Shaftesbury, Hutcheson and Moral Scepticisms

Peter J.E. Kail

One is faced with a number of problems when attempting to write about 'scepticism' in connection with Shaftesbury and Hutcheson. The first is that neither Shafestbury nor Hutcheson offer a sustained discussion of 'scepticism', though, as we shall see, Shaftesbury has something to say about morality and its relation to a certain form of non-moral scepticism. A second problem concerns Shaftesbury. His writings defy standard philosophical classification, and so it is sometimes difficult to extract from them a determinate position. A third problem is that 'scepticism' is such a multifarious term that it is immensely difficult to track its meanings in the period with which we are concerned. And even if one were to narrow one's focus to 'moral scepticism', as I do here, it is still true that there is a bewildering number of positions occupying the logical space of 'moral scepticism'.[1] So I propose not to begin with some definition of 'moral scepticism', but instead discuss some of the worries about morality that the invocation of a 'moral sense' is supposed to meet. The bulk of the paper is devoted to discussing the relevant aspects of Shaftesbury. I shall then conclude with a brief discussion of Hutcheson, suggesting that their moral sense theories are really rather different.

1 Shaftesbury and Scepticism

Anthony Ashley Cooper, the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, is credited in standard narratives of the history of moral philosophy as the progenitor of the 'moral sense', something subsequently taken up by Hutcheson, and passing through Hume onto Adam

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[1] E.g. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, *Moral Skepticisms*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 9–13.

P.J.E. Kail (✉)
Faculty of Philosophy, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK
e-mail: peter.kail@philosophy.ox.ac.uk

Smith. There is no doubt *some* truth in this narrative, but it can mislead and does not constitute the whole truth, and we shall see that even between Shaftesbury and Hutcheson there is a great deal of difference regarding the moral sense. Shaftesbury's *Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit*, published first in 1699 (and perhaps without his knowledge), most closely resembles the genre of standard philosophical writing. It was later revised and included in his *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711), a compendium of previously published work which includes dialogue and epistolary genres, together with a series of reflections on that work (the *Miscellaneous Reflections*). One reason for this variation in style might lie in the fact that he closely connects morality and aesthetics. His various literary styles might contribute to, or even inspire, the kind of 'rational enthusiasm' that he sees as the state of mind of a virtuous agent. Be that as it may, it is still the case that his views are difficult to summarize or, indeed, categorize. He was, like many at the time, but quite a pronounced degree, suspicious of theoretical endeavour, and his concern with philosophy was political and social rather than with it as a purely intellectual exercise. Indeed, Shaftesbury saw philosophy as a threat to morality, and took Locke, his former tutor, to be a greater threat than Hobbes in this connection. But before we turn to how he understood this threat, and what his answer might be, let us begin with a few words about his general attitude to scepticism.

We should remind ourselves that Shaftesbury's readership was not professional philosophy as we now know it, and so the philosophical precision to which we are used should not be expected from so literary an author as he. Quite often, his explicit uses of the term 'sceptic' and its cognates refer to a certain disposition of the mind, rather than some precise body of doctrine. In some cases it might appear that he sees scepticism as a welcome disposition. So, in *Miscellany* II, for example, he writes that he has "often wondered to find such a disturbance raised about the simple name of sceptic",[2] defining scepticism as "that state or frame of mind which everyone remains on every subject of which he is not certain".[3] This is contrasted the 'dogmatist' attitude of 'he who is certain, or presumes to say he knows'. But the context of this approving, and apparently innocent, view of scepticism is a discussion of Christianity and Shaftesbury's deist critique of it. Shaftesbury suggests that the good Christian must be a sceptic, and this is likely to be deist rhetoric. The word 'sceptic' carried as much rhetorically or emotively as it did by any precise and literal content (which is not to deny that the rhetorically or emotive uses are utterly divorced from the content), and is often taken as a synonym for atheism, and so the alignment of Christianity and scepticism here isn't so innocent. He later identifies sceptics – defending them this time against a 'clamour' – as 'scrupulists' who are splenetic and are given to criticism and satire.[4] The figure of the sceptic is found in narrator of the *Moralist, A Philosophical Rhapsody Being a Recital of Certain Conversations on*

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[2] Anthony Ashley Cooper Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, Lawrence E. Klein (ed.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 369.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 369.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 384–385. This is obviously connected to the important role of satire that Shaftesbury sees in social critique.

