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How will we know what is ‘good’? Richard Whately's challenge to the Christian utilitarianism of William Paley.

Elena Pasquini Douglas,
The Business School
The University of Western Australia
Elena.douglas@uwa.edu.au

I INTRODUCTION

This paper contributes to the examination of one of the most significant fault-lines in the intellectual history of the nineteenth century: the shift of Western political philosophy from a moral philosophy founded on the notion of a moral sense, which required cultivation, but was capable of discerning ‘the good’, to a defining ethic of utilitarianism. This episode is important background to the development of utility theory.

From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, questions of ends have increasingly been regarded from the ‘consequentialist’ perspective under which normative analysis depends only on the consequences of actions and not on the virtue associated with the end pursued. The hedonic prescription of Bentham, and the other philosophical radicals, that wellbeing in any collective depends on “the greatest good for the greatest number”, with the good determined by the ends selected by all the individuals, This conception, although not the final resting place of the utilitarian school of thought, offered a simplified scientific prescription of utility, assuming implicit comparability between ends. For its simplicity and use-ability this simple version of utilitarianism has come to dominate the moral calculations that underpin many public policy deliberations. The outcome of this shift meant that neither the clerisy, nor religious tradition, nor scripture would any longer be the touch-stones upon which moral propositions would be tested for virtue. Consequence would bear this weight.

In this paper I examine the intricate intellectual threads cut in this transition. I argue that the first cut to the old fabric of moral analysis was made by William Paley’s influential text, the *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* (1783). Paley and this book were profoundly influential. Almost immediately upon publication it became the required text for all undergraduates at Cambridge. Keynes said of Paley that he was “for a generation or more an intellectual influence on Cambridge “only second to Newton”. Of Paley’s book Keynes considered that anyone who read it would find, perhaps “contrary to his expectation, an immortal book” (Keynes 1933 p79n2). The critical point for our purposes was that this text, read by millions in Britain and the United States, represented the first time that an influential man of the cloth in Britain had sanctioned, a non-scriptural framing of ‘the good’. Paley’s book underlined a new meta-ethics, a new answer to questions about the nature of ethics and

moral reasoning¹. The Archbishop of Dublin, Richard Whately, sought to “correct Paley’s errors”, contesting Paley’s meta-ethics in *Paley’s Moral Philosophy with Annotations* (Whately 1859). Whately, here, was one of a number of influential Oxford and Cambridge trained divines who stood firmly against the shift to utilitarianism when discerning ‘the good’. Whately’s role in this story is the one which will be shown here. This episode sheds light on the range of perspectives on moral philosophy and meta-ethics in the period 1830-1860.

In short then, my aim is to qualify the extent of the triumph of utilitarianism in its simplistic Benthamite form, and suggest that its grip on the development of modern political and moral philosophy was not inevitable. More generally, this study exposes the unique character of Paley’s theological utilitarianism, which represented a moment of synthesis between the enlightenment impulse and the theological orthodoxy of the day. In an effort to put this analysis in context, the paper commences with a brief biographical sketch of William Paley, which nominates him as one of the dominant intellectuals of his age. A biographical sketch of Richard Whately follows, which reveals that Whately was a formidable and prominent figure in the generation after Paley. Throughout this paper study of Paley’s text will be from Whately’s influential annotated edition (Whately, 1859). A subsequent paper will consider the influence of Richard Whately, and his fellow antagonist to the “Philosophical Radicals” utilitarian project, Cambridge don Richard Whewell, on J.S. Mill’s development of utilitarianism from its more basic Benthamite form.

II BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF PALEY

William Paley (1743-1805)² was the son of a vicar and headmaster of Giggleswick in Yorkshire. At sixteen he went up to Christ’s College Cambridge, where he distinguished himself by graduating in 1763 with the high honour of Senior Wrangler. Within three years he was elected a Fellow of his college and soon gained the reputation as one of Cambridge’s most illuminating teachers. He lectured on metaphysics, moral philosophy and the Greek

¹ Meta-ethics seeks to understand the metaphysical, epistemological, semantic and psychological pre-suppositions of moral thought (Stanford Encyclopedia of Moral Philosophy, 2014). Examples of meta-ethics are questions which seek to answer the nature of human moral reasoning, for example, whether humans always act from self-interest. Normative ethics asks what we ought to do, meta-ethics asks why we would be moral at all.

² Biographies of Paley include: George Wilson Meadley, *Memoirs of William Paley*, D.D. (Sunderland: Printed for the author by J. Graham and sold by Cradock & Joy, London, and J. Deighton, Cambridge, 1809; enlarged and corrected edition, Edinburgh: Printed by George Ramsay for Archibald Constable, Edinburgh; Cradock & Joy, London; and J. Deighton, Cambridge, 1810); Alexander Chalmers, *Life of William Paley*, volume 1 of *The Works of William Paley*; Robert Lynam, biographical sketch of Paley, in *The Complete Works of William Paley. With Extracts from His Correspondence: and a Life of the Author* by the Rev. Robert Lynam, 4 volumes (London: Printed by J. F. Dove for G. Cowie, 1825). Edmund Paley, *The Life of Dr. Paley*, volume 1 of *The Works of William Paley*, D.D., edited by Edmund Paley, 7 volumes (London: C. & J. Rivington, 1825). D. S. Wayland, *Biography of Paley*, in *The Works of William Paley*, D.D., with a *Biographical Sketch of the Author*, by the Rev. D. S. Wayland, 2 volumes (Derby: H. Mozley, 1825). Henry Digby Beste, *Memoir of Paley*, in his *Personal and Literary Memorials* (London: Coburn, 1829). More recent biographies include: M. L. Clarke, *Paley: Evidences for the Man* (London: SPCK, 1974; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974) and D. L. LeMahieu, *The Mind of William Paley* (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1976). The portrait here draws on Crimmins, James E. (2004). "William Paley (1743–1805)". *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and Stephen, Leslie (1895). *Dictionary of National Biography*. New York: MacMillan. p. Paley entry.

