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Citation for published version:

Ahnert, T 2010, 'Hutcheson and the heathen moralists', *Journal of Scottish Philosophy*, vol. 8, pp. 51 - 62.
<https://doi.org/10.3366/E1479665109000505>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.3366/E1479665109000505](https://doi.org/10.3366/E1479665109000505)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Published In:

Journal of Scottish Philosophy

Publisher Rights Statement:

© Ahnert, T. (2010). Hutcheson and the heathen moralists. *Journal of Scottish Philosophy*, 8, 51 - 62doi:
[10.3366/E1479665109000505](https://doi.org/10.3366/E1479665109000505)

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FRANCIS HUTCHESON AND THE HEATHEN MORALISTS

THOMAS AHNERT
University of Edinburgh

ABSTRACT

Throughout his career Hutcheson praised the achievements of the pagan moral philosophers of classical antiquity, the Stoics in particular. In recent secondary literature his moral theory has been characterized as a synthesis of Christianity and Stoicism. Yet Hutcheson's attitude towards the ancient heathen moralists was more complex and ambivalent than this idea of 'Christian Stoicism' suggests. According to Hutcheson, pagans who did not believe in Christ and who had never even heard of him were capable of virtue, and even, he asserted controversially, of salvation. Yet Hutcheson did not think that the virtue of pagans, let alone their salvation, was a result of their moral philosophical theories. Hutcheson's applause for pagan philosophy as an intellectual achievement did not indicate a commitment to it, but was based on a detached and cautious evaluation that involved significant reservations concerning the truth and usefulness of pagan ethical thought.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout his career Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746) professed great admiration for the pagan philosophers of classical antiquity. In the Preface to his first book, the *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* of 1725, he explained that he 'took the first hints of [his opinions] from some of the *greatest Writers* of Antiquity' (Hutcheson [1726] 2008: 12). Much later, in the *Philosophiae Moralis Institutio Compendiaria* of 1745, a textbook intended for his students at the University of Glasgow, Hutcheson again praised the philosophical achievements of the ancients, whom he described as 'the grand

The Journal of Scottish Philosophy, 8(1), 51–62
DOI: 10.3366/E1479665109000505

fountains of all the sciences, of all elegance; the inventers and improvers of all ingenious arts' (Hutcheson [1745–1747] 2007: 4). A few years before the *Institutio* Hutcheson, together with the librarian and later professor of Greek at the University of Glasgow, James Moor, had published a translation and edition of *The Meditations of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus*, a text that Hutcheson regarded highly (Hutcheson [1742] 2008: xxii). His frequent praise of the 'heathen' moralists of classical antiquity drew criticism from several of his more conservative fellow Presbyterians in Scotland. In 1738 an attempt was made to put Hutcheson on trial for heresy. As late as 1753, several years after Hutcheson's death, one of the most prominent orthodox clergymen, John Witherspoon, ridiculed Hutcheson's followers for believing in the 'sainthood of Marcus Antoninus', and accused them of preferring the pagan philosophers of classical antiquity to Holy Scripture itself (Witherspoon 1754: 27, 48). Hutcheson's favourable opinion of pagan Greek and Roman thought appears indeed to contradict a traditional Calvinist emphasis on divine grace and Christian doctrine rather than profane (let alone pagan) philosophy as the only possible remedy for the moral corruption of human nature by Original Sin. It has been argued that Hutcheson was especially indebted to the doctrines of the ancient Stoics. According to James Moore and Michael Silverthorne, Hutcheson 'was refashioning Christian doctrine, notably the Presbyterian or Reformed doctrine of original sin, by substituting for it a particular variant of Stoicism... in which the original or natural constitution of human nature contains something divine within: a heart or soul that is oriented towards affection for others, good offices, benevolence' (Hutcheson [1742] 2008: xxiii). Richard Sher, in his seminal work on the Moderate party in the Presbyterian church, characterized Hutcheson's philosophy as a 'fundamentally Stoic edifice... buttressed by Christian principles', a 'Christian-Stoic' synthesis (Sher 1985: 176).

