts with duty. That this doctrine is not only held by both men, but illustrated by virtually the same example, is the most amazing example of the similarity of Price and Kant to each other.

Another similarity, at which we have hinted, is that both systems of ethics are deontological. Yet they are sufficiently different to warrant more exploration. We have noted, in Chapter V, that Price lists six heads of virtue: piety, gratitude, benevolence, prudence, veracity and justice. Kant does not include piety among his ethical duties, and even though he would not object to the principles entailed by the other virtues, gratitude, benevolence, prudence, veracity and justice, he does not call them "heads of virtue" as does Price.

In Chapter V, we have noted that Price seems to have a deontological system of ethics with respect to the virtues of piety, gratitude, justice and veracity. (R 166) Although the virtues of beneficence and prudence are end-oriented or teleological virtues, Price fits them into his deontological system as duties. (R 166) We are to be benevolent and prudent because it is our duty, avers

Price, and not because it is our inclination to be benevolent and prudent. We are to be benevolent and prudent not because we gain pleasure thereby but only because they are our duties. But benevolence and prudence are simply teleological. In being benevolent one must be teleologically oriented in one's decision concerning a particular act. But in Price's system,

"duty for duty's sake" is the sole moral motive and, therefore, one is to be deontologically oriented in one's decision as to whether to be benevolent and prudent. Cases of conflict would always be between the teleological and non-teleological virtues and between the virtues of prudence and beneficence. Since the virtue of veracity is usually a test-case between deontological ethics and other types, a consideration of the treatment of veracity by Kant and Price is in order. Kant's treatment of the virtue is far more interesting than Price's. In discussing "TRUTHFULNESS," (LE 224) Kant also gives his observations on several related topics such as "the white lie, mental reservation, equivocation, the need for frankness, and the right not to be spied upon."

While it is commonly known that Kant is against lying, it is not as commonly known that Kant considers lying to be only one species of falsehood. Prior to considering the types of falsehood, in his Lectures on Ethics, Kant holds that in keeping a secret the best mode of expressing one's self is a "prudent reserve." (LE 225) A man should

not be totally silent (completely reserved) for this is an extreme. The opposite extreme is represented by the "person who is loquacious . . ." (LE 226) Kant considers both tendencies to be weaknesses. Although both tendencies, the disposition to be mute and the disposition to be loquacious, are weaknesses, neither disposition runs counter to duty. On the other hand, since a lie (mendacium) is immoral, the disposition to lie should be corrected.

Kant continues to discuss the subject of lying:

> If I announce my intention to tell what is in my mind, ought I knowingly to tell everything, or can I keep anything back: If I indicate that I mean to speak my mind, and instead of doing so make a false declaration, what I say is an untruth, a falsiloquium. But there can be falsiloquium even when people have no right to assume that we are expressing our thoughts. It is possible to deceive without making any statement whatever. I can make believe, make a demonstration from which others will draw the conclusion I want, though they have no right to expect that my action will express my real mind. In that case I have not lied to them, because I had not undertaken to express my mind. I may, for instance, wish people to think that I am off on a journey, and so I pack my luggage; people draw the conclusion I want them to draw; but others have no right to demand a declaration of my will from me. . . . Again, I may make a false statement (falsiloquium) when my purpose is to hide from another what is in my mind and when the latter can assume that such is my purpose, his own purpose being to make a wrong use of the truth. Thus, for instance, if my enemy takes me by the throat and asks where I keep my money, I need not tell him the truth, because he will abuse it; and my untruth is not a lie (mendacium) because the thief knows full well that I will not, if I can help it, tell him the truth and that he has no right to demand it of me. But let us assume that I really say to the fellow, who is fully aware that he has no right to demand it, because he is a swindler, that I will tell him the truth, and I do not, am I then a liar? He has deceived me and I deceive him in return; to him, as an individual, I have done no injustice and he cannot complain; but I am none the less a liar in