Testament. At Cambridge Paley moved with the Latitudinarians – the boundary-riders of Anglican orthodoxy at the time - all headed for vicarages and bishoprics. The group focused their studies on a natural religion grounded upon argument from design for the existence of God. Joseph Butler's (1692-1752) classic work, *Analogy of Religion* (1736) was an essential text. Paley and his group were also much influenced by the robust interventions of David Hume in his antagonism to religion and theology. Debate, inconsistency and frequent disagreement amongst themselves, was common and, importantly, valued for its capacity to nurture the development of robust positions and thought. In fact, they shared a belief that such contests of ideas were the best protection against folly, whether theological, ecclesial, moral or political. Their ideological sport ultimately came up with the interesting philosophical position, accepting with more Orthodox brethren a still theologically influenced idea of “virtue” and “the good”, one with scriptural resonance, while nonetheless subscribing to “a greatest good for the greatest number” formulation in public policy questions. Paley was the most influential and read of this group and his writing had vast impact.

His seminal work, *The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* (1783) was written by this dutiful vicar, author and conscientious father of eight was written as a textbook based on the lectures he had given in his time at Christ's College. It is not a treatise but a collection of the key ideas, especially the theological work produced in the early eighteenth century (Stephen, 1876). His other major published works included *Horae Paulinae* (1790), on the *Acts and Letters of Paul* and *Evidences of Christianity* (1794), another of the principal books on the Cambridge curriculum of Christian apologetics in the era³.

III PALEY'S PRINCIPLES IN CONTEXT

To put the work of William Paley in context, first we must recognise that, in late eighteenth century Britain, all social theory was a branch of ecclesiology (Waterman, 1991). This is an intricate period in intellectual history which until was, until relatively recently, mis-portrayed in the literature⁴. In fact, as is the submission of this paper, Paley, Whately and Whewell drew upon traditions not extinguished until the late nineteenth century (Le Mathieu, 2002, pxxvi). Paley stood as one of the great figures of the Anglican Church to marry the secular instincts and insights of the Enlightenment with religious apologetics. Paley's work offers a link between morals and theology similar to the link drawn between natural and revealed religion, using analogy as the rhetorical tool. His classic apologetic texts can be seen as a synthesis of orthodox Christianity and the now strengthening enlightenment impulse desire to “reconcile science and religion”.

In his preface Paley outlines his intention to pursue “the principle of morals through the detail of cases to which it was applicable” so that the book accommodated “the situations

³ The first collected edition of the works of William Paley appeared in 1805-08; one by A. Chalmers with biography (5 vols., London: Printed for F. C. & J. Rivington, 1819, 1819); one by E. Lynam (1825); and one by his son, E. Paley (1825).

⁴ The ‘re-divinisation’ of Regency to mid-nineteenth century Britain started, in earnest, in the 1980s (Hilton, 1986; Waterman, 1991; Winch, 1996).

which arise in the life of this country in these times” (Whately, 1859, p4). It was this relevance and realism that Paley had found wanting in the natural law treatises (he cites Puffendorf and Grotius in particular here), and in the other more logical systems of morals that existed. His response was to offer a particular pedagogical approach focusing on problem-solution. Only when a young mind was exercised on the problem would they retain information about its solution was Paley’s thinking. Secondly, both science and scripture were seen as mutually reinforcing on questions of morals. Paley criticised those moral philosophers who “divide too much the laws of Nature from the precepts of Revelation”, siding instead with Dr Johnson’s characterisation that they “give strength and lustre to each other” (Whately, 1859 p5). “Upon each article of human duty, I have comined with the conclusion of reason the declarations of scripture” he expounded.

As a collection of teaching materials and lecture notes turned into a book, the *Principles* gives us a summary of that which was being thought and said on moral philosophy at the time. Any summary will be too cursory to be meaningful. The treatment of Paley’s *Principles* offered in this study focuses on Books 1 and 2. In book one, ‘Preliminary Considerations’ Paley provides the framework for his system. He explains the definition and uses of science, the Law of Honour, the law of the land, the role and authority of Scripture, the Moral Sense, Human Happiness and Virtue. Book 2 is entitled “Moral Obligations”. This book is designed to provide a meta-ethics, and to locate the authority of the ethical system Paley proposes.

His focus is on Moral Philosophy: “Morality, Ethics, Casuistry, Natural Law, mean all the same thing: that science which teaches men their duty and the reasons of it” (Whately, 1859 p11). In his presentation of his ethical system, Paley subscribed to Locke’s view that man was basically seeking pleasure and avoiding pain, the hedonic conception. There was no innate moral sense, no “inner spectator” or conscience inborn which could be developed. In addition, Paley thought Christianity and the idea of an after-life offered an additional incentive for good behaviour that was even more important than the incentive associated with pleasure in this life. Paley argued that “actions are good in so far as they tend to pleasure”. He defined moral virtue as “the doing good to mankind, in obedience to the will of God and for the sake of everlasting happiness”. Here the demands of individual self-interest, the demands of society in a collective sense and the demands of God were all aligned. God made us lovers of the good so it was our nature to pursue pleasure, which would bring that which was good and avoid pain, which, in the very long term, accounts for our desire for eternal life in paradise, as opposed to the alternative of eternal damnation. He described his concept as ‘expediency’. It is an embellishment of the concept of ‘fitness for purpose’, or telos in the argument for design theology, the language of means and ends in the grand narrative of nature. Despite the subtlety of his expediency to God’s design thinking, Paley was still a theological utilitarian in that his time horizon provides for a calculus of pleasure and pain that spans both physical life and eternal life.