Yet Hutcheson's attitude towards the 'heathen moralists' of classical antiquity was perhaps more complex than the idea of a fusion between Stoicism and Christianity suggests. Hutcheson wrote that pagans who did not believe in Christ and who had never even heard of him were capable of virtue, and even, he asserted controversially, of salvation. The author of the *Meditations*, Marcus Aurelius, was one such example. At the same time however, as will be shown below, Hutcheson did not think that the virtue of pagans, let alone their salvation, was a result of their philosophical theories. Hutcheson's applause for pagan philosophy as an intellectual achievement did not indicate a commitment to it, but was based on a detached and cautious evaluation that involved significant reservations concerning the truth and usefulness of pagan ethical thought. Hutcheson's scepticism about ancient philosophy may seem paradoxical, given his fulsome praise for a figure like Marcus Aurelius, whom he even portrayed as a quasi-Christian. But according to Hutcheson it was possible for a pagan philosopher

to be virtuous and even in all essential respects ‘Christian’, and yet, at the same time, for pagan philosophy to be wrong. This article seeks to explain this apparent paradox in Hutcheson’s thinking. I shall first discuss Hutcheson’s account of moral motivation and its foundations in human nature; I shall then turn to the importance of his ideas on divine providence and the afterlife for his moral theory, before finally considering why pagan moral philosophy, according to Hutcheson, was deficient, even though individual pagan philosophers like Marcus Aurelius might be virtuous and even capable of eternal life, as much as professed and sincere Christian believers.

I. VIRTUE AND HUMAN NATURE

There was no need for philosophical reflection, Hutcheson believed, in order to be moral. Human morality was based on a ‘moral sense’, an inborn capacity to separate moral from immoral actions that was prior to philosophical understanding and comparable to the ability of the eye to distinguish between different colours. In modern literature on Hutcheson much attention has been devoted to the epistemological status of the judgments made by this moral sense. In particular, it has been asked, whether the judgments of the moral sense are best described as non-cognitivist and matters of feeling, or whether they represent a form of ‘moral realism’, involving the perception of real qualities of external objects and actions.¹ The debate on this question has yet to be concluded, but as James Harris has argued persuasively in a recent article, the epistemological status of moral judgments was not Hutcheson’s real concern in his moral philosophy. Instead, he was interested primarily in the *naturalness* of morality, the degree to which the preference for good over bad actions was a natural feature of the human constitution (Harris 2008). Hutcheson considered morality to be part of the natural order that had been created by God and that reflected his justice and benevolence towards humanity. Moral conduct was based on instincts that were part of the natural constitution of ‘man’. Exercising the moral sense and acting morally, Hutcheson argued, produced feelings of pleasure in the agent that were far superior to the crass pleasures that followed from the satisfaction of selfish and immoral desires.

Good and bad actions were chosen by the will, but Hutcheson, unlike, for example, Samuel Pufendorf did not think of the will as an ‘indifferent’ faculty, suspended between the various courses of action it could choose (Pufendorf [1673] 1991: 19). Rather, Hutcheson conceived of the will as the seat of desire and aversion, that is, of passions that either draw the agent towards a particular object or repel him or her from it. We feel joy or sorrow depending on whether we have obtained something we desire or fear. These motions of the will can also be divided into two classes, the selfish and the benevolent. According to

Hutcheson it is just a matter of fact, evident from daily experience, that some actions are aimed at the well-being of others and do not involve any expectation of selfish gain, contrary to Bernard Mandeville's infamous satire on virtue in modern commercial societies in the *Fable of the Bees* (Mandeville [1732] 1988). Humans, Hutcheson believed, are by nature able to distinguish between moral and immoral actions: 'Never was there any of the human species, except ideots, to whom all actions appeared indifferent' (Hutcheson 1755: 24). We experience the 'most joyful sensations of approbation and inward satisfaction', when we have a certain 'set of affections' or perform the 'actions consequent on them' (Hutcheson 1755: 24). Whenever these affections or actions are observed in others, 'we have a warm feeling of approbation, a sense of their excellence, and, in consequence of it, great good-will and zeal for their happiness' (Hutcheson 1755: 24). The moral sense is only one of several similar powers and dispositions, the exercise of which is admirable, yet it is 'by the moral sense that actions become of the greatest to our happiness or misery' (Hutcheson 1755: 27).