> that my conduct is an infringement of the rights of humanity. It follows that a falsiloquium can be a mendacium--a lie--especially when it contravenes the right of an individual. Although I do a man no injustice by lying to him when he has lied to me, yet I act against the right of mankind, since I set myself in opposition to the condition and means through which any human society is possible. . . . Not every untruth is a lie; it is a lie only if I have expressly given the other to understand that I am willing to acquaint him with my thought. . . . But if we were to be at all times punctiliously truthful we might often become victims of the wickedness of others who were ready to abuse our truthfulness. (LE 227-228)

Kant argues that since men are often malicious instead of always being well-intentioned, "to be punctiliously truthful is often dangerous." (LE 228) Thus the "conception of the white lie" is ". . . enforced upon us by necessity--a difficult point for moral philosophers." (LE 228) Kant states that ". . . if necessity is urged as an excuse it might be urged to justify stealing, cheating and killing, and the whole basis of morality goes by the board." (LE 228) But in order to explain the only justification for a white lie, Kant says,

> Consider, for example, the following case. A man who knows that I have money asks me; 'Have you any money on you?' If I fail to reply, he will conclude that I have; if I reply in the affirmative he will take it from me; if I reply in the negative, I tell a lie. What am I to do? If force is used to extort a confession from me, if my confession is improperly used against me, and if I cannot save myself by maintaining silence, then my lie is a weapon of defence. The misuse of a declaration extorted by force justifies me in defending myself. For whether it is my money or a confession that is extorted makes no difference. The forcing of a statement from me under conditions which convince me that improper use would be made of it is the only case in which I can be justified in telling a white lie. (LE 228)

Although a white lie is justified only under conditions where an "improper use would be made of it . . .", avers Kant, a lying promise, with the intention to cheat, cannot be justified. Kant distinguishes a lying promise from "a breach of faith." A "breach of faith is a true promise which is not kept." A true promise is always morally praiseworthy for the intention is pure--even where there is a breach of faith, for sometimes circumstances beyond the control of the promiser interfere with the fulfillment of true promises.

Also in the section on "TRUTHFULNESS," Kant philosophizes on the command, "Judge not others!" and on the evil of spying.

> The moral disposition of others are for God to judge, but we are competent judges of our own. We cannot judge the inner core of morality: no man can do that; but we are competent to judge its outer manifestations. In matters of morality we are not judges of our fellows, but nature has given us the right to form judgments about others and she also has ordained that we should judge ourselves in accordance with judgments that others form about us. . . . (LE 230)

Kant deplores spying. He declares,

> Everyone has a right to prevent others from watching and scrutinizing his actions. The spy arrogates to himself the right to watch the doings of strangers; no one ought to presume to do such a thing. . . . It is very mean to lie in wait and spy upon a friend, or on anyone else, and to elicit information about him from menials by lowering ourselves to the level of our inferiors, who will thereafter not forget to regard themselves as our equals. Whatever militates against frankness lowers the dignity of man. Insidious, underhand conduct uses means which strike at the roots of society because they make frankness impossible; it is far viler than violence; for against violence we can defend ourselves, and a violent man

> who spurns meanness can be tamed to goodness, but the mean rogue, who has not the courage to come out into the open with his roguery, is devoid of every vestige of nobility of character. (LE 231-232)

So far, Kant has expressed sentiments with which, for the most part, Price would agree. Kant's approval of the "white lie" in his Lectures on Ethics, and his unusual application of the distinction between falsehood as falsiloquium and falsehood as mendacium, constitute Kantian doctrine that is not generally attributed to Kant. Nevertheless, these distinctions render his doctrines, found in the Metaphysics of Morals and his Critique of Practical Reason, capable of being understood in a different light.

In defense of Kant, it might be argued that one maxim of duty is often limited by another maxim of duty.[1] (This, incidentally, is a view similar to Price's view of the interference of the "chief heads of virtue.") For example, we have noted that in Kant's view, in Lectures on Ethics, Kant urges the necessity of prudence. He also contrasts the prerequisites of prudence and morality.