Another element of the *Principles* which gives insight into his ethical system is the section describing what constitutes human happiness (Whately, 1859 pp37-42). Paley describes “the exercise of the social affections”, “the exercise of our faculties, either of body or mind in pursuit of some engaging end” calibrating that “those pleasures which are most valuable, not which are most exquisite in the fruition, but which are most productive of engagement and

activity in the pursuit” . He has in mind an engaged, active life proclaiming that “engagement is everything” and “the more significant our engagements the better”. Paley then extends the analysis to describe efforts to make real improvements to society and the world around us, the improvement of laws, institutions, public works and languages, self-improvement and continued learning as more “engaging” activities are therefore of a higher order (Whately, 1859 p39) Still, Paley’s expediency shines through and in the end he summarises “that vice has no advantage over virtue, even with respect to this world’s happiness” – be virtuous, it will pay off (Whately, 1859 p42). In other words, in Paley’s rendering you can be virtuous irrespective of motive. Even though most of the examples Paley gives demonstrate a benevolent motive, when it comes down to the wire, this is superfluous and this is where he is exposed to the challenge from the proponents of virtue-ethics, for whom motive counts. It is both conceivable and acceptable to Paley that one contributes to the common-good because through doing good now and avoids hell later. Writing within a few Christmases of the French Revolution, Paley considered it possible that the governed only obeyed the rulers from prejudice and prescription: a habit of obedience reinforced by the calculations of rational self-interest.

To complete the circle for our present enquiry, we need to look into Paley’s ideas about political economy, within which, at that time, economic demography played a major role. Paley’s principles of political economy are these. Firstly, as we have seen above, Paley believed that “The final view of all rational politics is, to produce the greatest quantity of happiness” (Paley, 1825, Vol. IV, p.477). Paley’s (1825, Vol. IV, p479-483) demographic ideas include the notion that under good conditions population doubles in 20 years and that there is a ‘tendency’ for this to be subject to continual increase which is only countered by ‘checks’, such as delays in marriage. But when per capita real wealth is rising, the standard of living is reset as “habitual superfluities become actual wants”. Paley presented, in rudimentary form, a production theory. It is different to Malthus because his demography was different (Waterman, 1996, p678).

Paley’s work has suffered from the same accusation that Schumpeter (1954, p184) made against Adam Smith, that is, that was a more compiler or earlier thought than an original thinker. Lesley Stephen claims that everything Paley said, had already been said early in the eighteenth century (Stephen, 1876). However, popularisers, and Paley was certainly one of these, have a big impact in the world of ideas, transmitting high-thought to the world of action. But there are actually diverging views on Paley’s contribution to knowledge: Waterman claims that while Paley’s intellectual achievement have gone unremarked in the history of economic thought from Schumpeter through to the *New Palgrave Dictionary*, the fact remains that Paley preceded Malthus “in some of his most Malthusian ideas” (Waterman, 1996, p673-686).

Importantly though, Paley drew on Locke’s epistemology and rejected the notion of a moral sense in-built in man. He therefore rejected “the great inmate, the great demi-god within the breast” that Adam Smith speaks of in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Smith, 2009 [1759], p288) placing himself firmly at odds with the moral sense school, the principal proponents of which were: the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713), Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746), David Hume (1711–1776), and Adam Smith (1723–1790)). Instead, Paley’s utilitarianism started from Locke’s notion of tabula rasa; namely, ‘blank slate’ that individuals are born

without built-in mental content and that all of their knowledge comes from either experience or perception. Given that at that time “the University’s chief purpose was “to provide a gentlemanly education for the intending clergy” (Jones, 2007, pp1-2), the fact that Paley and his ethics remained for most of the period as the most important text for morals for the majority of students, mostly bound into positions of cultural authority as teachers or clergy (another form of teacher) themselves, meant that what he thought and wrote carried into the culture at large.

The controversy and anti-Paley campaign

Whately joined a pre-existing battle against utilitarianism. This was a central intellectual fight of the first half of the nineteenth century with rear-guard action continuing well into the third quarter of the century. This has been discussed extensively, in the literature which examines Christian Political Economy (Hilton, 1981; Waterman, 1991) and the history of philosophy literatures (Snyder, 2006, Le Mathieu, 2002). It was Paley’s outright denial of an inborn moral sense in man which really galvanised the forces against him. The Philosophical Radicals were efficient in the plan to hijack the new science of political economy for their utilitarian reform programme (Waterman, 1991). Having established the Westminster Review in 1824 and the University of London in 1826 to propagate their views, Bentham, James Mill and their allies (including Ricardo until his death in 1823 and through the promotion of his writing beyond then), were gaining the ascendancy in harnessing the new science of political economy to the cause of ‘radical’ reform. The Philosophic Radicals benefited from Paley’s endorsement of their Benthamite utilitarian ethics, and based their radical redesign of public policy determination upon this (Crimmins 1989). In this way, Paley became the target of their anti-utilitarian fight as the orthodox Christian under-writer of Benthamite reform programme.