Not all actions that are really beneficial to others are the result of the exercise of the moral sense. It is possible to desire sincerely the happiness of others as a means to our own happiness, but such desires have 'nothing virtuous in them' (Hutcheson 1755: 43). Fulfilling these desires may further the agent's own interests, but the 'main question is, whether the affections reputed benevolent are subordinated to some finer interest than worldly advantages, and ultimately terminate upon them' (Hutcheson 1755: 43). External actions may be influenced by hopes or fears depending on other human beings, but these hopes or fears cannot be considered virtuous motives, since they do not spring from 'any inward good-will or desire of their happiness' (Hutcheson 1755: 43). Since Hutcheson said that the sincere desire for the happiness of others was also a source of pleasure in the agent, it could be argued that, ultimately, this benevolence towards others is only a matter of self-interest. That was the argument of Hutcheson's contemporary John Clarke of Hull, who regarded self-love as the foundation of morality: self-love properly understood also leads to the performance of social duties towards others. Immorality is the result of a false conception of self-love, not of self-love itself (Clarke 1726: 15).² Hutcheson's reply was that it is impossible to will this benevolence towards others out of a selfish desire to experience the happiness associated with it. Virtuous affections towards others had to be based on spontaneous natural motions of the human soul, not on calculations of self-interest: our 'desire therefore of the pleasure of self-approbation, or of divine rewards, can only make us desire to have these affections, and to act a suitable part. But these affections cannot be directly raised by the will' (Hutcheson 1755: 45). The prospect of the pleasure of self-approbation or rewards from God can help us to 'surmount little interfering interests' that conflict with benevolence, but it cannot itself be the constant motive for benevolence (Hutcheson 1755: 44–5). 'Actions are conceived rewardable

because they are good, not good because they are to be rewarded' (Hutcheson 1755: 55).

Yet if morality is natural to humans, why then do so many individuals choose to act immorally? One reason is that below the moral powers are the senses, which offer 'an immediate sense of pleasure, such as the brutes enjoy, but no further satisfaction' and which are 'at best beheld with indifference' and are often a 'matter of shame, and the cause of contempt' (Hutcheson 1755: 29). The early years of humans' lives, Hutcheson lamented, are spent in the gratification of sensual appetites, unless there is a 'careful education', and 'our selfish passions early gain strength by indulgence' (Hutcheson 1755: 37). There are also the pleasures of the imagination, which are more lasting than those of the senses, but which can also interfere with the moral sense. Such are 'the beholding beautiful forms, the curious works of art, or the more exquisite works of nature; the entertainments of harmony, of imitation in the ingenious arts; the discovering of the immediate relations and proportions of the objects of the pure intellect and reason' (Hutcheson 1755: 128). And both these kinds of pleasures are inferior to the joys of sympathy, for which we will willingly forego any of the pleasures of the sense or the imagination. Yet the 'sympathetick pleasures' are subject to uncertainty, because they depend on the 'fortunes of those we love', which, like all human affairs, are uncertain (Hutcheson 1755: 131).

The highest and most lasting enjoyments are those associated with the exercise of the moral sense. They are not subject to fortune and can be experienced in spite of external disadvantages (Hutcheson 1755: 132–3). Philosophical reasoning can play a role in conducting humans towards the moral sense, because it makes humans aware of the different kinds of enjoyment their nature is capable of, and draws their attention to the '*Governing Mind* presiding in this world' (Hutcheson 1755: 78). This kind of reasoning, Hutcheson believed, cannot produce a moral sense, but it corroborates it by demonstrating that there is in fact no conflict between morality and interest, and that while considerations of interest cannot be the motive from which virtuous actions are performed, there is 'a perfect consistency of all the generous motions of the soul with private interest... and a certain tenor of life and action the most effectually subservient to both these determinations' (Hutcheson 1755: 78–9).