Natural or Moral Subjects. Philocles – who is called a "proselyte to Pyrrhonism"[5] – begins the work with a lengthy discussion of how he sees the intellectual climate and its dangers for Palemon, his interlocutor. He bemoans the tendency to be superficial and dogmatical in philosophy,[6] and connects scepticism with those who are 'never angry or disturbed', harking back to the *ataraxia* of the Pyrrhonians. However the literary presentation of this figure suggests a certain superficiality, a stance that is the 'prettiest, agreeablest, roving exercise of the mind' in contrast to the empiric's painful and laborious philosophy that aims at the "'the truth', a point, in all appearance, very unfixed and hard to ascertain".[7]

Shaftesbury's tendency to concentrate on the psychological as opposed to the epistemological side of scepticism is, of course, not out of line with the aim of Pyrrhonism. That aim was to arrive at a state of *ataraxia* or freedom from disturbance through the destruction of belief brought about – or *appears* to be brought about, as a consistent Pyrrhonian might say – by the equal force or *isostheneia* of two conflicting arguments, one in favour of *p,* one against *p* (or in favour of not-*p*). Its target is belief because it is belief that is supposedly the source of psychic disturbance. Shaftesbury must be unconvinced by this alleged freedom from disturbance and its ethical import, though he doesn't to my knowledge engage in an explicit rebuttal of these ideas. The ancient method of conflicting appearances is not lost on Shaftesbury, however. He thinks that confusion (rather than freedom from disturbance) is wrought not by conflicting appearances in common life but by conflicting *theoretical* accounts, or theories of human morality and thought. Men may be "wrought on and confounded by different modes of opinion, different systems and schemes imposed by authority, that they may wholly lose all notion or comprehension of truth".[8] The danger, that is to say, comes not from conflicting appearances generated from within what is implicit in ordinary thought but by the diversity of theoretical accounts which misrepresent ordinary thought. Some philosophers, he suggests, are perhaps not genuinely asserting the truth of their theories, contending that the reason

> Why men of wit delight so much to espouse these paradoxical systems is not in truth that they are so fully satisfied with them, but in a view better to oppose some other systems, which by their fair appearance have helped, they think, to bring mankind under subjugation.[9]

This 'general scepticism' is offered as a way to deal with "the dogmatical spirit which prevails in some particular subjects".[10] But, thinks Shaftesbury, it does more damage that good, bringing with it confusion, and more pointedly, the possible collapse of morality.

The placement in the text of this discussion of scepticism might suggest that Shaftesbury has Hobbes in mind (he is discussing a position which involves 'savages'

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[5] *Ibid*., p. 301.

[6] *Ibid*., p. 335.

[7] *Ibid*., pp. 241–242.

[8] *Ibid*., p. 45.

[9] *Ibid*.