This antagonism was part of the broader debate against the empiricists who were deemed incapable of appreciating the intricacies and mysteries of the human spirit. Antagonists were many, and represented a broad church embracing Romantics and Evangelicals, including among the most notable of the day, William Wilberforce and Thomas Chalmers. The romantic Samuel Coleridge called *the Principles* “an anarchy of morals”. Its emphasis of prudence over duty, he thought was a “debasement to the outward senses” (Hilton, 1986p171). William Hazlitt took the hyperbole further and labelled the work a “disgrace to the national character”.

The fierce campaign, fought from soon after the books publication in 1783, reached its crescendo in the hands of Adam Sedgwick (1785-1873) and William Whewell (1794-1866). They were the first to identify that Paley’s *Principles* opened the way for utilitarianism by the denial of a moral sense and the promotion of the hedonic formula. Whewell, natural theologian, mathematician and the Knightsbridge Professor of Moral Philosophy at Cambridge, argued that the moral confusions of the age had originated with Paley. As Boyd Hilton demonstrated in the *Age of Atonement* (1986), particularly after the French Revolution, Evangelical and High-Church Anglican thinking in Britain was that morals implied duty and struggle, not expediency. God intended and humanity benefited from the trials that befell mankind and that we rise against. Hilton tells us that “the Trinity sages” Sedgwick and Whewell amongst them who “set out systematically to denigrate Paley as a

mere utilitarian egoist” (Hilton, 1986, p171-3). At both Cambridge and Oxford the war against Utilitarianism saw Paley pitted against Joseph Butler (1692-1752) the brilliant anti-deist apologist from Oriel College of the generation prior to Paley who had written *Sermons* (1726), *the Analogy of Religion* (1736) and the *Dissertations on Personal Identity and Virtue* (1736). Both Whewell and Whately promoted Butler’s *Analogy*, his was the moral philosophy text at Oxford. At Oriel College, it was jestfully referred to as the “Oxford Koran” (Hilton, 1986 p173). Butler was a moral-sense intuitionist who suited the evangelical tenor of the times much better (Hilton, 1986, p171). At Cambridge however, despite this spirited anti- Paley-anti-utilitarianism campaign, *Evidences* remained compulsory for the Tripos right through to 1909.. As part of the campaign to unseat Paley, in 1845 Whewell published his own text book *Elements of Morality Including Polity* as a substitute for Paley’s *Principles*. (Snyder 2010, p244).

IV INTRODUCING WHATELY

Richard Whately (1787-1863) was a leading light of his times⁵. He was a wide-ranging thinker who made contributions to fields of knowledge, including logic, epistemology, rhetoric , moral philosophy and political economy based on Aristotelian logic and premises; a reformist educator in Oxford and Ireland; an Anglican priest who ministered throughout his life; a widely- read populariser of economics, logic and moral philosophy; a founder of political economy as a University discipline at Oxford and Trinity College, Dublin; a pioneer of social science and statistical collections; a theologian and, finally, the Archbishop of Dublin from 1831 until his death. In this section, we will consider Whately’s origins, character, education and career.

Whately cannot be understood in isolation from the community of scholars that both formed and sustained him in his intellectual endeavours: the community of Oriel College, Oxford⁶.

⁵ Whately was a major figure of the period. There are three principal biographies recounting his life and no autobiography. The first of these was William John Fitzpatrick’s *Memoirs of Whately*, 2 vols (London, 1864). The second was a biography and collection of correspondence written and edited by Whately’s eldest daughter, Elizabeth Jane Whately. This was published as *The Life and Correspondence of Whately*, 2 vols. (London, 1866). More recently, Donald Harman Akenson (1981) wrote *A Protestant in Purgatory The Conference of British Studies biography series. (new series) 2. The National Dictionary of Biography, 1885-1900* by James McMullen Rigg contains a five thousand word entry on Whately’s life and work. This account identifies him as an “independent liberal”, social science pioneer, anti-evangelical, advocate of the rights of dissenters, Catholics and Jews, outstanding teacher, social science pioneer and reformer of tertiary education. There is an entry on Whately in the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, viii: 287-8 by Mary Prior and an entry in the *New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics* (Online), by R.D. Collison Black. The most felicitous of the available portraits of Whately is the chapter on him in *Pre-Tractarian Oxford: A Reminiscence of the Noetics* by Tuckwell (1909). There is a stipple-engraved portrait of him in the National Museum and he sat for a portrait by Catterson Smith which is in the Royal Hibernian Academy. We are left with all two million words of his writing. According to *World Cat Identities*, there are 765 works in 2,131 publications in 16 languages and 16,151 library holdings of his work. The largest single collection of Whately’s papers is held at the Library of Oriel College, Oxford

⁶ Tuckwell’s book, *Pre-tractarian Oxford – A reminiscence of the ‘Noetics’* (1909) is a first guide to the life and times of the Noetics. Winch’s opus, *Riches and Poverty – An intellectual history of political economy in Britain 1750-1834* and the collaborative product of the “Sussex three” *The Noble Science of Politics. A study in Nineteenth Century Intellectual History* (1983) and Burrow’s *A Liberal Descent Victorian Historians and the English Past* (1981). Another hallmark book in this research is Boyd Hilton’s *The Age of Atonement – The Influence of Evangelicalism on*

Under the leadership of first Edward Copleston (Fellow, 1789-1814; Provost 1814-1828; Bishop 1828-1849) and then Whately himself (Fellow 1811-31), Oriel College was a hive of intellectual industry, leadership and culture.

