Francis Hutcheson on Liberty

RUTH BOEKER

Abstract

This paper aims to reconstruct Francis Hutcheson's thinking about liberty. Since he does not offer a detailed treatment of philosophical questions concerning liberty in his mature philosophical writings I turn to a textbook on metaphysics. We can assume that he prepared the textbook during the 1720s in Dublin. This textbook deserves more attention. First, it sheds light on Hutcheson's role as a teacher in Ireland and Scotland. Second, Hutcheson's contributions to metaphysical disputes are more original than sometimes assumed. To appreciate his independent thinking, I argue, it is helpful to take the intellectual debates in Ireland into consideration, including William King's defence of free will and discussions of Shaftesbury's views in Robert Molesworth's intellectual circle. Rather than taking a stance on the philosophical disputes about liberty, I argue that Hutcheson aims to shift the focus of the debates towards practical questions concerning control of desire, cultivation of habits, and character development.

1. Introduction

Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746) is best known for his mature works on aesthetics and moral philosophy. It may be surprising that these works contain little direct engagement with questions of liberty, especially since many of his predecessors and contemporaries in Britain and Ireland are involved in controversial debates about liberty and necessity.[1] Hutcheson does not entirely neglect questions of liberty[2], but to gain insight into his understanding of liberty it is informative to turn to a Latin textbook on metaphysics, entitled *Metaphysicae Synopsis: Ontologiam, et Pneumatologiam, Complectens* [*A Synopsis of Metaphysics Comprehending Ontology and Pneumatology*, hereafter short '*Metaphysics*'],[3] that he prepared for the instruction of students

[1] For instance, see Locke (1975); King (1702). King's *De Origine Mali* has been translated by Edmund Law into English (King, 1781). For further discussion and background, see Harris (2005); Pearce (2019).

[2] In the following I use the terms 'liberty' and 'freedom' interchangeably. Most of the primary texts that this paper focuses on were originally written in Latin. The Latin term 'libertas' can be translated as 'liberty' or 'freedom' into English.

[3] This work was not translated into English until 2006. The English translation is included in Hutcheson (2006).

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and probably composed in the 1720s during his time in Dublin. Yet a note of caution is in order from the outset. The first edition of *Metaphysics* was published without his consent in 1742 and although a second revised edition was published during his lifetime in 1744, he never fully endorsed the work.[4] This textbook was first and foremost a manual for teaching students and its content is constrained by the curriculum at the University of Glasgow. Despite Hutcheson's ambivalence about *Metaphysics*, I believe that it deserves more attention than it has received so far. First, the fact that he prepared a textbook on metaphysics sheds light on his role in the education of students in Ireland and Scotland, as I explain in more detail in section 2. Growing up as a Presbyterian in Ireland, Hutcheson, like many fellow Irish Presbyterians, had to travel to Scotland to earn a university degree and the intellectual and social context in both Ireland and Scotland shape his intellectual development and philosophical thinking. Second, I believe that *Metaphysics* despite being a textbook is more original than sometimes assumed. Although *Metaphysics* offers in the first instance a critical commentary on a textbook by the Dutch metaphysician Gerard de Vries and Hutcheson certainly draws on John Locke's philosophy to challenge the positions presented in de Vries's textbook, it is helpful to take the intellectual context in Ireland into consideration to better appreciate Hutcheson's own contributions to the philosophical debates. In section 3, after briefly providing further background about Hutcheson's textbook *Metaphysics* and its importance for the instruction of students, I examine closely how Hutcheson understands liberty and the will in *Metaphysics*. By showing that his view departs both from de Vries's and Locke's views, I intend to bring to light the independence of his thought. I propose that Hutcheson rather than trying to take a stance on metaphysical disputes about liberty aims to shift the focus of the debates and emphasizes the importance of controlling desires and cultivating right habits. Since these practical tasks do not presuppose a particular understanding of liberty, we can see why he is not very invested in settling the theoretical disputes about liberty. In section 4, I turn to his mature philosophical writings. His *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions, with Illustrations on the Moral Sense* includes a critical response to William King's defence of libertarian free will. Although Hutcheson can be seen as more critical about libertarian freedom in this work than in his textbook, his overall strategy is to show that as far as practical considerations

[4] See Moore (2006, Introduction; 1990).

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are concerned there is no need to adopt the libertarian view that freedom requires an agent's choices be entirely undetermined, meaning that the agent is in a position to both choose an action and its opposite, since attributions of merit and praise are not grounded in free rational choice. Instead we are better advised to focus on character development.

2. Education in Ireland and Scotland

Francis Hutcheson was born in 1694 in Drumalig near Saintfield, County Down, in Ulster. Both his father John Hutcheson (d. 1729) and grandfather Alexander Hutcheson (d. 1711) were Presbyterian ministers.[5] Hutcheson's family, like many other Presbyterians in Ireland, had roots in Scotland.

