John Gay and the Birth of Utilitarianism

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This article concerns John Gay's 1731 essay 'Preliminary Dissertation Concerning the Fundamental Principle of Virtue or Morality'. Gay undertakes two tasks here, the first of which is to supply a criterion of virtue. I argue that he is the first modern philosopher to claim that universal happiness is the aim of moral action. In other words: Gay is the first utilitarian. His second task is to explain the source of moral motivation. He draws upon the principles of association to argue (a) that we develop benevolent motives by associating the idea of our happiness with that of others and (b) that we come to approve of benevolence by recognizing that our happiness is inextricably connected with the general happiness. While some scholars have taken an interest in Gay's essay, a sustained treatment of its contents does not exist, despite its acknowledged influence on Hume, Hartley, James Mill, and John Stuart Mill.

INTRODUCTION

In 1902, Ernest Albee remarked that 'the whole outline of Utilitarianism ... is to be found in Gay's *Preliminary Dissertation*'.[1] Albee is referring here to John Gay's 1731 essay, 'Preliminary Dissertation Concerning the Fundamental Principle of Virtue or Morality'. Not much is known about Gay (1699–1745): he served as a fellow at Cambridge University from 1724 to 1734, and then as a vicar in Bedfordshire until his death.[2] Other than the 'Preliminary Dissertation', which was prefixed to Edmund Law's translation of William King's *An Essay on the Origin of Evil*, Gay did not publish anything.[3] While some contemporary scholars have taken an interest in Gay's essay, a sustained treatment of its contents does not exist, despite its acknowledged influence on Hume, David Hartley, James Mill, John Stuart Mill, and others.[4] The aim of this article is to explore

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[1] Ernest Albee, *A History of English Utilitarianism* (London, 1901), p. 83.

[2] Jonathan Harris, 'Gay, John (1699–1745)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.lib.usf.edu/view/article/10474> (2004). According to William Paley, Edmund Law said about Gay that 'no man knew the Bible or the works of Locke better' (William Paley, 'A Short Memoir of the Life of Edmund Law', *The Works of William Paley, D.D.*, vol. 5, ed. Rev. Mr. Stephenson (Cambridge, 1830), pp. 339–44, at 339).

[3] John Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation Concerning the Fundamental Principle of Virtue or Morality', *An Essay on the Origin of Evil*, William King, ed. and trans. Edmund Law, 3rd edn. (London, 1731), pp. xi–xxxiii.

[4] Although Gay's essay is often recognized as a seminal text in the history of ethics, it is often treated in a cursory manner. See: J. E. Crimmins, *Secular Utilitarianism:*

the indebtedness of utilitarianism to this obscure eighteenth-century Anglican clergyman.

Gay undertakes two tasks in the 'Preliminary Dissertation', the first of which is to establish the *criterion* of virtue (i.e. an account of what makes an action virtuous). He assumes a Lockean backdrop, on which moral ideas are 'mixed modes', our motives are based in pleasure and pain, and God's will is the ultimate source of obligation. Gay settles on universal happiness as the criterion of virtue. He is not the first to maintain this position; however, unlike Cumberland and Berkeley, Gay does not argue that agents should comply with a set of happiness-producing rules laid down by God. Although God directs us to promote happiness, Gay claims that agents should use their own reason to determine how to best achieve this end. I argue that Gay is the first modern philosopher to maintain that happiness-promotion is the aim of moral action; in other words, that he is the first utilitarian.

Gay's second task is to determine the *principle* of virtue (i.e. the source of moral motivation). Drawing on Locke's underdeveloped comments about the 'association of ideas' in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Gay argues (a) that we *develop* benevolent motives by associating the idea of our own happiness with that of others and (b) that we come to approve of benevolence as the core of morality by recognizing that our happiness is inextricably connected with the general happiness. Gay denies Hutcheson's view that we *innately* possess benevolent motives by giving a naturalistic account of how these motives develop, while simultaneously avoiding the Epicurean claim that these motives are non-existent and that our approval of benevolence is feigned.