Whately matriculated from Oriel College on the 6th of April 1805 and graduated with a B. A. (double major second class) in 1808 with which he was deeply disappointed and for which he blamed the examiners (Tuckwell 1909, p. 56). He continued to study theology and, like most Oxford dons of the period, he took Holy Orders in 1811, and in due course, the degrees of Bachelor of Divinity and Doctor of Divinity. As a Fellow of Oriel, Whately first came to prominence through writing Christian apologetics and on Church government. His first well known piece was an anonymous tract, a witty Christian-apologist challenge to Hume and the other extreme sceptics of religion of the day, *Historic Doubts relative to Napoleon Bonaparte* (1819), which compared the scant evidence for miracles with the scant evidence anyone who speaks of Napoleon has of his existence.

After his marriage to Elizabeth in 1822 they and returned to residence at Oxford, where he continued on the theme of Church governance in the Brampton Lectures, *On the Use and Abuse of Party Spirit in Matters of Religion*. In 1825 he returned his residence as the principal of St Alban Hall. He set about implementing his plans for reform at Oxford, particularly the restoration of the teaching of logic and rhetoric as central disciplines of the University curriculum. He succeeded in this task, with the assistance of his then friend and protégé, J.H. Newman (Tuckwell 1909). Of the Oriel Common Room it was said that it “stinks of logic” (Tuckwell 1909, p. 59). It was here that Whately’s “cold, penetrating intellect” and passionate reformist views, found their best expression. It was here, in this milieu, and wherever else Church reformers congregated in the first three decades of the nineteenth century, that Whately was afforded the audience of an “oracle” (Overton 1894, p. 119).

Whately’s concerns moved beyond Christian apologetics and Church governance. His contribution to logic, which first appeared as an article in the *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana* (1826), was ultimately published as a stand-alone treatise that went through numerous editions and was read by hundreds of thousands (Akenson 1981). *Elements of Logic* became a landmark piece of work in Britain and the United States, where it gave great impetus to the study of logic. Whately also contributed an article to the *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana* entitled ‘Rhetoric’, which was also adapted into a book, *Elements of Rhetoric*, published in 1828. In 1831 Whately was elected to the recently established Drummond professorship of Political Economy at Oxford in succession to his protégé Nassau Senior. The lectures delivered as part of his duties, *Introductory Lectures* (1832), were highly influential and their impact will be explored later in this narrative.

Social and Economic Thought 1785-1865 (1986). It is an essential contextual corrective to the prior neglect of evangelicalism in particular, and religion more generally, in the formation of intellectual currents through the nineteenth century. Hilton tells us that as the image of God morphed so too did the politics and political economy. In analysing this period, it is important not to fall for what Forbes (1975) referred to as the “fallacy of premature secularisation”

During this period Whately came to the attention of the Foxite Liberals who planned to slowly change the character of the House of Lords by adding more liberal Bishops to its ranks. They sought someone capable of improving the tense situation. So, in 1831 Whately was appointed Archbishop of Dublin. News of his appointment to the Bishopric of Dublin was met with alarm and dismay on both sides of the religious and political divide. The Tories thought him a Catholic-loving latitudinarian, given his views on state endowment of the Roman Catholic clergy and free religious instruction. The Catholics, by contrast, thought they'd been sent a rabid pugilist. The appointment of Whately as Archbishop had, in fact, been a shrewd and measured choice.

The Dublin period was not as happy for Whately as his Oxford years (Akenson 1981). He was not well suited to the formality and convention of a divided Ireland. Intellectually, however, it was productive. He published only one course of economics of his own, but one of his first acts was to endow a chair of political economy at Trinity College. Whately concentrated many years of study into an annotated edition of *Bacon's Essays* (Whately, 1868), and then, the subject of this paper, his annotated edition of *Principles of Moral Philosophy* which was retitled, *Paley's Moral Philosophy* (Whately, 1859).

V WHATELY'S ANNOTATED EDITION OF PALEY'S PRINCIPLES

To Whately *The Principles*, one of the most read books in England and America in the early nineteenth century, had "laid the foundation of Moral Philosophy for many hundreds – probably thousands – of Youth while under a course of training designed to qualify them for being afterwards the Moral Instructors of Millions" (Whately 1832, preface i). To Whately, therefore, such a work, "cannot fail to exercise a very considerable and extensive influence on the Minds of successive generations" (Whately 1832, preface i). It is important to keep in mind that in 1832 more than half of all students at Oxford would go on to take Holy Orders. At this time "the University's chief purpose was to provide a gentlemanly education for the intending clergy.... The college fellows were themselves required to be in holy orders, and they thought of themselves as clergy rather than academics in the modern sense" (Jones 2007, pp1-2). Whately thought *the Principles* an important text but one that "should be accompanied by cautions to the Young Student against adopting the whole of the system" (Whately, 1859, piii) and in particular its errors of omission. Paley's fault as a moralist, he thought, "was chiefly one of omission" since he arrives at "many right conclusions, though based on insufficient grounds" (Whately, 1859, p 27).