Although Scottish settlers had migrated to Ireland, and Ulster in particular, for centuries, an organized colonization process during the reign of King James I (who was formerly King of Scotland as James VI) brought many Scots to Ulster at the beginning of the seventeenth century, where they were granted land.[6] These Scottish settlers established Presbyterian congregations in Ulster. Although Presbyterians were initially happy to be part of the Church of Ireland due to their shared Protestant heritage, rifts between Irish Presbyterians and the Church of Ireland started to grow during the middle of the seventeenth century as the episcopal Church of Ireland became less tolerant of non-Anglican Protestants, whom it termed 'dissenters'. The Church of Ireland, as the established church, started to apply penalties for religious non-conformity to Presbyterians and other dissenting Protestants; thereby they expanded practices that formerly targeted only Catholics. The exclusion of Presbyterians, other Protestant dissenters, and Catholics under the suite of Penal Laws had political motivations and meant that those who did not belong to the Church of Ireland were not in a position to hold public offices. Furthermore, they were excluded from attending Trinity College Dublin, the only University in Ireland during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[7] Political, economic, and educational affairs in Ireland were predominantly in the hands of members of the Church of Ireland, and the Westminster Parliament

[5] See Moore (2008).

[6] For further details, see Bartlett (2010, pp. 99–109).

[7] For further details, see Bartlett (2010, pp. 163–67); Brown (2016, pp. 112–17); Foster (1989, pp. 124–25).

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too sought to exert its claim to rule. It is worth adding that those in political power in Ireland were not representative of the Irish population as a whole. At least three quarters of the population in Ireland was Catholic, and the much smaller Protestant part of the population was split into Presbyterians, who were mainly based in Ulster and Dublin, and Anglicans, who belonged to the Church of Ireland.[8] Although Presbyterians in Ireland were not prevented from religious worship (as were Catholics), they lacked political rights. Since they could not acquire a university degree in Ireland, many moved to Scotland for study and for many the University of Glasgow was the university of choice.[9] As of 1691, anyone who intended to become a Presbyterian minister needed to have a university degree, which commonly meant matriculation at a Scottish university for an arts degree.[10] The four-year degree included training in logic, metaphysics, moral philosophy, and natural philosophy. Preparation for the Presbyterian Ministry required further four years of studies in Divinity after the completion of the arts degree.[11] Since study outside Ireland was costly, several dissenting academies – called 'philosophy schools' in their day – were established that were meant to prepare students for study at Scottish universities and made it possible for them to abridge their studies in Scotland for the arts degree.[12]

This religious and political context shapes Francis Hutcheson's upbringing and education. From 1702 until 1707 he attends a local School in Saintfield, County Down, and then continues his education at a dissenting academy in Killyleagh, County Down, between 1707 and 1710. His training in Killyleagh made it possible to enter the fourth and final year when he starts his studies at the University of Glasgow in 1710/11. There he joins the natural philosophy class of John Louden. After his graduation Hutcheson remains in Glasgow and studies classical literature for a year before beginning training in Divinity in 1712/13 to become a minister in the Presbyterian church.[13]

[8] See Bartlett (2010, pp. 143–58). For an accessible overview of the issues, see C. M. Barry, 'Toleration in 18th Century Ireland', *Irish Philosophy Blog*, http://www.irishphilosophy.com/2016/11/17/toleration-18th-century/.

[9] See McBride (1993, p. 74); Moore (2008, p. 74; 1990, p. 43).

[10] See Steers (2012, p. 62).

[11] This was decided by the General Synod in 1702. See Steers (2012, p. 64).

[12] For helpful further discussion and insight into the curriculum of dissenting academies, see Steers (2012).

[13] See Moore (2008).

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In 1718 Hutcheson returns to Ulster with the intention of becoming a Presbyterian minister. However, his career path changes in 1719 when he accepts an invitation to run a dissenting academy in Dublin, which is the beginning of his career as a teacher. The Toleration Act of 1719 gave more protection to Presbyterians and other Protestant dissenters and made it possible for them to run schools like the dissenting academy that was founded in Dublin.[14] His role at the academy in Dublin involves preparing the next generation of students for study in Scotland, and Glasgow in particular, like the training he received in Killyleagh that prepared him for study at Glasgow.[15] This means that the courses that he teaches in Dublin are meant to resemble the courses that other students attend at Glasgow so that the Irish-based students can abridge their subsequent studies in Scotland. Thus, we can assume that his teaching included logic, metaphysics, and moral philosophy. It is further very probable that he composed textbooks on logic and metaphysics during the 1720s while he teaches at the Dublin academy.[16] Although neither of these textbooks were published during these years, Hutcheson did not teach logic and metaphysics courses again after he left Dublin to take up the chair of moral philosophy at the University of Glasgow, to which he was appointed in December 1729 as Gershom Carmichael's successor.[17]

Hutcheson's teaching in Dublin is certainly constrained by the curriculum at Scottish universities. In his inaugural lecture, delivered at Glasgow in 1730, he recalls being 'involved in laborious and tedious business' (Hutcheson, 2006, p. 191) during the years in Dublin, but this reflection seems overshadowed by modesty. Hutcheson has fond memories of his formative years as a student at Glasgow and is genuinely delighted to return to his alma mater as professor of moral philosophy.[18] Yet the years that he spent in Ireland during the 1720s were no less important for his intellectual development and he is very productive and intellectually creative during this time of his life. He published two major works, namely *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725) and *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, with Illustrations on the Moral Sense* (1728) during these years. Furthermore, the intellectual milieu in Dublin and Ireland informs

[14] See Carey (2006, p. 155).
[15] See Moore (1990, p. 45).
[16] English translations of both textbooks can be found in Hutcheson (2006).
[17] See Moore (1990, pp. xxii–xxiii).
[18] See Hutcheson (2006, pp. 191–92).