II. MORALITY AND PROVIDENCE

Hutcheson's ideas on morality and its foundation in human nature were grounded in a belief in divine providence. His views can be characterized as a physico-theological argument from design: all the separate parts of nature form a harmonious system and 'all is full of power, activity and regular motion, wisely and exquisitely adapted to the uses of the living and sensible parts of creation'

(Hutcheson 1755: 172). This order has to be the work of a ‘superior *all-ruling Mind*’ (Hutcheson 1755: 173). The existence of a moral sense, the exercise of which is associated with the highest and most refined pleasure possible, is further evidence of a Creator and his benevolent intentions for humankind. Indeed, the existence of ‘imperfection, indigence, pain, and even moral evil in nature’ (Hutcheson 1755: 181) is necessary to provide humans with an opportunity to exercise their moral faculty, thus experiencing its particular joys, which would mostly be absent in a state of inaction. Moreover, ‘our sense of many high enjoyments, both natural and moral is exceedingly heightened by our having observed or experienced many of the contrary evils’ (Hutcheson 1755: 182). Indigence makes possible liberality, danger, fortitude; the ‘lower appetites or passions’ allow for temperance (Hutcheson 1755: 182). In short, virtue requires the existence of some evils, natural and moral. Pains are also necessary to remind humans of the requirements of self-preservation. There is also the consideration, familiar from Malebranche and repeated by Pope in his *Essay on Man* (Riley 2003; Pope [1734–5] 1950, epistle 4, v. 121–2) that it would be highly damaging for God to suspend the operation of general laws whenever their operation would result in some evil, because ‘all contrivance or forethought of men, and all prudent action’ would immediately become futile (Hutcheson 1755: 186).

There is also a deeper meaning to the imperfection of human nature. Although real malice is rare compared to the acts of virtue and benevolence, nobody is capable of adhering perfectly to the ‘standard of virtue set up in our hearts’ and ‘thus are all conscious of guilt in the sight of God’ (Hutcheson 1755: 192). That is a problem moral philosophy, based on natural reason, cannot solve on its own. The existence of this universal corruption is a ‘powerful spur to a continual advancement in perfection’, but the progress in virtue is rarely, if ever complete, even ‘of those who live to mature age’ (Hutcheson 1755: 192). This fact, Hutcheson says, ‘seems to carry no faint intimation, that either we once were in a higher state of perfection, or that such a state is still before us’ (Hutcheson 1755: 193). Of course, Hutcheson believed both to be the case: humanity had been in a higher state of perfection in the state of innocence before Original Sin, and temporal life was going to be followed by an afterlife, in which the saved would be rewarded and would achieve a state of perfection superior to anything possible before death.

The afterlife was important for moral philosophy, because it is evident that the virtuous in this life sometimes suffer undeserved distress, such as persecution or poverty, even while they enjoy the pleasures that are the result of being virtuous. As Hutcheson put it in his introduction to metaphysics, the *Metaphysicae Synopsis*, in this life, many virtuous people are afflicted with bad fortune, whereas many wicked people escape all temporal punishments. It could of course be argued that these wicked people suffer the agonies caused by acting against their

moral sense, and that material goods such as wealth are not the true reason why the virtuous act morally. Even so, Hutcheson clearly felt that it is unjust for the virtuous to be afflicted with such distress, while the wicked are blessed with, for example, material prosperity. All injustices of this kind will be remedied by the distribution of rewards and punishments in an afterlife (Hutcheson 1742: 2).