Richard Whately and William Paley agreed on a great many things. They were both devoted Natural theologians. Both branches of moral analysis (virtue and deontological), however, despite this critical difference, depart from natural religion's insights to guide their reasoning, both sought to reveal in their ethical deliberations what they detected in God's creation (Le Mathieu, 2002). This provided the shared intellectual framework for debate. Whately cites Paley's "watchmaker God" enthusiastically in his *Introductory Lectures on Political Economy* (Whately, 1832). They both agreed that numerical laws of gravitation and planetary motion, mathematics and chemistry all proved the existence of God (Hilton, 1986, p24). Whately had drawn a new distinction between "scientific" and "theoretical" knowledge in a way that safe-guarded the primacy of each in their different spheres (Whately, 1832). This, in effect, surrendered the intellectual monopoly that had hitherto been held by the

Church. After this time it would no longer be necessary for the ordinary business of the scientist of the natural or social realms to reconcile their theorizing with religious doctrine, as had been the project to that point. There is an irony here, Whately is as much the author of the demise of role of revelation on civic life as Paley.

Whately had wanted to release his edition of Paley much earlier. Whewell had, in 1845, published the replacement text book to Paley's for Cambridge, *The Elements of Morality, including Polity*. Whately was inspired by and quotes extensively from this: "There is one Writer Dr, Whewell whom it is the more important to particularize, from his having been a distinguished Professor of Moral Philosophy in Paley's own University. And from a Work of his accordingly I have cited some extracts" (Whately, 1859, piii). Like Whewell, Whately's strongest censures are focused on Paley's fundamental architecture of morality, his meta-ethics. The main domains of disagreement are provided below in the order they appear in Whately's edition.

Firstly, Whately challenged Paley on the idea that motive matters. Paley argues the Benthamite, scientific line that full morality can be observed from consequences of actions. Whately challenges this giving as an example, the man who tells the truth only for purposes of expediency, proving that perhaps he is prudent, but that no one would assume him an honest one (Whately, 1859, p14). Whately emphasised that motive as an essential component of virtuous conduct. This reinforces the view that consequences alone are an insufficient guide to moral conduct, motive matters.

Secondly, Whately challenged Paley's notions of how we discern and guide ourselves to virtuous conduct. Whately, as a bearer of the virtue-ethics tradition and advocate of the moral sense being inbuilt, argued that man is "manifestly designed by Nature for the society of his fellows". Sympathy is in-built. Whately looks to the animal kingdom for an example "just as the bee or the ant" is designed for social cooperation, human beings inherently possess sympathy for fellow human beings and from this a moral sense emerges, albeit one that requires cultivation and development (Whately, 1859, p23).

In Whately's reckoning, without an innate 'moral sense' men and women are impotent to discern good from evil in their own lives, let alone comparisons with others, or between societies. The Benthamite system "can afford no information about what ought to be in public affairs; and his advocacy of political economy in policy formation is at best unhelpful and at worst a mere fraud" (Waterman 1991, p 215). Whately regarded Paley's denial of a moral sense as the gravest error in an otherwise important work. This inability to explain the good is the central deficiency of utilitarian ethics. Whately's principal correction to Paley was:

"man, according to him [Paley], has no moral faculty, - no power of distinguishing right from wrong, - no preference of justice to injustice, or kindness to cruelty, excepts when one's own personal interest happens to be concerned.The truth, I conceive, is actually the reverse of this, viz., that Man having in himself a Moral-faculty...by which he is instinctively led to approve virtue and disapprove of vice. (Whately 1859, p. 77).

In a materialistic universe presupposed by Bentham and endorsed by Paley, human pleasure

and pain are reducible to the interaction of 'discrete physical objects'(Crimmins 1989). The effect of this can be evaluated –subjectively and provisionally - by each individual. But without some of the necessarily theological understanding of a 'meaning' or 'purpose' to human life, it is impossible for anyone to be sure about the value even of his own pleasures and pains, let alone those of anyone else. This is Whately's challenge to Paley:

“For as the believer in God is at a loss to account for the existence of evil, the believer of no God is equally unable to account for the existence of good, or indeed anything at all that bears the mark of design (Whately 1859, p68).

The third Whatelyian challenge is one derived from Bishop Fitzgerald's writing on Paley's failure to differentiate between the existence of absolute moral maxims (Paley cites different cultures celebrating and deriding radically different practices, an early cultural relativist) as distinct from the existence of a faculty for moral discrimination (p28). Whately's counter-argument, by analogy, was that we would think it ridiculous to regard the existence of “an ear for music” because there were no “innate tunes”.

A fourth critique comes in the major annotation on the chapter on Happiness (Whately, 1859, pp42-79). Whately takes Paley to task, often drawing on William Whewell's writing on the subject, against Paley's view that “pleasures differ in nothing but continuance and intensity”. Whately draws attention to Paley's apparent inconsistency on pleasures being undifferentiable other than in continuance and intensity with Paley's hierarchy of happiness. This hierarchy starts by explaining all the things happiness is not, and then presents what happiness is. It asserts happiness is a comparative phenomenon and gets more intense and important the more “engagement” is present, and, furthermore the higher the level of engagement the pursuit entails, the more elevated it is. Here Whately quotes Whewell:

“And if the pleasures of sense “differ only in intensity and duration’, from pleasures of filial and parental affection, we ought to know how many days of luxurious living are equivalent to the pleasure of saving a father's life”(Whately, 1859, p42).