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the development of his philosophical views and helps him find his own philosophical voice.[19]

In the following I want to pay particular attention to his views on liberty and situate them within intellectual debates in Ireland. First, Hutcheson is well aware of William King's libertarian defence of free will. William King (1650–1729), who was Bishop of Derry from 1691 until being appointed as Archbishop of Dublin in 1703, publishes *De Origine Mali* in 1702. In this work, which examines the origin of evil, King argues that it is important to distinguish between natural and moral evil and that humans are responsible for moral evil in the world. Moral evil occurs because humans have free will. Although God could have created humans without free will and arranged the world such that they would only do good actions, King believes that free will is essential for human moral development, despite the fact that it can lead to moral evil.[20]

Moreover, Robert Molesworth (1656–1725), who was an intellectual, merchant, and influential politician, was one of Hutcheson's associates in Dublin.[21] Molesworth supported Hutcheson's intellectual development, and probably helped him as he began publishing his works, in a place where Hutcheson was seen as a dissenter and in need of political protection.[22] Molesworth was friends with several intellectuals, whose views were considered radical at that time, including John Toland and Anthony Collins. Molesworth was also a close friend of Anthony Ashley Cooper, the Third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713) and we can assume that Hutcheson had the opportunity to engage with Shaftesbury's works through Molesworth's intellectual circle.[23] Shaftesbury's philosophy aims to revive ancient philosophical views, and emphasizes that philosophy should be practical and help us improve our lives. It offers a stark contrast to the natural law tradition that shaped university courses in moral philosophy. By encountering intellectual views that diverge from the standard university curriculum and that many would have

[19] For further details, see Brown (2002).

[20] For additional details of Hutcheson's and King's relationship, see Brown (2002, Ch. 6).

[21] It is not known how Hutcheson and Molesworth first met. Molesworth's influence was not restricted to Dublin, but rather he also had an influence on student affairs in Glasgow in the 1720s. For further discussion, see McBride (1993, pp. 82–86).

[22] For further details, see Brown (2002, Ch. 1). See also Moore (1990, pp. 46–47).

[23] See Carey (2006, pp. 152–61; 2015, pp. 37–38); McBride (1993, pp. 82–84).

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regarded as radical Hutcheson had the opportunity to step back from the views that his teachers in Glasgow advanced and to broaden his understanding of the intellectual debates of his day. This no doubt aided him to develop his own philosophical voice.

3. Liberty and the will in Hutcheson's *Metaphysics*

Hutcheson's most detailed commentary on philosophical debates concerning liberty and the will can be found in his Latin textbook *A Synopsis of Metaphysics*. Although we cannot be confident that it reflects his considered views, it was influential for university teaching in Scotland throughout the eighteenth century.[24] According to James Moore, Hutcheson's *Metaphysics* offers a critical commentary on the Latin textbook *Determinationes Ontologicae et Pneumatologicae* by the Dutch metaphysician Gerard de Vries.[25] De Vries's textbook was regularly assigned at the University of Glasgow during the first half of the eighteenth century and recommended by John Louden in his metaphysics classes. Moore maintains further that Hutcheson draws on John Locke's philosophy to challenge de Vries's metaphysical views.[26] In the following, I aim to show that Hutcheson's approach to metaphysics is more original than this; it not only builds on de Vries's and Locke's works, but also the intellectual debates in Ireland and beyond inform Hutcheson's views and help him add his own voice to metaphysical debates.

Hutcheson's *Metaphysics* is divided into three parts. The first part focuses on being and the common attributes of things, the second on the human mind, and the third on God. For present purposes, the second part is most relevant. There Hutcheson adopts the common distinction between the understanding and the will and the second chapter on the will offers insight into his thinking about liberty. He introduces the understanding and the will as powers of the mind and claims that 'the faculty of understanding and the faculty of willing … are concerned respectively with knowing things and with rendering life happy' (Hutcheson, 2006, II.i.2, p. 112). Although other philosophers of his day would agree with his characterization of the understanding, his claim that the will is concerned 'with

[24] Two editions were published during Hutcheson's lifetime in 1742 and an altered and enlarged edition in 1744, followed by five posthumous editions in 1749, 1756, 1762, 1774, and 1780.

[25] See Moore (2006, pp. xiii–xvii).

[26] See Moore (2006, pp. xv–xvi).

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rendering life happy' diverges from their accounts of the will. Neither de Vries nor Locke introduce the will in these terms. According to de Vries, the intellect concerns knowledge and the will concerns freedom.[27] Locke introduces the will as follows:

> The Power of Thinking is called the *Understanding*, and the Power of Volition is called the *Will*, and these two Powers or Abilities in the Mind are denominated *Faculties*. (Locke, 1975, II.vi.2, p. 128)

> This *Power* which the mind has, thus to order the consideration of any *Idea*, or the forbearing to consider it; or to prefer the motion of any part of the body to its rest, and *vice versâ* in any particular instance is that which we call the *Will*. (Locke, 1975, II.xxi.5, p. 236)

This means that for Locke the will is a power of the mind, which is exercised in mental acts of volition. If a subsequent action (or its forbearance) is performed (or not performed) in accordance with the volition, the action (or its forbearance) is called voluntary.[28] Since Hutcheson's characterization of the will departs from both de Vries's and Locke's views, it is worth exploring further as to why he introduces the will in terms of happiness.