The rewards and punishments of the afterlife cannot be the proper motive for moral actions, which have to be an expression of disinterested benevolence, but the prospect of these rewards and punishments is of considerable significance for moral practice: although the prospect of an afterlife cannot motivate a truly moral action, it is capable of performing an important educative function. For Hutcheson thought of moral behaviour as the product of a culture of the mind (*cultura animi*), which allows the moral sense to assert itself against the impulses of the inferior powers and senses. This culture does not depend on knowledge or understanding, but on the formation of habit, which is developed and strengthened through repeated exercise, like muscles that were formed by regular training:

The turbulent appetites and particular passions whether of the selfish or generous kind... naturally arise on certain occasions... To govern and restrain them an habit is necessary, which must be acquired by frequent recollection and discipline. While we are calm we must frequently attend to the danger of following precipitantly the first appearances of good or evil; we must recollect our former experiences in ourselves, and our observations about others, how superior and more lasting enjoyments have been lost by our hasty indulgence of some pressing appetite or passions: how lasting misery and remorse has ensued upon some transient gratification: what shame, distress, and sorrow have been the effects of ungoverned anger: what infamy and contempt men have incurred by excessive fear, or by their aversion to labour and painful application. We may thus raise an habitual suspicion of unexamined appearances, and an habitual caution when we feel any turbulent passion arising. (Hutcheson 1755: 102)

The necessary discipline however is especially difficult to achieve for the wicked, who have 'stupified consciences... insensible of remorse, and live in affluence of all the pleasures they relish' (Hutcheson 1755: 203), however inferior these might be to the pleasures of the moral sense. Now, although the 'sanctions of laws' cannot be the motives for true moral behaviour, they can provide support, a kind of crutch that deters the agent from immoral action and thus allows the moral sense, which had previously been suppressed by the corrupt pleasures, to be exercised regularly and thus grow in strength. Without the threat of punishments the depraved would not even have the chance of beginning to conform to the rules of morality, of acquiring moral habits, and thereby being corrected and reformed.

III. PAGAN PHILOSOPHY AND THE LIMITS OF NATURAL REASON

To what extent then did these religious foundations of Hutcheson's moral theory require Christian revelation? Could they be known from unaided natural reason, which was available to pagans as much as to Christians? Hutcheson clearly believed that natural reason offers at least probable arguments for the existence of a future state with the distribution of rewards and punishments in it. One of these arguments is derived from the nature of the soul as an immaterial substance. The soul cannot be a material entity, because it is capable of thought; and thought, it was commonly argued, cannot be the result of the rearrangement of inert particles of matter. And unlike corporeal entities, the soul is not composed of smaller elements, but is simple and indivisible. This means that whereas physical bodies perish when the union of material elements of which they consist is dissolved, there is no reason to assume that the soul could ever disintegrate in the same way. In theory the soul could be annihilated, but the complete annihilation of any created being, whether material or spiritual, is only possible by an act of God, not within the ordinary course of nature (Hutcheson 1742: 31–2). All that these metaphysical and pneumatological arguments could prove however was the *possibility* of a continued existence of the soul after death, not that it necessarily survives the physical disintegration of the body. Hutcheson appears to have believed that Christian revelation could at the very least lend certainty to such philosophical speculations about an afterlife and divine providence. In his short overview of the history of philosophy, published as a preface to his student textbook on logic, the *Logicae compendium*, the pagan philosopher whom Hutcheson praises most is Socrates. Socrates had come closest to forming an accurate idea of the relationship between human beings and God and of the implication this relationship had for moral actions. Hutcheson declared Socrates to have been 'the founder or author of true philosophy' ('[v]erae philosophiae instaurator aut inventor'), who had turned his mind away from 'physical and occult things that contribute little to making a happy life' ('rebus corporeis et occultis, parum ad vitam beatam facientibus') and directed it entirely towards 'true piety, the knowledge of God, and the cultivation of every virtue' ('veram pietatem Deique cognitionem, et omnem virtutem excolendam'). Socrates taught that the souls of humans are immortal and that they would be happy or miserable after death, depending on how they had conducted themselves before they died (Hutcheson 1738: 4–5). Hutcheson however does not seem to have believed that pagan philosophers were capable of achieving certainty on this question, often stressing the limitations of natural reason with regard to the key truths of religion, especially concerning knowledge of the immortality of the soul and the afterlife. Although, for example, he urged his students to go to the 'grand fountains of all the sciences, of all elegance; the inventors and improvers of all ingenious arts, the Greek and Roman writers', he added that while 'drawing from them what