> Prudence requires a good understanding, morality a good will. If our conduct as free agents is to have moral goodness, it must proceed solely from a good will. . . . But while a sound understanding is requisite to prudence, to morality what is requisite is a will which is simply good in itself. (LE 18)

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[1] For Kant, maxims are limited by the formal principle of the categorical imperative. Although maxims are not deducible from a general law, they are "regarded as those subjective laws which merely have the specific character of universal legislation, . . ." (KTE li-lii) and (KTE 299)

Apparently, for Kant, prudence could not be considered to be moral unless each maxim of action springs from the good will. Moreover, the question arises as to how it is possible that the good will could give rise to a maxim of telling a white lie even when the questioner would have no right to the truth and when he intends to make an improper use of the truth.[1] But since Kant condones the use of the white lie in this case, it might be asked if he could extend its application to benevolence.

We have already offered a definition of benevolence for Richard Price.[2] "Benevolence is the disposition to be governed by the motive of rectitude, as perceived by reason, in promoting the happiness of others." Kant says,[3]

> Acts which have in view the welfare of another and are prompted by and proportioned to his wants are acts of kindness. . . . they are acts of benevolence if they alleviate real needs; . . . (LE 235)

These acts of kindness are called

> magnanimous, if they entail the sacrifice of an advantage; . . . and if they alleviate the extreme necessities of life they are acts of charity. (LE 235)

Incidentally, Kant avers that if all men would perform their duty of charity, there would be no poor people.

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[1]Kant is unwilling to permit a white lie in his later works.

[2]Price's view of benevolence seems to be much more inclusive than Kant's view.

[3]In Part II of The Metaphysics of Morals, Kant's "The Doctrine of Virtue" is divided into two parts: "PART ONE: Duties to Oneself" and "PART TWO: Duties of Virtue to Other Men." These two parts correspond, roughly, to what Price calls prudence and benevolence respectively.

Poverty would have been eliminated.

Turning to the issue of the conflict between the duties of benevolence and veracity, one wonders why Kant does not make allowance for the "white lie" as he did earlier in his teaching career in the case where the other person would make improper use of the truth. That he does not appear to allow for the use of the white lie under any condition is indicated by his controversy with Benjamin Constant, a French philosopher.[1] Constant argued that it is right to tell a lie to a would-be murderer in order to save his intended victim.[2] Says Constant,

> The moral principle that it is one's duty to speak the truth, if it were taken singly and unconditionally, would make all society impossible. We have the proof of this in the very direct consequences which have been drawn from this principle by a German philosopher, who goes so far as to affirm that to tell a falsehood to a murderer who asked us whether our friend, of whom he was in pursuit, had not taken refuge in our house, would be a crime. (KTE 361)

Kant replies,

> The French philosopher opposes this principle in the following manner, . . . "It is a duty to tell the truth. . . . To tell the truth then is a duty, but only towards him who has a right to the truth. But

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[1]Immanuel Kant, "On A Supposed Right to Tell Lies from Benevolent Motives," Kant's Critique of Practical Reason and other Works on The Theory of Ethics (Trans. by Thomas K. Abbott), 5th edition (London: Longmans, Green, and Co.), 1898, p. 361.

[2]It is interesting that Kant appeals to consequences, i.e. the intended victim might escape as a result of telling the truth whereas he might be killed if he should tell a lie since the intended victim might slip out unnoticed. (KTE 363) This appeal to consequences as justification for telling the truth is a teleological consideration.

> no man has a right to a truth that injures others." (KTE 362)

But, continues Kant, ". . . the first question is whether (KTE 362) a man--in cases where he cannot avoid answering Yes or No--has the right to be untruthful." Kant's answer is categorically no. Kant argues that if the man tells a benevolent lie, he may ". . . become punishable even by civil laws." (KTE 362) An example of this would be the case where the victim should have departed from the house unobserved, and the murderer should find him as a result of the lie. (KTE 362) Kant declares,

> To be truthful (honest) in all declarations is therefore a sacred unconditional command of reason, and not to be limited by any expediency. (KTE 363)
>
> The duty of truthfulness makes no distinction between persons to whom one has this duty and to whom one can exempt himself from this duty; rather, it is an unconditional duty which holds in all circumstances. (KTE 365)

The duty to tell the truth is a formal duty which holds true independently of any circumstances, according to Kant. He might have defended his theory better if he had maintained that it should be universalized that "everyone should lie in order to save an innocent man from murder."[1]