According to Hutcheson, the will 'seeks (*appetens*) every kind of pleasant sensation and all actions, events, or external things which seem likely to arouse them, and shuns and rejects everything contrary to them' (Hutcheson, 2006, II.ii.1, p. 126). In a passage added to the second edition, Hutcheson explains that this is possible, because all humans constantly desire (*appetitio*) happiness, which he takes to be an innate feature of our human constitution.[29] He further elaborates that 'the mind, so long as it maintains a calm and provident motion[30], is formed to seek every good thing in itself and to shun every evil; and when several things come before it which it cannot

[27] See de Vries (1718, p. 106). The Latin reads as follows: 'Sicuti de natura Intellectus est Conscientia, absque qua intellectio non foret talis, sic de natura Voluntatis est Libertas, absque qua nec volitio talis esset, sed brutus impetus. Estque, ejus, aeque ac ipisus voluntatis, adeo mens nostra sibi conscia, ut nullius rei magis'.

[28] See Locke (1975, II.xxi.5, p. 236).

[29] See Hutcheson (2006, II.ii.1, p. 126).

[30] The Latin expression is 'motu fertur et providō'. The Latin adjective 'providus', which is here translated as 'provident', can also be translated as 'prudent'.

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have all at the same time, it turns to those which seem greater and more excellent' (Hutcheson, 2006, II.ii.1, p. 126).

His view that humans constantly seek happiness further rests on a distinction between two different kinds of desires.[31] First, Hutcheson argues that there is *sensual desire*. We share this kind of desire with non-human animals and it 'directs us toward pleasure by a kind of blind instinct' (Hutcheson, 2006, II.ii.1, p. 127). This means that the mind 'is driven by a quite violent emotion of the mind to obtain certain sensual goods and to avoid sensual ills' (Hutcheson, 2006, II.ii.1, p. 127). By contrast, the other kind of desire can be called *rational desire* and can be seen as *will* in the proper sense. It involves a 'calm emotion which calls in the counsel of reason and pursues things that are judged, in the light of all the circumstances, to be superior, and are seized by a nobler sense' (Hutcheson, 2006, II.ii.1, p. 127).

Since rational desire, can be seen as the will properly understood, let us consider how rational desire operates. First, Hutcheson argues, there is spontaneously arising desire or aversion, which is often followed by a process of deliberation during which the arguments for getting the things we desire and for avoiding the things that we dislike are carefully considered. After the process of deliberation is completed, 'there follows an *intention* (*propositum*) or *determination* (*consilium*) to do those things that seem most likely to achieve the end' (Hutcheson, 2006, II.ii.1, p. 127). Following the scholastics, the initial desire or aversion can be called 'simple wanting' and the intention to act, which follows the deliberative process, 'efficacious volition' (Hutcheson, 2006, II.ii.1, pp. 127–28).

At first sight, it may appear that Hutcheson here adopts a version of Locke's account of the suspension of desire.[32] As Locke prepares the second edition of his *Essay*, which was published in 1694, he heavily revises the chapter 'Of Power', which is chapter xxi of Book II. As part of the revisions he adds his so-called doctrine of the suspension of desire. In the second edition Locke explicitly distinguishes between desire and volition.[33] While a volition to do action A, commonly leads to the performance of A, desires are better understood as wishes and not all desires lead to action. Indeed, there can be multiple and conflicting desires. Commonly our strongest and most pressing desire results in a volition, which in turn leads to action, provided

[31] See Hutcheson (2006, II.ii.1, p. 127)
[32] See Locke (1975, E2–5 II.xxvii.47, 50-52 pp. 263–64, 265–67).
[33] See Locke (1975, E2–5 II.xxi.30 pp. 249–50).

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there are no external impediments preventing the action.[34] However, the path from desire to volition is not an automatic process. Locke's second edition view is that intelligent beings have the power to suspend any of their desires until they have properly examined the good or evil of the desired things in question. This means that we can 'hold our *wills* undetermined, till we have *examin'd* the good or evil of what we desire' (Locke, 1975, E2–5 II.xxi.52, p. 267).