[10] *Ibid.*

and the distribution of power), but the above quotation would fit Locke better, since Locke's theoretical and limiting conception of human understanding goes hand in hand with his anti-dogmatism. Indeed, as I mentioned above, Shaftesbury saw Locke's philosophy as a sceptical threat (as did many others).[11] But how could it be that Locke's theoretical account of morality could be a source of scepticism? One reason is nicely articulated in Daniel Carey's recent book, *Locke, Shaftesbury and Hutcheson: Contesting Diversity in the Enlightenment and Beyond*. The nub of this worry lies in Locke's strategy to unseat nativism. One alleged phenomenon treated as evidence for nativism is common consent, which we can roughly characterize as follows. There is strong degree of convergence in moral behaviours, and – reconstructing as best we can the line of argument that Locke is attacking – the best explanation of that convergence must appeal to innate moral principles. Locke, by contrast, points to the diversity of moral practice to render doubtful the idea that there is any such convergence to be so explained. He marshals a number of considerations to support the claim to diversity including, and especially, testimony from travel writings. Now, quite obviously there is a whole host of questions one might raise here, not least a worry about the reliability of such sources (indeed, Shaftesbury thought Locke rather gullible on that score), but let's leave all this to one side. The key point is that Locke's appeal to variation in moral practice resembles the tenth mode of Sextus Empiricus's *Outlines of Scepticism*. This mode strives to affect *ataraxia* regarding ethical beliefs by highlighting different and conflicting moral practices. Of course Locke didn't think that any sceptical conclusion follows since he argues for an independent, and non-nativist, moral epistemology. But if one is unpersuaded by Locke's positive theory – as Shaftesbury was – diversity threatens scepticism.

In the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* Locke introduces three laws that concern moral relations, one of which he calls the "law of opinion or reputation".[12] He introduces this law because he allows that a great deal of the discourse of vice and virtue is a matter of culturally specific convention, where "the measure of… what is steemed *Vertue* and *Vice* is this approbation or dislike…which by a secret and tacit consent establishes its self in the several Societies, Tribes, and Clubs of Men in the World".[13] This is a claim he supports again with an appeal to empirical evidence for diversity. But whilst allowing that a good deal of evaluation is mere convention, Locke thinks that are two further kinds of moral relations or laws that secure genuine objectivity. This positive view, in its barest outlines, is as follows:

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[11] E.g. Henry Lee, *Anti-Scepticism: or, Notes Upon each Chapter of Mr. Locks's Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, London, 1702. For discussion see John W. Yolton, *John Locke and the Way of Ideas*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1956.

[12] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Peter H. Nidditch (ed.), The Clarendon Edition of the Works of John Locke, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1975, 2.28.10–11. References are to book, chapter, and section numbers.

[13] *Ibid.*, 2.28.10.

moral knowledge is knowledge of certain analytic relations that hold among ideas.[14] These relations, capable of demonstration, figure in turn in sets of laws. These laws comprise three kinds. One of which is the law of opinion noted above, and another comprises civil laws or the laws of the commonwealth. But the fundamental law is the divine law, determined by God and discoverable either through reason or revelation. The divine law is "the only true touchstone of *moral Rectitude*".[15] Customs and state sanctioned laws might coincide with the divine law, but Locke's emphasis on diversity suggests that most do not. Instead, the divine law, determined either by revelation or reason, must correct the various and diverse laws of opinion and the civil law. But if this is so, then Locke's positive epistemology is radically disconnected from the ordinary practices adumbrated in the law of opinion: that is to say, grasp of moral truth very rarely figures in the explanation of moral belief and practice. Locke's account threatens to make most moral practices not a form of moral knowledge and concede that most moral practice is merely culturally determined. No wonder, then, in correspondence Shaftesbury wrote that "virtue, according to Mr. Locke, has no other measure, law or rule, than fashion or custom".[16]

In effect, Shaftesbury took Locke's position to encourage Pyrrhonism, but with a twist. A true Pyrrhonian does not take diversity to support that idea that there is no truth to be had in moral areas – that is to say, he does not take diversity to support that dogmatic conclusion that there are no moral facts. Instead, he concludes that it is impossible, as Sextus Empiricus puts it, to "say what each existing object is like in its nature, but [it is possible to say] only how it appears relative to a given persuasion or law or custom".[17] But Shaftesbury understands the use of conflicting moral practices to issue in a stronger conclusion. Theocles, Shaftesbury's hero in the *Moralists*, represents the sceptical outcome as the idea that "there can be no such thing as real valuableness or worth; nothing in itself estimable or amiable, odious or shameful. All is opinion".[18] In effect, Shaftebury sees Locke's use of diversity as threatening what J L Mackie called the 'argument from relativity' for value anti-realism. This particular form of anti-realism Mackie calls 'moral scepticism', which he equates with the "bold statement' that there 'are no objective values'.[19] Mackie takes the kinds of diversity that Locke exploits against nativism to provide indirect support for the conclusion that there are 'no objective values', and it seems Shaftesbury agrees with Mackie in this implication.