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[1] At least this suggestion would seem to be compatible with the categorical imperative, "Act only on that maxim whereby you could at the same time will that it should become a universal law." (TE 302-18) It would also conform to the second statement of the categorical imperative with respect to the intended victim: "Act so as to treat humanity whether in your own person or in that of another always as an end and never as a means only." Also it seems that it would not conflict with the principle of the autonomy of the will in legislating universal laws for

Then it would have at least been consistent with his former view shown by the introduction of the white lie in order to save oneself from an extortion of a confession by one who would have no right to the truth. But for some reason Kant did not do this. Certainly, not many people who love the truth could agree with Kant at this point. It is apparent also that possibly Kant changed his view in even condoning a "white lie," between the time that he wrote his Lectures on Ethics, and his later writings. If, however, his Lectures on Ethics, as we have noted, should be too hastily accepted as his definitive view on the permissibility of the white lie to those individuals who have no right to the truth, without knowing his later works, then his views on lying would seem to be inconsistent with each other.

Lewis White Beck suggests an alternative explanation of the Kant-Constant controversy. He claims that Kant errs when he sometimes thinks ". . . of rules as valid without regard to circumstances, . . ." (ACKPR 80) In a footnote, however, he comments, "Recent studies have convincingly shown the relevance of circumstances to rules in Kant's ethics; . . ." (ACKPR 80) At this point we should remember that circumstances also have an important

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itself. See Ross's book, Kant's Ethical Theory for an alternative interpretation of this suggestion. "Any individual act is an instance of a class of acts which is a species of a class of acts which is a species of a still wider class." (p. 32)

role to play in Price's theory of ethics.

It seems that Kant's Lectures on Ethics, later compiled in book form, were given between the years 1775 and 1781. (LE xi) MacMurray comments,

> To the student of Kant the present volume has a threefold importance. It enables him to form some opinion of the material out of which Kant's systematic theory of morals was built, as it existed at the time . . . before the unifying ideas of his Metaphysic of Morals had been properly defined. In the second place, the lectures contain a great deal of material, particularly in the discussion and definition of leading ideas, which helps considerably towards the interpretation of the maturer and more authoritative works. Lastly, they reveal Kant as a practical moralist, applying his mind earnestly to the detail of conduct, and supremely concerned with the social effects of his moral teaching, in a way that none of his more speculative writings can hope to do. From the lectures we can form a concrete idea of Kant's own conception of the good life. (LE xi-xii)

If philosophers were better acquainted with Kant's Lectures on Ethics, as well as his other writings, they might not be quite as prone to criticize Kant, as does Rader, for example, for his formalism. Rader says,

> The weakest part of Kant's ethical . . . philosophy is his formalism. This leads him to neglect considerations of welfare and the rights of the individual. It is ultimately inconsistent with his belief in freedom and in man as an end in himself. (EHC 159)

Of course Rader's criticism of Kant, which is so typical of criticisms against Kant, has considerable merit if construed to be directed against Kant's position in his controversy with Constant. In fact, if we judge Kant by his maturer works, it is a cogent criticism.

It is difficult to determine how Price would deal with the Kant-Constant controversy. At least from the Review, it is apparent that Price loves truth and truthfulness. Nevertheless his approach to the Kant-Constant controversy would be considerably different from Kant's. Clearly Kant is unwilling to justify the use of the white lie under any conditions in his controversy with Constant. In keeping with his first statement of the categorical imperative, Kant could not with consistency universalize the maxim of lying. Unlike Kant, however, Price's approach to lying would not appeal to the criterion of universalizing the maxim of lying.

Price considers the virtues of veracity, prudence and benevolence to be self-evident duties which are intuited by the understanding. If he should have considered the Kant-Constant controversy, he would have recognized a competition between the duties of veracity and benevolence. In this case of the interference between these two virtues, Price would examine the circumstances and possible consequences as his understanding perceives them to be. I believe that Price would perceive that benevolence would be the stronger of the two conflicting duties in this "competition" of duties. In fact the duty of veracity would be greatly out-weighed by the duty of benevolence. Ultimately, then, if Price were confronted with this choice, my conjecture is that he would resolve the conflict by perceiving (intuiting) the right action to be to tell the white lie