Despite the apparent similarities between Locke's account of suspension of desire and Hutcheson's understanding of rational desire, I believe that it is important to acknowledge that Hutcheson does not wholeheartedly endorse Locke's views on agency, liberty, and motivation. Differences between their views come to light if we consider how they each understand motivation. Overall, Hutcheson offers a more intellectual account of motivation than Locke. In the first edition of the *Essay* Locke argues that the greater good alone determines the will.[35] Locke was prompted by William Molyneux and William King to rethink his first edition account, who worry that his first edition view is too intellectual. For instance, Molyneux in a letter, dated 22 December 1692, challenges Locke's position by claiming that 'you seem to make all Sins to proceed from the Understanding, or to be against Conscience; and not at all from the Depravity of our Wills' (Locke, 1989, letter no 1597, vol. 4, p. 601). Molyneux here shares a concern that King has expressed in remarks that King prepared upon Molyneux's request on Locke's *Essay* and which Molyneux sent to Locke appended to a letter, dated 15 October 1692.[36] King, who believes that moral evil exists, because God has created humans with free will, since he regards free will as essential for moral development, criticizes Locke's view, because King is concerned that on Locke's view God would be responsible for sin and evil. Locke changed his view concerning motivation and rather than assuming that the greater good alone motivates, his new revised view is that only uneasiness determines the will.[37]

Hutcheson does not share Locke's second edition account of motivation. Instead Hutcheson's understanding of motivation comes closer to Locke's first than his second edition account. Furthermore, Hutcheson emphasizes the importance of controlling desires and cultivating right habits. To see how Hutcheson's view

[34] See Locke (1975, E2–5 II.xxi.40, 47, pp. 257–58, 263–64).
[35] See Locke (1975, E1 II.xxi.29, pp. 248-51).
[36] See Locke (1989, letter no 1544, vol. 4, p. 541). For further discussion, see Storrie (2019).
[37] See Locke (1975, E2–5 II.xxi.29, 31–40 pp. 249, 250–58)).

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differs from Locke's and other influential views of his day, it is helpful to turn to his views on liberty and humans' ability to control their desires.

Hutcheson, like de Vries and Gershom Carmichael, acknowledges that his predecessors have grappled with the difficult question of how liberty is best understood.[38] The controversial question, Hutcheson maintains, concerns whether liberty is a power '*to set* [oneself] *to will a thing or its contrary equally*, which is called the *liberty of contrariety* (as if one were to say that he can desire and pursue either that which seems to him pleasant or that which appears harmful and annoying),' or is it '*at least the power to set* [oneself] *to act or not to act, to will or not to will*, which is the *liberty of contradiction*' (Hutcheson, 2006, I.iv.6, p. 97). The former kind of freedom requires a subject to be both able to will an action and its contrary, which means that it is an indifferent power of the mind to turn in any direction. The latter concerns a subject's ability to enter into an act of willing or not willing, or of doing what one wills or omitting what one does not will. Hutcheson invokes these different definitions of liberty also in a subsequent section that addresses the question 'Where liberty lies'. Since this section sheds light on Hutcheson's thinking, it is worth citing the first paragraph in full:

> Since the sentiment of the mind after completing its deliberation does not depend on the will, but necessarily follows the evidence of truth which is put before it, and [since] no previous command of the will arouses simple wishing or the initial desire or aversion, there is no question of *liberty* here at all, whether liberty is taken as *the power of doing what we wish and omitting what we do not wish,* or *a certain indifferent power of the mind to turn equally in any direction*. If therefore *liberty* is *a faculty which, given all the conditions for action, may act or not act, do one thing or its contrary,* it will only have place in an actual intention to act or in an efficacious volition, according to whether we can initiate [the volition] or suppress it by a previous decision of the will. But if this power pays no attention to the appearances of good or evil which are put before it or fails to follow them, it would seem to be a useless and capricious [power]. Anyone, therefore, who finds it absurd that our minds should be endowed with a power which in no way certainly follows our judgment will have to define it to mean merely *a power of doing what we wish and of refraining*

[38] See Hutcheson (2006, I.iv.6, pp. 97–99, II.ii.3, pp. 129–31). See also de Vries (1718, 38, pp. 106–10); Carmichael (2002, pp. 34–38).

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> *when we do not wish,* however much the mind may have been constrained to wish or not. (Hutcheson, 2006, II.ii.3, p. 129)

While Hutcheson does not offer a new and original definition of liberty, he shifts the focus of the debates by emphasizing the importance of acting in accordance with 'the evidence of truth'. This means that once the process of deliberation of the various desires is completed, one should identify the ultimate intention or efficacious volition guided by truth. This means that if one deliberates which desire to pursue, say the desire to do A or the desire to refrain from doing A, then one should pay attention to the good or evil that are inherent in or result from the action or omission of the action. Thus, for Hutcheson the primary question is not to settle which definition of liberty is to be preferred, but rather that deliberation is guided by moral truth. This is not meant to suggest that he regards the different positions on liberty to be equally plausible.

In the second edition of *Metaphysics* Hutcheson adds commentaries that outline how Stoic philosophers and Peripatetic philosophers would engage with the textbook questions concerning liberty.[39] The fact that he consults sources that find no explicit treatment in de Vries's textbook and Locke's *Essay* is another indication that he moves beyond their views. Stoic philosophers argue that '*nothing* arises *without a cause*' (Hutcheson, 2006, I.iv.6, p. 98). Since causes cannot go in opposite directions, they believe that totally indifferent causes are impossible. Thus, Stoics would reject freedom of contrariety. Rather their view is 'that the will is constrained and directed by each man's character' (Hutcheson, 2006, II.ii.3, p. 129). By contrast, Peripatetic philosophers offer critical responses to determinism, as defended by Stoic philosophers, and argue that 'the nature of *rational causes* [is such] that they can move in any direction, and that this characteristic is theirs by nature' (Hutcheson, 2006, I.iv.6, p. 98).[40] In the first instance Hutcheson outlines the views of Stoic and Peripatetic philosophers, as one may expect in a textbook designed for students. However, is he merely a neutral commentator, or does he add his own voice to the debates? First, it is worth noting that the Stoic position receives more detailed consideration than the views of the Peripatetics, which could be seen as intimating that he leans

[39] See Hutcheson (2006, I.iv.6, 97–98, II.ii.3, pp. 129–31). Hutcheson was especially interested in the works of the Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius and contributed to a translation of his *Meditations*. Aurelius's views on liberty can be found in Hutcheson and Moor (2008, X.33, pp. 129–33).