In the first section of the article, I discuss Gay's argument for universal happiness as the criterion of virtue. In the second section, I argue that Gay, by shifting his attention away from rules to the quality of actions, uses the criterion of virtue to establish a version of act-utilitarianism. In the third section, I discuss Gay's account of the principle of virtue and the moral psychology he takes to be supportive

Social Science and the Critique of Religion in the Thought of Jeremy Bentham (Oxford, 1990), pp. 68–72; Elie Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophical Radicalism*, trans. Mary Morris (London, 1928), p. 7, 11, 22-3; Colin Heydt, 'Utilitarianism before Bentham', *Cambridge Companion to Utilitarianism*, ed. Ben Eggleston and Dale E. Miller (New York, 2014), pp. 16–37, at 25–30; Terence Irwin, *The Development of Ethics: A Historical and Critical Study. Volume II: From Suarez to Rousseau* (New York, 2008), p. 870–1; Christian Maurer, 'Self-Interest and Sociability', *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Eighteenth Century,* ed. James A. Harris (New York, 2013), pp. 291–314, at 304–5. Jerome Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy* (New York, 1998), pp. 405–10; Jacqueline Taylor, *Reflecting Subjects: Passion, Sympathy, and Society in Hume's Philosophy* (New York, 2015), pp. 63–4. A notable exception is Albee, *A History*, pp. 69–83.

of utilitarianism. I end the article by considering the legacy of Gay's essay.

I. UNIVERSAL HAPPINESS AS THE CRITERION OF VIRTUE

The first task of Gay's 'Preliminary Dissertation' is to determine the criterion of virtue. There are two steps to his argument, both of which rely heavily on Locke's discussion of morality in the *Essay*. I argue that Gay uses much of what Locke says about moral ideas, moral epistemology and moral motivation to build his account of act-utilitarianism. The first step in assembling this view comes in Gay's adoption of the Lockean thesis that moral ideas are 'mixed modes'.

Locke defines 'modes' as ideas of features that inhere in substances.[5] A simple mode is a complex idea whose constituent parts are variations on a single idea, while a mixed mode is a complex idea whose constituent parts include distinct simple ideas.[6] An example of a simple mode is 'solidity'.[7] For Locke, the idea of solidity is derived from the experience of interacting with other bodies – we abstract from our experience of these bodies to get the idea of solidity. Mixed modes are different since their combination draws on a number of different experiential sources.[8] An example of a mixed mode is the idea of 'government', which is composed of many simpler ideas (rulers, laws, offices, privileges, etc.) that are variously combined to form different types of government (republic, monarchy, dictatorship, etc.). What is distinctive about the form of combination in mixed modes is its *arbitrariness*, in the sense that experience does not necessitate any one combination of the ideas. This further distinguishes mixed modes from ideas of substances, which have some real essence that is responsible for their existence.[9] In the case of mixed modes, there is no such essence: the idea is merely the production of the mind.

To say that moral ideas (e.g. murder, theft, adultery) are mixed modes is to say that they are fabrications of the mind. From the perspective of a Lockean empiricist, there are two advantages to this view. First, it is metaphysically parsimonious: if one can explain how moral ideas arise from our ordering of experience through language and thought, there is no need to assume the innateness of moral ideas, or to explain how concepts like 'theft' are the objects of direct experience or simple modes,

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[5] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P. H. Nidditch (New York, 1975), pp. 166–8.

[6] Locke, *Essay*, p. 288.

[7] Locke, *Essay*, pp. 122–7.

[8] Locke, *Essay*, p. 288.

[9] Locke, *Essay*, pp. 295–6.

alongside concepts like solidity and dimensionality.[10] Second, treating moral ideas as mixed modes solves traditional moral epistemological concerns (e.g. questions about the source of moral knowledge). If we are responsible for the production of moral ideas, we have a kind of 'maker's knowledge' about morality, which Locke thinks allows moral theory to become a demonstrative science.[11] One can, of course, ask how meaningful this knowledge is: if moral ideas are the result of an arbitrary combinations of ideas, different minds will produce different ideas; while these ideas may be codified in language, the result will nevertheless be moral relativism or parochialism.

It is important to recognize that treating moral ideas as mixed modes only entails relativism about moral *ideas*, which is tantamount to saying that different people will have different ideas about what murder, theft, or adultery entails. Neither Locke nor Gay sees anything problematic about this implication; in fact, it is taken to be a strength of the view. Locke maintains that a divergence in the use of moral ideas does not imply a difference in moral standards. Take the concept of theft: a story about its cognitive genesis in the minds of people who possess it does not tell us anything about whether it is wrong to steal in a particular instance. For this latter task, Locke and Gay think we require a standard that does not refer to the concept of theft (or any other moral concepts). Bentham makes a similar point in his own work. His general suspicion about competing moral systems derives from his concern about how philosophers use moral language. Bentham refers to moral ideas as 'fictions': there is nothing *real* about a concept like theft, murder or adultery – they are simply tools we use to carve up our social reality.[12] Once this reality is established, we require rules that govern how we relate to one another in it; these rules are derived from a deeper standard: the criterion of virtue, which happens to be the principle of utility.