in order to save the innocent victim from a would-be murderer. Only by telling the "white lie" would he be doing his "duty for the sake of duty," i.e. he would be acting according to his perception of rectitude. "Rectitude for the sake of rectitude" is the sole moral motive. I draw this conclusion not because of Price's great love for his fellow-man. I offer this conjecture only because I believe that Price would perceive that to tell the "white lie" in this situation would be his intuited resolution of the conflicting virtues. It would be what he perceived to be the right action. Of course it is true that an examination of other characteristics of Price's personality might support our conclusion of what Price would do in a given situation. I believe that a human being would rank higher in Price's estimation than an abstract principle such as Kant's principle of universality. It appears that he is much less subject to the charge of formalism than Kant.[1] Price would certainly respect Kant for his stand and would hold that Kant's act of telling the truth, with respect to a "competition" between the virtues of veracity and beneficence in the Kant-Constant controversy, would be an example of practical virtue. On the other hand, if Price should tell a white lie in order

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[1]It appears that Price was much more practical than Kant in respect to human beings. This is seen especially--as will be shown in the remainder of this chapter--in the way the two men conduct themselves in face of restrictive authority.

to foil the intention of the would-be murderer, he could also claim the white lie to be an example of an act which would be practically virtuous.[1]

We might also appeal to Price's insistence on political as well as individual freedom to reinforce our interpretation of Price. Even though Price was an Englishman, and considered himself to be a loyal citizen, we have noted, in Chapter II of this dissertation, that he supported the cause of American liberty from England's tyranny. The life and liberty of the American colonists were at stake. In spite of intense social and political opposition, Price continued to aid the cause of the Americans even though he corresponded under the number "176" in order to keep his identity a secret from political authorities. (TBF 93) Similarly, I believe that he would have used any means to aid the intended murder victim--even the white lie. Kant, on the other hand, obeyed Kaiser Frederick Wilhelm II when he was ordered not to write on the subject of religion.[2] (KTE xl) Kant believed that it was his unconditional duty to submit to political authority even though he too was in sympathy with the American and French Revolutions. The difference in the approach to obeying authority shows a

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[1]Price says, "Truth and right in all circumstances, require one determinate way of action; . . ." but different persons judge differently. (R 167-168)

[2]When Frederick Wilhelm II died, in 1797, "Kant regarded himself as free, and published his Contest of the Faculties . . ." (KTE xli)

basic difference in attitude toward obeying general rules. Price would obey directives which he believed to correspond to rectitude whereas Kant would obey authoritative directives unconditionally because he believed it a duty to obey authority--regardless of the consequences. Says Kant,

> To deny one's inner conviction is mean, but in such a case as this silence is the duty of a subject; and, although a man must say only what is true, it is not always a duty to say all the truth publicly.[1] (KTE xl)

In his reply to the king, Kant declared that to avoid suspicion, he "as his Majesty's most loyal subject," would be "solemnly engaged to refrain from writing or lecturing on religion, natural or revealed."[2] Abbot says,

> The words, "as your Majesty's most loyal subject," were inserted with the intention of limiting his engagement to the life of the king, . . . (KTE xl-xli)

Although I do not claim that Kant and Price would find a direct application of their political views, with respect to obeying authority, to their positions that might be taken on the Kant-Constant controversy, I suggest that it is a possibility. A pattern of how people react in one situation might enable a spectator to infer how they might react in another.

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[1]This quotation was found on a slip of paper after his death. Apparently, Kant mentioned the King's order to no one.

[2]It apparently never occurred to Kant that he could have continued to write under an anonymous name or a number as did Price. In fact I believe that Kant would have considered such a practice to conflict with duty and would, therefore, be immoral. Certainly, Kant could not have universalized the maxim of disobeying authority without a contradiction.

Much more could be said about similarities between Kant and Price. Many issues could be raised. We have undertaken, however, a comparison of a limited number of points. Other issues would constitute an undertaking for another thesis.[1] Before closing, however, a few more words might be said about the position of Kant as he is usually understood.

We have noted the excessive formalism and abstractness of Kant's categorical imperative and his position that it is immoral to violate a universal rule for the sake of consequences. Morality is never determined by consequences. Nor is morality determined by inclinations according to Kant in his more famous works. At least this is the way in which he is usually interpreted. Price is very close to Kant's position on morality, but he does not formulate the categorical imperative.