[40] See also Hutcheson (2006, II.ii.3, pp. 130–31).

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towards the Stoic position. Yet there is no clear indication that he aims to defend one position against the other. This opens another interpretive option, namely that he does not regard the views as rival theories and thus he sees no need to settle the dispute.[41] Just as he does not clearly argue in favour of one definition of liberty against another, he does not clearly take a stance regarding the disputes between Stoics and Peripatetics. Instead of seeing this as a weakness of his contribution to the debates, I want to propose that he intends to shift the focus of the debate. Hutcheson emphasizes the importance of making choices and forming intentions, or efficacious volitions, that are guided by truth and that will promote goodness and happiness, but in order to make choices guided by truth, he does not have to settle philosophical disputes about liberty that are in the focus of student textbooks such as the question whether liberty is better understood as liberty of contrariety or liberty of contraction. On the one hand, if our will is indifferent and both options are equally open, it would be irrational to form the volition to perform an action that is evil or has evil consequences. On the other hand, if choices are determined, it will be important to cultivate right habits and to train the mind in such a way that it can control desires. Hutcheson's engagement with Stoic and Peripatetic views helps prepare the next issue to which he turns, namely the question of what control humans have over their desire.[42]

Hutcheson not only argues that calm desires are superior, since they correspond to goods, but also that we are able to direct our mind to suppress desires for bad things and to pursue superior desires:

> Whatever men's freedom may be, if adequate signs of superior goods are put before them, anyone who has carefully examined the things which arouse desire, and has directed the powers of his mind to this thing, [will find that] all his appetites and desires will be stronger or milder in proportion to the goods themselves. Everyone, therefore, who has seriously done this will be able to make all his desires for superior goods and aversion from the graver evils so strong that he will easily be able at need to suppress weaker desires for bad things and his aversion to lesser evils. Thus he will be able to shape the whole pattern of his life, so that he will pursue all the nobler goods and ignore all the lower

[41] According to Moore (2006, pp. xxv–xxvii), Hutcheson can be seen as attempting to reconcile Stoic and Peripatetic views.

[42] See Hutcheson (2006, II.ii.3, p. 131).

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> things which are incompatible with them. (Hutcheson, 2006, II.ii.3, p. 131)

For Hutcheson the important task is that humans properly control their desires, but to do so, it is not relevant to quibble about the different definitions of liberty that his contemporaries offer. To see how exactly humans can control their desires it is helpful to turn to another passage where Hutcheson argues that violent emotions or lower desires gain force due to incautious association of ideas.[43] It is not uncommon that we erroneously associate happiness with certain things and pain and evil with other things. For instance, assume that Sarah was planning to help her friend, but on her way to her friend broke her leg. Since then she associates helping friends with evil and has stopped helping friends. In this example Sarah mistakenly associates helping friends with evil. Hutcheson believes that there are many other examples of incautious associations of ideas, but that we can gain control over violent emotions if we carefully examine our associations of ideas and separate the ideas or notions we combined erroneously and carelessly.[44] He writes:

> If we are to achieve a just command of these desires and true freedom of mind, it would be very helpful to separate and take apart these notions which we have so carelessly put together, and take a long, hard look at those things that stimulate the appetite, stripping them of these stolen colors; so that we may discover and learn for ourselves what real good and evil is in each of them, and so that we may not seek or shun them beyond the measure of true good and evil. (Hutcheson, 2006, II.ii.6, pp. 136–37)

On this basis, it can be said that Hutcheson's contribution to debates about liberty that received attention in textbooks used in Scottish universities lies in his shift of focus towards practical questions of how we are best able to attain goodness and happiness. He believes that we are able to control our desires and through the cultivation of right habits and proper examination of association of ideas we can train our mind to pursue superior desires. Since these practical aims are consistent with different ways of understanding liberty, there is no need to settle the dispute as far as practical purposes are concerned.

[43] See Hutcheson (2006, II.ii.6, pp. 136–37).

[44] See also Hutcheson (2002, pp. 20–21, 28, 65–86, 92–93, 104–5, 108–12, 131–32). For further discussion, see Gill (1996). I have also learned from forthcoming work by Kathryn Tabb and John P. Wright on association in eighteenth-century Scottish philosophy.