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[14] *Ibid*., 4.4.7–10.

[15] *Ibid*., 2.28.8.

[16] Quoted in Daniel Carey, *Locke Shaftesbury and Hutcheson: Contesting Diversity in the Enlightenment and Beyond*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 130.

[17] Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Scepticism*, J. Annas and J. Barnes (eds.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 40.

[18] Shaftesbury, *op. cit*., p. 328.

[19] John Leslie Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, New York, Viking Press, 1977, p. 15.

2   Shaftesbury's Reponse

How then does Shatesbury respond?[20] Ultimately, his response is a form of realism.
In outline, moral truths depend on a natural teleology, that which is fit for a creature
to do, which in turn rests on the independent moral beauty of the universe. Before
we can understand this, we need to note two further features of Locke's account
with which Shaftesbury takes issue. First, with respect to the motivating force of
morality, Locke is what would now be called an 'externalist'. That is to say, it is the
promise of the reward of pleasure or the threat of painful punishment (especially in
the afterlife with respect to the divine law) that motivates compliance with the law,
and not the mere appreciation of it moral status. It might be thought that 'external-
ism is itself a form of moral 'scepticism'. If it is, then it is one that differs from the
conflicting appearances scepticism mentioned above. I will discuss this thought
when we discuss Hutcheson. Second, Locke's account of the status of moral proper-
ties is *voluntarist*: that is to say, the status of some action as morally good is deter-
mined by the will of God. Again I shall make a few remarks about voluntarism and
'scepticism' in the next section.

Shaftebury's response to Locke's externalism is equally relevant to Hobbes' account.
Shaftesbury credits human beings with a far richer psychology than Hobbes and Locke,
including within that psychology a whole host of other-regarding affections or motivat-
ing states. He then objects to Hobbes and Locke by appeal to the intuition that moral
goodness is tied to motivation. Thus, for example, he writes that we do not say

> That he is a good man ….when he abstains from executing his ill purpose through a fear of
> some impending punishment or through the allurement of some exterior reward.[21]

Shaftesbury therefore emphasises the other-regarding character of the motivating
affection as the mark of goodness. This intuition, however, needs to be treated with
some caution. First, though the mark of the good agent is an other-regarding motiva-
tion, the presence of such motivating states is explained as parts of the natural psy-
chological endowment of the agent, and *not* through detection of the non-natural
evaluative properties that concerned Mackie. Second the content of the motivation
need not involve reference to morally thin concepts like 'right', 'good' and such.
That is to say, acting for the interest of another need not be conceived explicitly by
the agent as acting *morally*. Affection for one's children is an other-regarding
motive, of which we morally approve, but we don't typically show affection to our
children *because* it is morally required. Instead, the status of such motivations as
moral is determined by their falling under the approval of the moral sense.

But what is the moral sense? It is, after all, how Shaftesbury responds to the
perceived scepticism of Locke. The moral sense is a form of *awareness* of those
first-order affections, either first-personal or third-personal 'spectatorial' awareness.

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[20] Part of his response is to reinstitute a sophisticated form of nativism based on the stoic notion
of prolepsis, but I am not going to pursue this topic here This aspect, however, is the focus of
Carey's work.

[21] Shaftesbury, *op. cit*., p. 169.

This awareness issues in "another kind of affection towards those very affections themselves".[22] The moral sense (a) provides the content for the thin moral concepts such as 'right' and 'good', such that actions are presented under an irreducible evaluative mode of presentation and (b) is responsive to the 'moral quality' of actions. This second idea proves to be more elusive than the first. The first can understood in terms of their being special feelings – simple ideas – which yield the irreducible content for moral contents. The second – responsiveness to 'moral qualities-makes us wonder quite what a moral quality might be. It is this that we now pursue.