It is my view that Kant fails to discern the incompatibility of the first and second statements of his categorical imperative.[2] In expounding his second statement, the principle of humanity, Kant insists that a moral agent should improve his own moral and rational nature and also

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[1]Some of the other similarities mentioned by Fowler and Wilson, for example, seem worthy of further investigation.

[2]The two statements of the categorical imperative are listed: First, "Act only on that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." Second, "Always act so as to treat humanity whether in your own person or in that of another always as an end and never as a means only."

promote the happiness of others. Price would agree with Kant even though he did not formulate the second statement of the categorical imperative as does Kant. This statement raises teleological considerations, appeals to consequences, whereas the first statement of the imperative stresses universality, rectitude for the sake of rectitude, a deontic principle. The first principle, in certain situations, could be universalized to eliminate all the goodness in the universe. Of course Price does not state a categorical imperative and would probably be much less prone than Kant to accept such a statement of universality. Instead, Price would probably say, when duties conflict, each person is obligated to act according to his perception of right, i.e. moral intuition. In conclusion, I quote Oliver Johnson who rightly criticizes this type of ethical theory:

> If we appeal to the deontologist's own standard for the judgment of theories in ethics--moral insight--the answer seems inescapable: Their theory must be rejected. Rather than elucidating our non-theoretical moral convictions, this theory, I should contend, would render these convictions finally meaningless. For if one can fulfill his duty in the full meaning of that term and yet through his action leave the world in a worse condition than had he not acted at all, what significance can the notion of duty or moral obligation have? If such an action could be right, would we not have just as much reason for urging people to act wrongly as rightly? And if this be true, can any meaningful distinction be drawn between right and wrong? (RG 128-29)

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

This study has investigated the life and philosophic work of Richard Price, a philosopher who, for the most part, has been too long neglected and unheralded. An expository account of his life and works, and his epistemological and ethical theories, has been given.

It is of considerable interest to note Price's multifarious interests not only in philosophy, but in theology, the Christian ministry, economic and political theory, and in life insurance expectancy, statistics and mathematical probability.

We have noticed the *a priority* of Price's philosophy in both his ethics and in his metaphysics. Although his arguments are interesting, his claims to what can be known *a priori* in the realm of physics seem excessive in the light of the developments of modern science. The developments of multiple dimensional theories of geometry and space have replaced Newtonian three-dimensional space which Price believed to be *a priori*. Price's claims to *a priority* are far more excessive than those of Kant. It should be noted, however, that even if every example which Price uses should prove to be in error, his theory of intuitionism is not necessarily proven to be incorrect. In fact, his epistemological intuitionism could be a correct view in spite of many faulty applications.

Another point of interest is Price's view that the understanding immediately perceives simple ideas in both the realm of metaphysics and ethics. We have introduced the distinction between abstract ideas or concepts as "essence, number, identity, diversity, sc.," (R 19) on the one hand, and propositional ideas on the other hand, to alleviate the confusion into which Price falls as a result of lumping all these together as ideas--simple ideas at that. We have also noted that Price fails to differentiate ideas--which later were distinguished by Kant as percepts and concepts--from one another.

An interesting topic for future study would be a comparison of Price with modern intuitionists. A modern philosopher whom he most closely resembles in certain respects is W. D. Ross.

Without going into great detail, among the positions which resemble one another in the systems of Price and W. D. Ross are the distinction between prima facie and actual duties, the distinction between subjective and objective, i.e. the abstract senses of right, and the view held in common by both men as to how the right action, among alternatives, is determined, namely, that an agent is morally obligated to perform the act which he thinks to be most morally suitable to the circumstances as the agent thinks them to be.