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This shift towards practical questions of self-control has roots in ancient philosophy, but can also be found in Shaftesbury's philosophy.[45] Shaftesbury, like Hutcheson, has great admiration for ancient philosophy. In his major work *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* he argues that philosophy should be practical and help us improve our lives and criticizes purely speculative philosophical disputes. In *Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author* – one work included in *Characteristicks* – Shaftesbury emphasizes the importance of becoming an author of one's own life, of governing one's passions, and cultivating a true and noble character. In his *Inquiry concerning Virtue or Merit* – another work included in *Characteristicks* – he regards pleasures of the mind as superior to those of the body and holds that mental enjoyments are the only means to attain certain and solid happiness.[46] Shaftesbury's philosophical ideas were debated in Robert Molesworth's circle and thus we can assume that Hutcheson has had the opportunity to engage with Shaftesbury's philosophy during his years in Dublin. This intellectual context in Dublin certainly played a role in Hutcheson's intellectual development and presumably stimulated him to move beyond the issues presented in textbooks and to add his own voice to debates about liberty.

4. Liberty and the will in Hutcheson's mature writings

Since Hutcheson does not devote a chapter or section in his mature writings to philosophical debates about liberty, we have limited textual resources to reconstruct his mature thinking about liberty. The mere fact that he has little to say about liberty can be seen as further evidence that he does not see the need to settle the philosophical debates that concerned his predecessors and contemporaries. Instead he is more concerned with debates about human nature and aims to show that humans are not merely self-interested beings, but have also benevolent affections towards others that are not reducible to self-love.[47] As he advances his own views concerning human nature he anticipates potential objections. In particular, he intends to show that William King's understanding of liberty does not

[45] See Boeker (2019). Among the ancient sources, Hutcheson is well acquainted with Marcus Aurelius's philosophy and contributed to an English translation of his *Mediations*, which was submitted for publication in 1742.

[46] See Shaftesbury (2001, vol. 2, p. 58).

[47] See Hutcheson (2004; 2002).

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undermine his philosophical position.[48] I will examine Hutcheson's response to King more closely below, but first let me comment on how Hutcheson advances philosophical studies of the human mind and our mental capacities.

Hutcheson defends the view that there are not only the five well-known external senses, sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste, but that we are also constituted with several other senses. By a sense he understands the mind's independent capacity to receive ideas '*and to have Perceptions of Pleasure and Pain*' (Hutcheson, 2002, p. 17). Besides external senses, he asserts that we have an internal sense, which concerns the pleasures of the imagination and makes it possible to have '*Pleasant Perceptions* arising from *regular, harmonious, uniform* Objects' (Hutcheson, 2002, p. 17), a public sense, which concerns '"our Determinations to be pleased with the *Happiness* of others, and to be uneasy with their *Misery*"' (Hutcheson, 2002, p. 17), a moral sense, 'by which "we perceive *Virtue*, or *Vice* in our selves, or others"' (Hutcheson, 2002, p. 17), and a sense of honour, '"which makes the *Approbation,* or *Gratitude* of others, for any good Actions we have done, the necessary occasion of Pleasure; and their *Dislike, Condemnation,* or *Resentment* of Injuries done by us, the occasion of that uneasy Sensation called *Shame,* even when we fear no further evil from them"' (Hutcheson, 2002, p. 18).

Hutcheson further argues that corresponding to each type of sense there is a particular type of desire. Desires are part of our human constitution and they arise 'upon Apprehension of Good or Evil in Objects, Actions, or Events, to obtain for our *selves* or *others* the *agreeable Sensation,* when the Object or Event is good; or to prevent the *uneasy Sensation,* when it is evil' (Hutcheson, 2002, p. 18). He identifies the following classes of desire:

> 1. The Desire of *sensual Pleasure,* (by which we mean that of the external Senses); and Aversion to the opposite Pains. 2. The Desires of the *Pleasures of Imagination* or Internal Sense, and Aversion to what is disagreeable to it. 3. Desires of the Pleasures arising from *Publick Happiness,* and Aversion to the Pains arising from the *Misery of others*. 4. Desires of *Virtue,* and Aversion to *Vice,* according to the Notions we have of the Tendency of Actions to the Publick Advantage or Detriment. 5. Desires of *Honour,* and Aversion to Shame. (Hutcheson, 2002, pp. 18–19)

[48] See Hutcheson (2002, pp. 178–82).

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The distinction that Hutcheson draws between different senses, on the one hand, and different desires, on the other hand, mirrors the distinction between the understanding and the will.[49] The different senses that he identifies are mental capacities that enable us to receive ideas, while the various desires enable us to attain good and to avoid evil. Identifying several different senses and corresponding desires helps Hutcheson establish his view that humans are not merely self-interested beings, but also benevolent and that benevolence is an inherent part of human nature.

Hutcheson is interested in understanding human action and examines what excites us to choose one action over another. He distinguishes between the reasons that excite actions from the reasons that justify actions and claims 'that all *exciting Reasons* presuppose *Instincts* and *Affections*; and the *justifying* presuppose a *Moral Sense*' (Hutcheson, 2002, p. 138).[50] This thesis enables Hutcheson to challenge rationalist views about motivation. If this is correct, it follows that reason alone cannot motivate or excite action, but rather the presence of instincts or affections is required. He elaborates:

> As to *exciting Reasons,* in every calm rational Action some *end* is desired or intended; no end can be intended or desired previously to some one of these Classes of Affections, *Self-Love, Self-Hatred,* or desire of private Misery, (if this be possible) *Benevolence* toward others, or *Malice:* All Affections are included under these; no *end* can be previous to them all; there can therefore be no *exciting Reason* previous to *Affection.* (Hutcheson, 2002, p. 139).