In order to settle on the criterion of virtue, Gay claims that we have first to determine what we are *obligated* to do as rational beings. Following Locke, he assumes a hedonistic account of obligation.[13] Gay notes that an agent is obligated to perform an action 'when there is

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[10] Locke, *Essay*, pp. 65–84.

[11] Locke, *Essay*, pp. 549–53.

[12] Jeremy Bentham, 'Essay on Language', *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, vol. 8, ed. John Bowring (Edinburgh, 1843), pp. 295–337; Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Legislation and Morals*, ed. J. H. Burns and H. L. A. Hart (New York, 1996), pp. 26–9, 95 n. 1, 97, 111, 207, 212.

[13] A related term is 'interested obligation'. The language of interested obligation comes from Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry Concerning the Original of Our Ideas of Virtue or Moral Good*, ed. Wolfgang Leidhold (Indianapolis, 2008), pp. 177–8. One may find it suspicious that Gay draws on the concept of interested obligation to defend his view that happiness is the criterion of virtue. After all, appealing to happiness to prove that

such a relation between an Agent and an action that the Agent cannot be happy without doing or omitting that action, then the agent is said to be *obliged* to do or omit that action'.[14] In other words, an agent is obligated to perform an action when her happiness depends on its performance. When it comes to determining the proper criterion of virtue, we are obligated to recognize that criterion which, when we comply with it, best secures our happiness. According to Gay, there are three potential standards, each of which has its own sanction: the norms of society (with its sanction of social censure), the laws of government (with its sanction of legal punishment) and divine law (with its sanction of eternal hellfire).[15] Since eternal hellfire is direr than the sanctions of social censure and legal punishment, complying with the divine law will best secure the possibility of our happiness.[16]

This lands Gay in voluntarism, alongside natural lawyers like Locke and Pufendorf. But we are still left with the question, 'what that Will of God … directs me to do?'.[17] According to Gay, God is a 'being infinitely happy in himself from all eternity … [and] could have no other design in creating mankind than *their* happiness; and therefore he wills their happiness'.[18] Because God wills the happiness of his creation, and one is obligated to act in accordance with the will of God, it follows that one is obligated to promote the happiness of mankind as well. In this way, Gay refers to the happiness of mankind as the 'criterion of virtue, but *once removed*'.[19] While the will of God is the source of obligation (and the ultimate criterion of virtue), the happiness of mankind is the criterion for virtuous action. When it comes to discharging one's moral duty, Gay claims that there is a 'fitness' between an action and its consequences:

happiness is the basic moral concept seems to beg the question. I do not deny that there may be something question-begging in Gay's argument, though discussing it here would take us too far afield. Two things *can* be said in Gay's favour. First, his position on the nature of obligation is fairly traditional. The idea that there is a distinctly 'moral' species of obligation is (to a large extent) a later development in the history of moral philosophy. Second, Gay's general strategy at this point of the argument is to provide a framework to arbitrate the disputes between the other moralists. By drawing on the concept of interested obligation – as opposed to something more metaphysically loaded – he can more easily get everyone on the same page, so to speak.

[14] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xviii.

[15] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xviii.

[16] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xxi.

[17] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xix.

[18] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xix. While Gay's assumption that God wills the happiness of his creation seems sensible, it is theologically controversial for his time. For example, Gay is out of step with certain dominant forms of Protestantism of which he was no doubt aware (Presbyterianism and the Reformed tradition, generally). In this way, Gay's presentation of utilitarianism as a minimalist, theologically based ethics may be more revisionary than he suggests. I thank one of the anonymous referees for this point.

[19] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xix.

'some things and actions are apt to produce pleasure, others pain ...
some are for the good of Mankind, others tend to the detriment of it:
therefore those are to be chosen which tend to the good of Mankind; the
others to be avoided'.[20] The agent must use her reason to foresee the
potential consequences of her action, and the extent to which it may
promote the happiness of others. This process will be discussed more
in section II.