knowledge you can', his students ought to 'have recourse to yet purer fountains', that is, the Scriptures. For they alone gave to sinful mortals 'any *sure* hopes of a happy immortality' (Hutcheson [1747] 2007: 5; italics added). In the introduction to his translation of the *Meditations* of the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius, Hutcheson noted that pagan philosophers clearly suspected the existence of a future state, yet '[i]t was customary among the best philosophers, in imitation of Socrates, to speak upon this subject with such alternatives, even when they were persuaded that there would be a future existence. They thought this highly probable; and yet, as they had not full certainty, they suggested proper supports and consolations even upon the contrary supposition, and endeavoured to give strong motives to virtue independent of future rewards' (Hutcheson [1742] 2008: 145–6, footnote).³ The Stoics, according to Hutcheson, never developed a clear idea of a future state (Hutcheson [1742] 2008: 75, footnote). The full benefits of knowledge of the afterlife therefore were limited to Christians, though pagans could have an inkling of it. This did not mean that humans had to have revelation in order to be moral: it is not as if the desire to act morally and the ability to distinguish between moral and immoral actions depended on the knowledge of Scripture, but we only fully understand the foundations of morality and benefit from the support that knowledge of an afterlife offers if we know the key truths of revelation.

But there is also another way in which morality might be afforded divine assistance. Hutcheson suggested that truly virtuous dispositions in pagans were the result of Christ's merit, which could be effective even in those pagans who had never heard of Christ. In that sense, even pagans who were ignorant of Scriptural revelation could be Christians:

'Tis but a late doctrine in the christian [sic] church, that the grace of God, and all divine influences purifying the heart, were confined to such as knew the christian history, and were by profession in the christian church. The earliest Christians and martyrs were of a very different opinion. However, they maintained that it is by the merits of our Saviour alone, men can either be justified or sanctified; *yet they never denied these blessings could be conferred on any who knew not the meritorious or efficient cause of them* [my italics – TA]. To maintain they could not, is as absurd as to assert, that a physician cannot cure a disease, unless the patient be first instructed in the whole art of medicine, and know particularly the physical principles by which the several medicines operate. Nay, the early Christians believed the spirit of Christ operated in Socrates, Plato, and other virtuous heathens; and that they were Christians in heart, *without the historical knowledge* [my italics – TA]. (Hutcheson [1742] 2008: 22)

The term 'historical knowledge' here does not refer to knowledge of the secular historical circumstances of Christ's life, but to the knowledge of doctrinal truths.