Fifth, Whately criticises Paley's discussion of virtue, habits and duties. Paley tells us “man is a bundle of habits” (Whately, 1859, p46). Whately agrees, but nevertheless challenges Paley for failing to identify the habits man might develop which might be against the “public good” and might need correction. This draws attention to Paley's optimistic theology that man is built to desire “good” and not to desire evil as a matter of design. Again, at the level of meta-ethics, Whately challenges Paley for his statement, “Virtue is the doing good to Mankind, in obedience to the will of God” (Whately, 1859, p51). Whately argues that there are discrepancies in what different groups of men regard as moral, and that the “will of God” can indeed be difficult to discern. Whately proffers an example of a section of an Irish Catholic school book, published at the government's expense, which tells the story of some Protestants burnt at the stake “it is very shocking that people should be burned; but it was much more shocking that they should be leading so many more people to be burned in the flames of hell forever” (Whately, 1859, p52). It is hard to know the “will of God”.

Whately's sixth and final critique returns to Paley's idea of expediency, or prudence as being ultimately the same thing as duty; for example, to do what is prudent is to do our duty, no more is required of us. For the optimistic Paley, that which is fit for human purpose is good,

and we naturally desire it. Therefore prudently pursuing our interests will correspond with the good. There is, by this analysis, no need for restraint or for the cultivation of the moral impulse, we just do what we're made for and all will be well. In this system if we do what is prudent, we will fulfil our duty. Whately cites Whewell, again, pointing out that in this system the requirement to "do any moral act", is reduced to two elements: "external restraint" and "the command of the superior" (Whately, 1859, p61). Whately argues men do not "account any conduct virtuous which they believe to have proceeded entirely from calculations of self-interest; even though the external act itself be such as they conceive would have been done by a virtuous man" (Whately, 1859, p61). For an act to be considered virtuous, it must flow from the correct motive, as well as have positive consequences.

In summary, Whately admired Paley's text and its capacity to instruct the elites on how they should conduct themselves in practice, in his introduction to *Paley's Moral Philosophy* (1859), he lauds its instructive effect "on the hundreds, probably thousands of our Youths on a course of training designed to qualify them for being afterwards the Moral instructors of Millions" (Whately, 1859, piii). Despite his overarching admiration, however, Whately thought the book arrived at good outcomes via wrong departure points and he set out to fix these troubling elements using his own name and stature to correct its most important errors.

How successful was he in this? Firstly on the main evolutionary line of thinking on moral philosophy and utilitarianism, it did have an effect. Whately's argument and writing, in this critique and elsewhere, along with that of Whewell, did influence on J.S. Mill. Mill was moved by these combined attacks on utilitarianism (Snyder, 2006, p30-32). We know that Mill, in addition to his own experience of the joylessness of the Benthamite mental universe, (Mill, 1873), was affected by the alternative currents of thought, particularly Coleridge, but also the three way contest between himself, Whewell and Whately on epistemology, logic, science, morality, and politics. This was very fertile activity and influenced Mill's thinking about utilitarianism profoundly (Snyder, 2006, p97, 102, 300, 302). Whately's contribution to Mill's subsequent reinvention of theoretical utilitarianism will be the subject of another paper.

Returning to Whately's influence on the broader culture, his annotated edition of Paley's text was widely disseminated. It was reviewed and discussed in the higher journalism. One example is this brief report in *the Spectator*, 12 March, 1859:

"The annotations of Dr. Whately on Paley's "Moral Philosophy" (excluding the "Political Philosophy") are often somewhat loose in style. In argument, the Archbishop is most successful when tracing the entanglements and errors in which Paley involved himself, by rejecting an innate moral sense, and relying upon positive command and utility as the origin and reason of morals. The most cogent and conclusive argument on any single fallacy is the exposure of Paley's mode of reasoning from single and exceptional instances to general laws".

The edition, as demonstrated above, was not regarded as anything out of the ordinary. Furthermore, Paley's rejection of a moral sense, was plainly as unacceptable to the reviewer as it was to Whately and Whewell. Furthermore, it indicates the reviewer's view that "positive command and utility as the origin and reason of morals" is no way to ground a moral system. *The Spectator* as a mainstream example among the higher journals of the

1850's, is a good indication of elite thinking.

However, despite mainstream thinking and the best efforts of Paley's antagonists, the rationalist Oriel Noetics, and the Cambridge antagonists who sought to "systematically denigrate him as a utilitarian egoist" (Hilton, 1986 p171), the influence of Paley's thinking on the broader culture, prevailed. The full story of how utilitarianism infiltrated the workings of economics and policy is complex and beyond the scope of this paper. It is the discreet submission of this paper, however, that despite the learned critique by Whately, despite an array of antagonists assembled against the *Principles*, from its publication at the end of the eighteenth century right through until Whately's 1859 critique, illustrating just how contested the notion of morality with no moral sense, was. Still, it prevailed and so it was that Paley became the Christian orthodox vessel on which the philosophical radicals, and their utilitarian program, first entered mainstream waters. Paley.

Grounding his analysis on the Lockean conception of the blank slate, Paley denied the existence of a God-given moral sense. This fundamentally new approach to Christian moral philosophy, dressed as it was in clerical garb, endorsed, at its heart, a scientific analysis of morality based on consequences alone. As the primary text for moral instruction of a generation, no amount of rear-guard reaction could divert the river that flowed from it. Yet this was only half of the river. Ultimately, it flowed with other cultural forces which were to reinforce the spirit of science and a reduced role for revelation in moral or social matters in this chapter of the enlightenment. One landmark example highlights the point: published in the same year as Whately's Annotated edition of Paley was Charles Darwin's *the Origin of Species* (Darwin, 1859). Ironically, it was the tenuous and mechanistic God promoted by Paley in particular and now firmly planted in the mind of intellectual Christians in Britain, was no match for the explosive explanatory power of the blind forces of evolution now presented by Darwin. Both the baby, and the bathwater were thus dispensed with and, ironically enough, Paley's signature was on both.