Gay's use of mixed modes is a significant step in the history of
utilitarianism. Consider the claim that the *content* of our moral ideas
(e.g. what we regard 'theft' to consist in) does not settle the question
of how we ought to act in a particular circumstance. To answer this
question, we have to appeal to a normative standard that is external
to our web of moral ideas. All actions will be judged according to this
principle, with the implication being that no action is right or wrong
except by reference to the principle. If we assume that the principle
of utility should play this role – which Gay argues follows from God's
commitment to the happiness of his creation – the only morally relevant
property of an action is happiness-promotion. Utilitarianism is, then,
a natural consequence of the thesis that moral ideas are mixed modes
(plus a modest theology). In the next section, I explore a few historical
roots of Gay's act-utilitarianism.

II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF UTILITARIANISM

A number of modern moral philosophers argue that morality concerns
human happiness, and that we best promote it by dutifully following
rules to which we have access through right reason (i.e. reflection on
natural law).[21] For these thinkers, happiness is not the aim of moral
action – its aim being the obeying of certain rules laid down by God
that, when done so consistently, tend to promote overall happiness.
Gay takes a different approach in the 'Preliminary Dissertation'. He
maintains that happiness is the aim of moral action, and that agents
should use their reason to determine how best to contribute to the
general happiness. In this way, Gay formulates the first account of

[20] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', pp. xix–xx.
[21] George Berkeley, 'Passive Obedience; or, the Christian Doctrine of Not Resisting the
Supreme Power, Proved and Vindicated, Upon the Principles of the Law of Nature, in a
Discourse Delivered at the College-Chapel', *The Works of George Berkeley, D.D. Bishop
of Cloyne*, vol. 2, ed. Richard Priestly (London, 1820), pp. 251–92; Gershom Carmichael,
Natural Rights on the Threshold of the Scottish Enlightenment, ed. James Moore and
Michael Silverthorne (Indianapolis, 2002); Richard Cumberland, *A Treatise on the Law
of Nature*, ed. Jon Parkin (Indianapolis, 2005); Hugo Grotius, *The Rights of War and
Peace*, vols. I–III, ed. Richard Tuck (Indianapolis, 2005); Samuel Pufendorf, *The Whole
Duty of Man, According to the Law of Nature*, ed. Ian Hunter and David Saunders
(Indianapolis, 2002).

act-utilitarianism in the modern period. In this section, I explore the natural law roots of utilitarianism and show how Gay's act-utilitarianism develops out of this context. I then treat Butler's criticism of Gay's naïve form of act-utilitarianism and his call for a more sophisticated version of the theory.

The roots of utilitarianism are to be found in the seventeenth-century natural law tradition, particularly in Richard Cumberland's *A Treatise of the Laws of Nature*.[22] For most figures in this tradition, natural laws are seen as imperatives that regulate individuals' behaviour in one of three non-overlapping spheres: the personal (duties to oneself), the public (duties to others) and the divine (duties to God).[23] On standard views, there is no deeper principle that ties the duties of each sphere together; what connects them is their being mutually commanded and enforced by a legitimate authority. While the legitimate authority is often God, natural lawyers do not depend on revelation to explain our knowledge of these laws, claiming that we have access to their contents via reason.[24] What distinguishes Cumberland from his contemporaries is his insistence that our moral duties can be reduced to one: promote the common good, defined as 'the aggregate of sum of all those good things which either we can contribute towards, or are necessary to, the happiness of all rational beings'.[25] By identifying our chief moral duty as happiness-promotion, and by arguing that each of us has access to this duty via reason, Cumberland lays some of the necessary groundwork for the development of utilitarianism.

Berkeley picks these points up in his sermon 'Passive Obedience'. Following Cumberland, Berkeley argues that God desires the happiness of his creation and that he creates laws which regulate human action to the end of promoting the common good. He identifies two ways in which individuals can contribute to the general happiness. First, one can, 'without … any certain universal rules of morality … upon each particular occasion … consult the public good, and always to do that, which to him seem in the present time and circumstances, most to conduce to it'.[26] Second, one can observe 'some determinate, established Laws, which, if universally practiced, have from the nature of things an essential fitness to procure the well-being of mankind; though in their particular application, they are sometimes through

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[22] Cumberland, *A Treatise*.

[23] Carmichael, *Natural Rights*; Cumberland, *A Treatise*; Pufendorf, *Whole Duty of Man*.

[24] Carmichael, *Natural Rights*, pp. 10–11. For more on the history of natural law theory, see: Knud Haakonssen, *Natural Law and Moral Philosophy: From Grotius to the Scottish Enlightenment* (New York, 1996); Schneewind , *The Invention of Autonomy; Richard Tuck, Natural Right Theories: Their Origin and Development* (New York, 1982).

[25] Cumberland, *A Treatise*, pp. 513–14.