This knowledge of doctrine was known as ‘historical faith’; its opposite was faith as the sincere reform of the heart. The sanctification of the heart could not be achieved by human efforts alone. It depended on the merit of Christ and on the transformation of corrupt human nature by grace. But it did not require knowledge of the existence of Christ, his life story and death on the cross. The real essence of Christian religious faith thus lay not in doctrinal beliefs, but in virtuous conduct, which depended on Christ’s merit, even in those who lacked ‘historical knowledge’ or ‘historical faith’. This was how Hutcheson was understood by the authors of a pamphlet defending him against his orthodox opponents and published in 1738, when there was an attempt to have him put on trial for his allegedly heretical religious opinions. As Hutcheson’s apologists put it, he ‘never said there was any Salvation to any of fallen Mankind, except by the Merits of Christ, but often said, he saw no Proof, that none could reap the Benefit of his Merits, but those who actually knew him’. And nor, they added, ‘do we see it’ (Anon. 1738). A critic might respond that this reduced faith to a matter of good works, but Hutcheson would reply that the virtuous deeds of a sanctified believer are distinguished by their motives from those actions that conform to law externally, but are performed out of fear of punishment or a crude desire for rewards. Hutcheson is saying that while the sanctified take pleasure in acting morally, this pleasure is not of the crass, sensual kind sought by the corrupt; and the sanctified also do not act morally for the sake of the pleasure these moral actions produced. The question of the importance of conduct in salvation had been raised in debates such as the Marrow Controversy between 1718 and 1723, and Hutcheson’s position certainly needs to be understood in relation to theological discussions of this kind. Therefore, while Hutcheson believed morality to be ‘natural’, he also appeared sceptical about the ability of humans to achieve it fully without some kind of divine assistance, either in the form of Scripture or the direct infusion of grace. It is not difficult to see why Hutcheson’s views would have appeared problematic to many Presbyterian fellow-believers, such as Thomas Boston, whose *Human Nature in its Fourfold State*, first published in 1720, was ‘the most frequently reprinted Scottish book of the eighteenth century’, going through over a hundred editions (Ryken 2004). Boston argued that knowledge of the message of the Gospel is essential for salvation. Only the regenerate enjoy true, proper knowledge of Scripture, so it is not sufficient to be familiar with the contents of the Bible, if its message is not properly absorbed. Yet salvation without any knowledge of Scripture at all was also unthinkable. The emphasis of Thomas Boston and other contemporary Presbyterians on doctrine reflected a particular belief concerning the conditions of God’s forgiveness for humans’ sins. They were convinced that human nature had been corrupt and prone to sin since the Fall. Yet even if a particular individual were capable of acting perfectly virtuously at all times, he or she would not thereby merit eternal life, because the guilt of Adam and Eve’s Original Sin was transmitted from one

human generation to the next, and remained, no matter how virtuously a person conducted him- or herself. A newborn child who has not yet had an opportunity to commit any particular sin, is still liable for eternal damnation because of this inherited guilt. Only knowledge of, and sincere faith in, the merit of Christ's death on the cross can bring about divine forgiveness and hence salvation. Hutcheson however argued that the merit of Christ's death on the cross extended to people who had never even heard of him. Pagans were capable not only of morality, but of salvation. But that did not mean that pagan moral philosophical or religious beliefs were true. Morality and salvation did not depend on having correct philosophical beliefs or orthodox religious doctrines, but on the reform of the heart, which was reflected in the individual's conduct. Hutcheson's belief in the ability of pagans to be virtuous and to merit salvation did not imply that he considered them capable of achieving these aims by virtue of their natural powers of reasoning, on which their philosophy was based. They required supra-natural assistance, but this assistance did not have to be offered by means of Scriptural revelation and the doctrines derived from it; it could come immediately from God.

IV. CONCLUSION

Hutcheson thus evidently harboured serious doubts about the validity of the moral philosophical theories of pagan classical antiquity, including Stoicism. However much he admired their intellectual achievements, the works of the heathen moralists were always subject to critical evaluation from the superior perspective of Christian modernity. Although the philosophical reasoning of which pagans were capable could go a considerable way towards explaining the foundations of morality, it did not offer any certainty concerning the existence of an afterlife, without which moral theory was incomplete. Some pagans, such as Socrates, believed in the immortality of the soul and an afterlife with rewards and punishments, but they lacked the assurance that only Scripture could provide. Pagans were capable of practical virtue, and even salvation, but this was not as a result of their moral theories. It reflected the fact that pagans, according to Hutcheson, as much as Christians could be the recipients of divine grace, which was the means to reform human nature, which had been corrupted by Original Sin.

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NOTES

¹ See for example Raphael (1947); Winkler (1985); Norton (1985). A more recent intervention in this debate is Kail (2001). One of the best interpretations of Hutcheson's moral and political theory is still Leidhold (1985).

² On the question of self-love in Hutcheson's moral theory, see Grote (2006).

³ This statement might in principle be by Hutcheson's fellow editor, James Moor, but if that is the case it seems fair to assume that his views would have been consistent with Hutcheson's.