In one respect, things are relatively straightforward. Modes of approval are generally correlated other-regarding motives, which are in turn part of the proper function of the creatures of the created world. So a correct moral response is a response to an affection that is part of the proper functioning of the agent. All particular creatures are themselves systems with natural functions, embedded in wider systems – species – that, in turn, are seen 'as part of another system'. Everything is embedded in a natural teleology, such that their affections and passions must be understood in terms of proper ends. The natural good is a state of the creature that is conducive to their relevant ends, and "if anything, either in his appetites, passions or affections, be not conducing but the contrary, we must of necessity own him ill".[23] Shaftesbury conceives any such ill as affecting not merely the particular creature, but as 'injurious' to 'others of his kind'. This idea is then iterated with respects to kinds or species – a species is ill when it is injurious to another species, and ultimately with respect 'to the universal system'. The moral sense is therefore designed as a particular mode of approval of the proper function of some agent, and if the moral sense is functioning properly it will respond to those first-order affections that are, in their turn, functioning properly. So, to the extent that the moral sense approves of proper function, the 'sense' of the moral sense is not particularly difficult to understand. Furthermore, there need not be any metaphysically strange 'non-natural' moral properties to which such a sense is responsive. The feeling of approval matches itself to proper function.

There is, however, something else in Shaftesbury that intimates the kind of non-natural realism to which Mackie objects, the rejection of which he calls 'scepticism'. Recall that Locke's use of diversity, and Shaftesbury's worry about it, resembled Mackie's 'argument from relativity'. Mackie took diversity to provide indirect support for the thesis that 'there are no objective values'. We represent the world to contain 'objective values', but there are none. Now, though Mackie does not put the issue in conceptual terms, he is not innocent of conceptual assumptions. He interprets ordinary moral thought as centrally engaged in representing the world to contain non-natural properties that are internally related to the will, so that, to borrow a phrase from Anthony Price, it is of the 'essence' of value that "if I perceive a value in an object, that must incline me for or against it".[24] A moral realist for Mackie would be one who affirms the existence of such values. Shaftesbury uses the term

[22] *Ibid*., p. 172.

[23] Shaftesbury, *op. cit*., p. 165.

[24] Anthony W. Price, "Doubts About Projectivism", *Philosophy*, 61, 1986, p. 215.

'realist' in connection with morality, and his opposition to Locke's use of diversity might seem to point to his being a 'realist' in Mackie's sense. Thus, for example, he writes that a 'realist' about virtue

> Endeavours to show that *it is really something in itself and in the nature of things, not arbitrary or factitious…, not constituted from without or dependent on custom, fancy or will, not even in the supreme will*.[25]

It would be easy to leap from this quotation to the hasty conclusion that the 'realism' here is how Mackie understands it. But the view of the moral sense as simply tracking proper function does not require the non-natural metaphysic that constitutes realism for Mackie. Where there is a residual and implicit Mackie-style realism in Shaftesbury's position concerns his rejection of voluntarism. Voluntarism, in the opening sections of the *Inquiry*, is rhetorically labelled 'daemonism', and defined as the belief that "the governing mind or minds [are] not absolutely nor necessarily good…but capable of acting according to mere will or fancy".[26] As Shaftesbury saw it, voluntarism has it that goodness is determined by the *fiat* of God's will. Fundamentally, Shaftesbury rejects voluntarism because, like Leibniz's God, Shaftesbury's deity is receptive to an order or harmony of the whole, which itself guides the economy of the universe, and, what's more, this order or harmony guides or constrains the designing intelligence in its creation.