Yet Hutcheson anticipates that his thesis that reason alone cannot excite actions and always presupposes some instinct or affection will be questioned by his contemporaries, like King, who defend libertarian free will and argue that we can freely determine our actions and who take this to be crucial for merit and praiseworthiness.[51] According to King, free will consists in a faculty of election.[52]

[49] This reading is supported by the following statement: 'Whereas *Desire* is as distinct from any *Sensation*, as the *Will* is from the *Understanding* or Senses' (Hutcheson, 2002, pp. 28–29).

[50] According to Garrett, (2002, p. xvii), Hutcheson borrows the distinction from Hugo Grotius (2012, II.i.1) to challenge rationalist accounts of motivation.

[51] See Hutcheson (2002, pp. 178–82)

[52] See King (1702, 5.1.3). King describes the faculty of election as follows: 'if then we suppose such a power as this, it is plain, that the agent endowed with it cannot be determined in its operations by any pre-existent goodness in the object; for since the agreeableness between it and the

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Hutcheson asks whether '*determining our selves freely* … mean[s] *acting without any Motive or exciting Reason*'. If it does not mean that one acts without a motive or exciting reason, then 'it cannot be opposed to *acting from Instinct or Affections,* since all *Motives* or *Reasons* presuppose them' (Hutcheson, 2002, p. 179). Alternatively, it could mean that only actions done without any motive or exciting reason are meritorious. Such actions would be actions done 'by *mere Election* without prepollent *Desire* of one *Action* or *End* rather than its opposite, or without *Desire of that Pleasure* which some do suppose follows upon any *Election*' (Hutcheson, 2002, p. 179). This means that one could not prefer an action over its opposite. Hutcheson asks us to consider whether anyone ever acts in this way, namely merely by election without any prior desire. Furthermore, he asks whether we would approve of such an action.

> Upon seeing a Person not more disposed by *Affection, Compassion, or Love or Desire,* to make his Country happy than miserable, yet choosing the one rather than the other, from no *Desire of publick Happiness,* nor *Aversion to the Torments of others,* but by such an *unaffectionate Determination,* as that by which one moves his *first Finger* rather than the *second,* in giving an Instance of a *trifling Action;* let any one ask if this Action should be *meritorious:* and yet that there should be no *Merit* in a *tender compassionate Heart,* which shrinks at every *Pain* of its *Fellow-Creatures,* and triumphs in their *Happiness;* with *kind Affections* and *strong Desire* labouring for the publick Good. If this be the Nature of *meritorious Actions;* I fancy every honest Heart would disclaim all *Merit in Morals,* as violently as the old *Protestants* rejected it in *Justification.* (Hutcheson, 2002, pp. 179–80)

This leads Hutcheson to question the view that he ascribes to King, namely that merit or praiseworthiness is founded on unaffectionate

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objects, at least in most of them, is supposed to arise from the determination, the agreeableness cannot possibly be the cause of that determination on which itself depends. But the congruity of the object with the faculty is all the goodness in it, therefore there is nothing good in regard to this power, at least in those object to which it is indifferent, till it has embraced it, nor evil till it has rejected it: since the determination of the power to the object is prior to the goodness and the cause of it, this power cannot be determined by that goodness in its operations' (King, 1781, 5.1.3.5). For further discussion, see Pearce (2019).

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choice, or mere election.[53] He proposes, '[b]ut perhaps 'tis not the *mere Freedom of Choice* which is approved, but the *free Choice of publick Good,* without any *Affection*. Then *Actions* are approved for *publick Usefulness,* and not for *Freedom*'(Hutcheson, 2002, p. 180). Alternatively, it is possible that neither mere election alone nor public usefulness alone are meritorious, but rather both are jointly required for merit. However, could we praise a manufacturer whose work is publicly useful? Hutcheson believes that in the absence of a kind affection or desire of public good such actions are not meritorious.[54]

According to Hutcheson, philosophers who defend libertarian free will and emphasize the importance of rational choice often fail to acknowledge that in addition to violent passions and desires there are calm desires and affections; and that they confound reason with calm desires and affections. Since violent passions often lead to negative consequences not just for individuals but also for society, Hutcheson believes that they must be properly managed and we should focus on cultivating a calm temper or character. Again, we see that Hutcheson believes that upon closer inspection arguments by defenders of free will prove irrelevant and instead it is more important to focus on character development and the cultivation of right habits.[55]

University College Dublin
ruth.boeker@ucd.ie

[53] It is questionable whether Hutcheson's reading of King accurately represents King's account of election. For a more sophisticated interpretation, see Pearce (2019).

[54] See Hutcheson (2002, pp. 180–81).

[55] Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the Center for the Scottish Enlightenment Conference on Science in the Scottish Enlightenment at the Princeton Theological Seminary in March 2017 and the Irish Philosophy in the Age of Berkeley Conference at Trinity College Dublin in April 2019. I would like to thank both audiences for helpful feedback. I am also grateful to Takaharu Oda, Kenneth Pearce, and Katherine O'Donnell for their useful comments on a draft of this paper.

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