VI CONCLUSION

Why does this episode matter? To return to where we started and the challenge to explain how the transition from virtue-ethics to utilitarian occurred. This paper presents a study of this pivotal episode in the story of how theology and virtue-ethics parted ways. West lost virtue. In the half-century examined here, the 2000 plus year old system for discerning social good, descended from at least Aristotle, and understood mediated by Judeo-Christian revelation lost its hallowed place at the centre of civic life. Since then, as Macintyre has argued, we have lost the language, and the evaluative frameworks to perceive the loss that Whately and Whewell so lament. It is only through an historical reconstruction – a task only pointed toward here - that we can examine such transition points and see what was actually at stake.

In *After Virtue* (1981) Alasdair Macintyre drew attention to all that has been lost in the transition from a virtue-based to a consequentialist assessment of moral behaviour. He points to "...all those relative concepts which inform our moral discourse were originally at home in larger totalities of theory and practice in which they enjoyed a role and function supplied by contexts of which they have now been deprived". He highlights "the concepts we employ have in at least some cases

changed their character in the past three hundred years”; and, finally, that “the evaluative expressions we use have changed their meaning”, for example, “words like ‘virtue’ and ‘justice’ and ‘piety’ and ‘duty’ and even ‘ought’ have become other than they once were (Macintyre, 1981, p10). In the case of the Noetics, these deliberations resulted in a clear-minded approach to public policy which separated the discernment of ends from the analysis of means, echoes in virtue-ethicist admonitions of utilitarians today (Macintyre, 1999; Sandel, 2012). But Whately’s critique remains unanswered.

Secondly, at a finer level of detail, the episode illuminates the theological moral philosophy which underpins Noetic Political Economy, an alternative intellectual product contemporaneous with the emergence of Benthamite and Ricardian political economy. This Noetic system was the result of collaboration by a group of scholars which included Edward Copleston, J.H. Newman and Nassau Senior. This unique fusion of Aristotelian virtue-ethics framework, rationalist Smithian political economy and Christian moral philosophy, in its argument for design God, natural theology, and conceptions of self-love and duty, was an important synthesis. Whately, the Oriel Noetics and the other antagonists to Paley’s thought it entirely wrong to suppose “that the hedonistic calculus” could replace revelation as an ameliorating source in the perfection, or at least improvement, of the innately existing moral sense, Smith’s “impartial spectator” The Oriel Noetics view was that political economy was the best instrument to determine means, but that ends, the purposes to which policy was directed, had to be discerned using other criteria and instruments: a clerisy, and deep, rationalist reflection on the tenets of revelation and the direction and final good they presuppose. However Paley’s contributions were seminal to their moral philosophy and natural religion. So Paley too is an important pre-cursor to what AMC Waterman termed, Christian Political Economy (1991).

Thirdly, the episode presents a story of the contingency in intellectual evolution. Paley’s “immortal book” – despite the efforts of many, became the British elite’s Psalter of utilitarianism. It helped shape the English mind of the nineteenth century. Had it not been for Paley’s explicit recognition of the utility of the “the greatest good for the greatest number” as a superior arbiter than the cultivation of the existing moral sense, Bentham’s radical position may have lacked the stamp of divine approval necessary for it to pass muster. We are left to muse at the intricate weave of ideas that underpin the complex evolution of nineteenth century liberalism and conservatism. It is a fabric of many hues and textures and Paley and Whately are woven throughout.

Finally, to conclude the paper on a point of historiography: it should be of interest to scholars of intellectual history to see how little this vital issue has been considered in the scholarship of the nineteenth century. Given the consequences for socially agreed nature of moral reasoning, policy-making and the history of economics this is a notable blind spot. The first draft of the intellectual history of the period was dominated by of the liberal radical tradition starting with Leslie Stephen’s *The English Utilitarians* (3 Volumes) (1902), and was then popularised with *The Growth of Philosophical Radicalism* by Elie Halevy (1928), and followed up with his *The History of the English People* (6 Volumes) (Halevy, 1931- 32). These writers wrote the Christian influence out of the story. These historians often drew on a teleological view of the nineteenth century looking for evidence of the precursors to the ultimate victory of the agnostics, secular-rationalists and atheists that would follow. This

historical episode demonstrates this is yet another case of “premature secularisation”, history. Another case of intellectual history, having been written with the colour of virtue and theological influence drained from the portrait (Forbes, 1973).

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Richard Whately (1 February 1787 – 8 October 1863) was an English rhetorician, logician, economist, academic and theologian who also served as a reforming Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin. He was a leading Broad Churchman, a prolific and combative author over a wide range of topics, a flamboyant character, and one of the first reviewers to recognise the talents of Jane Austen. Preview “Utilitarianism by John Stuart Mill. Utilitarianism Quotes Showing 1-30 of 33. “It is indisputable that the being whose capacities of enjoyment are low, has the greatest chance of having them fully satisfied; and a highly endowed being will always feel that any happiness which he can look for, as the world is constituted, is imperfect.” “Whatever may be the opinion of utilitarian moralists as to the original conditions by which virtue is made virtue; however they may believe (as they do) that actions and dispositions are only virtuous because they promote another end than virtue; yet this being granted, and it having been decided, from considerations of this description, what is virtuous, they not only place virtue at.