What the moral sense ultimately appreciates as 'moral beauty' is simply the aesthetic order of the universe, which is independent of God. In effect, the moral goodness of proper-functioning, other- regarding, agents is simply an instance of objective aesthetic goodness, and our moral sensitivity is a sensitivity to a radically objective aesthetic order. And this stress on independence, which is behind Shaftesbury's rejection of voluntarism, leaves a residual problem of the status of these aesthetic properties. For ultimately Shaftesbury just takes it as brute and thoroughly objective that there is an aesthetic order that governs the moral sense, and it is here that the realism to which Mackie objects exists in Shaftesbury's thought. There are facts that motivate not only our appreciation of the aesthetic goodness of things but also those of the creator.

Shaftebury's emphasis on the aesthetic character of the whole economy of the universe – making the assumption that we can make sense of that – helps us understand Shaftesbury discussion of the compatibility of external world scepticism and the reality of moral distinctions. In the Miscellany VI he writes of "our late dry task" of proving "morals without a world, without the supposition of anything living or extant besides our immediate fancy and the imagination".[27] Here he is referring to his the previous discussion of Miscellany V where he discussed Descartes and the sceptical solipsistic position of the second *Meditation*. His answer to the puzzle of how morality and such scepticism are compatible appeals to what Michael Gill calls

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[25] Shaftesbury, *op. cit*., pp. 266–267.

[26] Shaftesbury, *op. cit*., p. 165.

[27] *Ibid*., p. 428.

the "mental enjoyment account".[28] Moral normativity is secured in a world that is all imagination by the fact that our passions and the relations can themselves be the object of appreciation, so that we are capable of bearing our own survey, whereas the immoral person will be plagued by a sense of disharmony. These aesthetically-pleasing relations can hold among one's own psychological economy, however 'exterior objects stand – whether they are realities or mere illusions', as he puts it in the *Inquiry*.[29] Like arithmetical relations, with which in this Shaftesbury explicitly compares them, moral relations hold among mental items as well as physical ones. Aesthetic relations (and their normativity) are abstract, and can apply to any kind of items capable of standing in them, just as arithmetical relations can hold between apples as well as thoughts.

3   Hutcheson's Moral Sense

There is little doubt that Hutcheson admired Shaftesbury. In the title page of the first edition of his *Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue,* Hutcheson presents himself as defending 'the principles of the late Earl of Shaftesbury against… the Author of the *Fable of the Bees*', and does so by an appeal to an aesthetized moral sense. But though obviously influenced by Shaftesbury, Hutcheson's moral sense differs profoundly in a number of key ways. Hutcheson is considerably more down to earth than Shaftesbury inasmuch as his moral sense theory is less bound to issues about voluntarism and aesthetic order. For him, the aesthetic and the moral senses have a perfectly natural function that only invokes issues about God and creation to the extent to which he thinks humans are placed in a providential environment. It is this lack of concern with what Shaftesbury saw as the ultimate source of scepticism that is perhaps the biggest difference between the two moral sense theorists For, as the quotation makes plain, Bernard Mandeville interposes himself between Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, and joins Hobbes as a notorious enemy of morality. In what remains I shall try to make clear some of these differences and their relation to scepticism.

In the previous section, I noted that Locke appears to subscribe what is now called 'externalism' about moral judgment. A rough way to characterize this idea is that one can grasp and acknowledge some relevant moral truths and yet not be motivated by them. What motivates is not the grasp of the moral rightness of an action, but something 'external' to that grasp, e.g. a desire to 'do the right thing' or a desire for praise. Such a thought might be what is behind Locke's linkage of moral motivation with reward and punishment, two motivations that 'external' to knowing what is the right or wrong thing to do in relevant circumstances. Moral motivation is at the

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[28] Michael Gill, *The British Moralists on Human Nature and the Birth of Secular Ethics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, 121ff.