[26] Berkeley, 'Passive Obedience', pp. 259–60.

untoward accidents'.[27] In the first case, one proceeds as an act-utilitarian: deciding what course of action would produce the highest degree of happiness in a particular circumstance. Importantly, Berkeley is thinking here of a naïve act-utilitarian, who doesn't make use of rules in their decision procedure. In the second case, one proceeds as a kind of rule-utilitarian: complying with a set of rules that, if consistently followed, will promote overall happiness, even if each particular action does not do so.[28]

Berkeley argues that one should act like a rule-utilitarian – that is, consistent with 'determinate, established Laws', without regard to how much happiness one can promote in particular circumstances.[29] He gives two reasons for this view: first, we are bad at knowing the consequences our actions will have; second, without rigid principles there is no standard to which people can appeal when engaged in moral deliberation, or in the face of moral disagreement.[30] Berkeley's concerns about our epistemic limits and the potential indeterminacy of moral judgements push him to defend a rigourism about moral principles, saying 'no private interest, no love of friends, no regard to the public good, should make us depart from them'.[31] Despite his empiricist tendencies, Berkeley refers to moral principles as 'laws of nature' or 'eternal rules of reason' that are 'stamped on the mind'.[32] He is not concerned about the consequences of particular actions, and there is no room for the application of judgement in these matters since it cannot be trusted without the guidance of law. This is especially clear in Berkeley's treatment of Shaftsbury in *Alciphron*, where he likens the moral sense to a smokescreen for selfishness and prejudice.[33] Further considerations about happiness only become relevant in Berkeley's view when considering God's nature; all concern for the common good as such is seen by him as irreligious.[34]

The idea that one should simply do as God commands and let the chips fall where they may, trusting that doing so will contribute to the common good, is different from what Gay recommends. He expresses more of an interest in the moral quality of particular actions – an

[27] Berkeley, 'Passive Obedience', p. 260.
[28] Berkeley, 'Passive Obedience', pp. 263–4.
[29] Berkeley, 'Passive Obedience', p. 260.
[30] Berkeley, 'Passive Obedience', pp. 260–1.
[31] Berkeley, 'Passive Obedience', p. 262.
[32] Berkeley, 'Passive Obedience', p. 262.
[33] George Berkeley, 'Alciphron, or the Minute Philosopher: In Seven Dialogues', *The Works*, pp. 1–250, at 10–11, 21–3.
[34] Berkeley argues that there is a connection between the moral sense theory and the 'free-thinkers', whom he despises. On the free-thinkers, see Berkeley, 'Alciphron', pp. 242–9.

interest that comes through in how the essay itself is framed. Gay claims that the 'generality of mankind' agree about which actions are virtuous, despite often disagreeing about *why* these actions are virtuous.[35] He captures the agreement about virtue by formulating a definition of it he thinks everyone can agree to: 'conformity to a rule of life, directing the actions of all other creatures with respect to each other's happiness; to which conformity everyone in all cases is obliged'.[36] By framing virtue in this manner, Gay makes the scope of morality those actions which impact the happiness of others. When it comes to defining the relevant 'rule of life', Gay appeals to the will of God. But unlike Berkeley's God, who commands us to act so as not to run afoul of various rules that, taken together, contribute to overall happiness, Gay's God commands us to be simply 'a means of the happiness of mankind'.[37] On this view, doing one's moral duty consists in recognizing that 'I am to do whatever lies in my power towards promoting the happiness of mankind'.[38]

Gay is not specific about what promoting the happiness of mankind entails, though he says we will know from the '*relations of things*':

for some things and actions are apt to produce pleasure, others pain; some are convenient, others inconvenient for a society; some are for the good of mankind; others tend to the detriment of it; therefore those are to be chosen which tend to the good of mankind, the others to be avoided.[39]

It is a brute fact that particular actions tend to have certain types of consequences. We get in touch with facts about, say, potential inconveniences for society by one of two means: we '*perceive* the inconveniences of some things and actions when they happen' or we '*forsee* them [the inconveniences] by contemplating the nature of the things and actions'.[40] Over time we gain a better appreciation of which actions are conducive to the general happiness. Despite the institutional knowledge we come to possess about these matters, it is clear that this knowledge is empirical, which explains why Gay does not say anything concrete about promoting happiness. He instead provides a structure through which to approach these questions. While Berkeley expresses misgivings about our powers of judgement, Gay is optimistic about our foresight regarding which actions will produce happiness based on our knowledge of human nature.[41]

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[35] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xiii.
[36] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xvii.
[37] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xiv.
[38] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xiv.
[39] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', pp. xix–xx.
[40] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xx.
[41] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xx.