This writer believes that the life and works of Richard Price have raised problems and issues, many of

which are not yet fully resolved. It may be asked, for example, whether any system of a priori ethics really accounts for the findings of sociologists and anthropologists. I am not suggesting that one has to abandon intuitionism's valid insights, which it may have. As an alternative to the a priori ethics of Price and Kant, Fowler and Wilson suggest that only an "a posteriori method" in ethics ". . . is able to prove its efficacy in regard to morals." (op. cit., 115) Furthermore, they say,

> In the history and growth of the human race it finds most of the materials necessary for its inductions, and for answering the various problems which a moralist is concerned to solve. . . . What is man? Of what improvement is he capable? . . . the nature of moral obligation, the nature and extent of human freedom . . . (op. cit., pp. 115-116)

It is noted, however, that a posteriori ethics could never give the universality and certainty which Price and Kant desire.

Another comment should be made which applies directly to intuitionists. Professor W. K. Frankena has asserted that unless the modern intuitionists attempt to explain in a satisfactory way ". . . non-empirical concepts, . . . a priori propositions, non-descriptive properties, practical reason," they no longer "deserve a hearing."[1] It is fortunate that he uses the word modern in describing intuitionism for I am certain that he is well aware that Richard Price, who anticipates certain features of modern

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[1]"Moral Philosophy at Mid-Century," Philosophical Review, Vol. IX, No. 1 (1950), p. 46.

intuitionism, has not even thought about some of these concepts.

Of considerable interest is Price's treatment of the idea of rectitude, or right. Price holds that all valid, obligatory, legal and moral claims are posterior to rectitude, that rectitude is presupposed by all valid positive laws, moral rules, and justice itself. The understanding intuitively perceives right, rectitude, as a simple idea. In spite of Price's lofty views on morality, a concluding comment is in order.

If right--rectitude--is a <u>simple</u> idea, as Price claims, it may be asked how it is possible that the ideas of goodness, and of good and ill desert, are constituents of right? Yet Price claims that they are, even though he does not explain how this is possible.

In Chapter VI we considered certain similarities between Price and Kant. Although the two men did not know each other or each other's works, several similarities in their ethical systems appear. We noted the similarities on the doctrine of the relation of duty to inclination and the law of rectitude. We also noticed certain similarities on their doctrines of virtue and the conflict of duties. The fact that Kant allows for a white lie under any condition was a fact unknown to this writer prior to this study. It was seen, however, that Price's distinction between the <u>absolute</u> and <u>practical</u> virtue of actions, allows each

individual to determine (according to circumstances) the act which would be right for him. This distinction allows for a difference in actions which individuals would perform under given circumstances, and even though none should be absolutely virtuous, they could each be practically virtuous. This doctrine allows for the integrity of each individual since each moral agent is responsible only to act according to his perception of rectitude--imperfect as it may be. Kant, I believe, would not allow for this distinction since the categorical imperative, for him, makes no exceptions. It holds as a formal, universal principle which Kant feels is the same for all rational beings. Just how he could allow for telling a "white lie" to a person who would have no right to the truth, and would misuse it, but not make allowance for the use of the white lie in order to save the life of another person (since a lie can never be sanctioned by the categorical imperative with respect to benevolent motives), is a glaring inconsistency in his moral doctrine.

Both Price and Kant contribute a system of deontic ethics. Price does not consider the Kant-Constant issue, but if he did he could uphold both thinkers as proposing acts of practical virtue. It is my conjecture that Price would agree with Constant.

Finally, it might be asked how non-empirical (a priori) ideas of virtues can be, as Price says, "self-evident"

and yet conflict. Price's explanation is not entirely satisfactory. What he calls "self-evident" is not always self-evident.

Much more could be said. The system of natural theology might have been discussed for it is quite similar for both Price and Kant. Further study of the concept of a priori knowledge as treated in the systems of Price and Kant would be valuable. All of these doctrines, however, seem to lie beyond the scope of this present undertaking on ethics. Both thinkers will undoubtedly prove of considerable interest to future generations of philosophers whether they approve or disapprove of Kant and Price. To these future generations we commend the study of ethics in general, and Kant and/or Price in particular, as an activity of dignified endeavor. We especially recommend the study of Price and/or Kant as a background for modern intuitionism.

Finally, it is my opinion that a theory of ethics is needed to do justice to the acceptable points in any ethical theory which is amenable to experience. Even the theories of Price and Kant, as lofty in moral precepts as they are, both fall short at this point. Any theory that is worthy of consideration today must consider the consequences of actions as determining, at least in part, their moral worth.

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