[29] Shaftesbury, *op. cit*., p. 229.

centre of he accounts offered by Hobbes and Mandeville of co-operative behaviour. For them, the motive force of moral action is not, at bottom, an appreciation of irreducible moral 'oughts', but because those actions relate to an agent's non-moral interests. The differing ways in which this thought is articulated are complicated. For Hobbes, and at the highest level of simplification, apparent other-regarding behaviour is normatively intelligible because it coheres with any particular agent's self interest. What motivates at bottom is the idea that other-regarding action actually benefits *me*. For Mandeville, the emergence of co-operative behaviour involves a fiction that appeals to the vanity of human beings and so its motivational structure is less transparent and may involve a degree of self-deception. What really motivates moral behaviour is a desire to bolster one's own self-esteem.

All these accounts – Locke's externalism, and the various psychological accounts from Hobbes and Locke – invite the term 'scepticism'. Thus David Fate Norton writes of a *crise morale* in the early modern period, involving a

> Moral or ethical scepticism…[that is] an essentially assertive position, one wherein the objective of moral distinctions is denied as a consequence of investigation into human motivation, belief and action.[30]

Norton discussion of such a crisis occurs as a backdrop to his discussion of Hutcheson's moral sense, and focuses on Hobbes (Mandeville is briefly discussed as well). But whilst not wishing to argue too strenuously about the meaning of the term, this is problematic. Although it is quite true that Mackie takes 'scepticism' to amount to a determinate claim regarding how things stand in the world – as opposed to our failure to be in a position to *know* – we should be less happy to surrender the term 'sceptic' and its cognates to an 'essentially assertive position' for the period we are considering.

First, Norton gives us no evidence that positions of Hobbes and Mandeville were systemically described 'sceptical', and Hutcheson, who targets them, does not apply the term to either author (rhetorically useful thought it would have been to do so). Second, their accounts of motivation do not issue in any modesty about our capacity to determine veridical from misleading appearance. Instead they offer positive claims about the nature of human motivation. Of course Norton recognizes this, but doesn't tell us why the term 'scepticism' is appropriate for a position that the Pyrrhonians would call a dogmatist position. Third, the *arguments* and patterns of support for these positions do not resemble the standard sceptical tropes with which thinkers of the period are familiar. So, although it is true that Shaftesbury, and later Hume, associate scepticism with denial of the 'reality of moral distinctions', this assertive, but negative claim at least comes out of the uses of tropes that have a Pyrrhonian history. Locke *does* attract the label 'sceptic' because his appeal to diversity resembles one of Sextus's sceptical tropes. Fourth, the focus on the human in this characterization of moral scepticism misses a central concern of Shaftesbury's,

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[30] David F. Norton, *David Hume: Common-sense Moralist, Sceptical Metaphysician*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1982, p. 244.

namely *voluntarism*. That concerned whether God could be motivated by 'objective goodness', which is rather different from what motivates *us*.[31]

Part of the problem here, as I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, is that 'sceptic' is an elusive term, but if understood by a contrast term – namely dogmatism – Hobbes and Mandeville are not sceptics. However, there is one thing that is true of Hobbes and Mandeville that might merit describing their positions as 'sceptical'. It is sceptical inasmuch as a view of the nature of our moral thinking has an appearance that reality doesn't match. If their accounts of motivation are correct, then morality is not quite as it seems This mismatch is roughly as follows. We think that moral actions (as opposed to instances of hypocrisy) are motivated *not* because they serve the interests of the agent but the interest or needs of those who are the objects of moral concern. We *think* we are acting for the other person, but in reality, we are using them instrumentally to serve our own ends. It is this idea that worries Hutcheson, and his appropriation of the moral sense. So in effect the focus of Hutcheson's concern was a different form of 'scepticism' – if we can call that – from Shaftesbury's.

Hutcheson's key, Shaftesbury-inspired, objection to Hobbes and Mandeville – and the central point behind an appeal to the a moral sense – is to argue that their attempt to explain apparent moral behaviour as a form of 'disguised self interest' fails to account for the presence of distinct and irreducible moral concepts. Whilst Mandeville thought moral concepts were an invention of a superior class in order to manipulate the masses, Hutcheson in effect questions where they got those from if morality is a mere fiction. The "perception of moral good is not derived from custom, education, example or study. These give us no new ideas".[32] Hutcheson's rigorous empiricism implies that distinct concepts require distinct experiences, and the particular pleasurable or painful experiences of the moral sense furnish such contents. Here though Hutcheson differs from Shaftesbury, a difference that depends again on difference in targets. Shaftebury is happy to reintroduce a sophisticated nativism based on the Stoic notion of *prolepsis*, and he does so because he takes Locke's uses of diversity to require a nativist response. Hutcheson takes great pains to distance himself from the charge that his moral sense requires innate ideas.[33] He sides with Locke and he appeals to experience to show that there are genuine moral concepts, and not mere disguised self-interest.[34]

Hutcheson's focus on genuine altruism and our moral responsiveness to it, means that his account of objectivity needn't require the realism that Shaftesbury's focus on voluntarism required. This shows in their different view of the relation of

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[31] Norton's discussion of the alleged *crise morale* focuses far too much on Hobbes, and leads him to overlook both Locke's uses of diversity and his voluntarism as sources of concern for Shaftesbury, and to see Locke's account as sceptical simply because of its externalist character.

[32] Francis Hutcheson, *Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, Wolfgang Leidhold (ed.), Indianapolis, Liberty Press, 2004, p. 99.

[33] E.g. Hutcheson, *op. cit*., p.100.

[34] For a full discussion of this, see Carey, *op. cit.*

aesthetics to morality. Although they both compare morality with aesthetics, Hutcheson's aesthetics have a different character because of his lack of concern with voluntarism. I suggested that there is a residual strong realism in Shaftesbury, but Hutcheson's account is rather less mysterious. For the irreducible aesthetic experience in Hutcheson's account is not connected to its object in a way that suggests experience of something that is itself irreducibly aesthetic. Instead it is connected to a certain formal feature – uniformity amidst variety – which is the key feature of good scientific explanation. God has designed us in such a way that we find this feature pleasurable, which in turn encourages us to pursue a certain end, namely to increase knowledge. Our appreciation of this feature encourages us to seek out things that instantiate it and directs our appreciation of mathematics and theory. This arrangement owes itself to God's benevolence, and so aesthetic appreciation is not appreciation of aesthetic facts that are independent of God, as it is in Shaftesbury. Instead the aesthetic is reduced to a certain kind of experience that plays a functional role.

This idea feeds into his account of morality. Whereas Shaftesbury must, in the end, identify the moral with the aesthetic, Hutcheson uses his account of aesthetics as a model for the moral sense, and doesn't identify the two. His central thought is that once we admit that there is a characteristic and irreducible experience in one area – aesthetics – there is no bar in principle to extending it to the moral case. And just as the aesthetic experience is designed to render salient to us a particular feature suitable to a certain end – uniformity amidst variety, which is the mark of a good theoretical explanation – moral experience renders salient a feature conducive to a certain end. That feature is benevolence, the feature that contributes to the wellbeing of society in general. Again, all this is considerably less mysterious than Shaftebury's appeal to moral beauty. The emphasis is not on the order or beauty of the world *per se* but on the benevolent intentions of God and his providence.[35] But what it means ultimately is that Hutcheson's response to Mandeville and Hobbes focuses on the psychology of human beings – our motives and our moral appreciation of them – and does not entangle itself in realist metaphysics and the Euthyphro dilemma. Instead we have the capacity to approve of and appreciate actions that contribute to the well-being of humanity in general, which does not – as Hobbes and Mandeville's accounts do – make morality less then it seems.[36]

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[35] For more detail on the aesthetic and moral senses in Hutcheson, see Peter J. E. Kail, "Normativity and Function in Hutcheson's Aesthetic Epistemology", *British Journal for Aesthetics*, 40, 2000, pp. 441–451; and "Hutcheson's Moral Sense: Realism, Skepticism, and Secondary Qualities", *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 18, 2001, pp. 57–77.

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