While a case can be made for the distinctiveness of Gay's moral theory, there are concerns about its viability. In 'Dissertation of the Nature of Virtue', Joseph Butler takes aim at those 'careless readers' of Hutcheson who imagine 'the whole of virtue to consist in singly aiming, according to the best of their judgment, at promoting the happiness of mankind in the present state'.[42] Of the mistakes one can make in reasoning about morals, Butler thinks that 'none can be conceived more terrible' than this.[43] After all, 'some of the most shocking instances of injustice, adultery, murder, perjury, and even of persecution, may … have the appearance of being likely to produce an overbalance of misery of the present state'.[44] While one might interpret Butler as giving a table-thumping defence of common-sense morality, his point is more complicated than this:

Though it is our business and our duty to endeavour, within the bounds of veracity and justice, to contribute to the ease, convenience, and even cheerfulness and diversion of our fellow-creatures: yet from our short views, it is greatly uncertain, whether this endeavor will in particular instances, produce an overbalance of happiness upon the whole; since so many and distant things must come into account.[45]

We cannot know which actions will promote the greater good. Knowing this fact requires knowing how our actions will impact *everyone's* well-being, which is not possible for beings like ourselves. Even worse: cases where people shirk duties for the sake of increasing happiness often proceed from 'ambition, the spirit of party, or some indirect principle, concealed perhaps in great measure from persons themselves'.[46] Since people cannot be trusted to know themselves, they should not neglect their duties out of recognition of an abstract moral standard like universal happiness.

Butler thinks that we should aim to promote the happiness of others, but only in so far as our attempts do not run afoul of justice or veracity.[47] In this way, Butler does not wholly reject utilitarianism; he maintains

[42] Joseph Butler, 'Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue', *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature* (London, 1740), pp. 451–67, at 465. Butler does not specify *who* the 'careless readers of Hutcheson' are. It is certainly possible that he read Gay's 'Preliminary Dissertation', which was published nine years earlier. Regardless, Butler's objection is directed at the position Gay defends – one that he thinks naturally flows from a mistaken reading of Hutcheson's *Inquiry*. For more on this possibility, see Aaron Garrett, 'The History of the History of Philosophy and Emblematic Passages', *Natural Law and Politics: Essays in Honor of Knud Haakonssen*, ed. Richard Whatmore (Cambridge, forthcoming).
[43] Butler, 'Dissertation', p. 465.
[44] Butler, 'Dissertation', p. 465.
[45] Butler, 'Dissertation', p. 466.
[46] Butler, 'Dissertation', p. 466.
[47] Butler, 'Dissertation', p. 466.

that, considering our epistemic shortcomings and our tendency to deceive ourselves, we should be wary of attempts to promote happiness that are unconstrained by justice and veracity. Butler's position can be distinguished from Berkeley's view on two fronts. First, whereas Berkeley held that considerations of happiness should not enter into moral deliberation, Butler thinks that we *should* attempt to positively impact the general happiness within certain limits. These limits are set by rules of justice and veracity, and also by the insight that our efforts to promote happiness are best directed at members of our inner circle.[48] Second, consider the content of justice and veracity. These norms are not facets of the divine but concern the affairs of human beings, and their authority is based on their being necessary components of a peaceful existence. We owe it to ourselves to be just and veridical, even if God needs to remind us of this obligation at times. This is different from Berkeley, who suggests that we should follow God's dictates even without knowing how our doing so will promote happiness.

Butler's criticism is then aimed at a naïve form of act-utilitarianism, which holds that each individual should, with each other-regarding action, determine how to best promote happiness based on the options currently available to her. Gay does not say much about his preferred decision procedure, and so it is unclear how much of Butler's objection lands on him. As I mentioned previously, Gay's comment that we know how to promote happiness by '*perceive*[ing] the inconveniences of some things and actions when they happen' and '*forsee*[ing] them by contemplating the nature of the things and actions' suggests that we can develop general rules about how to act once we gather sufficient knowledge about the relationship between certain act-types and their consequences.[49] If asked about what these rules entail, Gay would conceivably see Butler's norms of justice and veracity as important to the goal of promoting happiness. Gay does not say anything about these matters, though there is nothing about his view that precludes the inclusion of a more sophisticated decision procedure. In so far as there is a disagreement between Gay and Butler, it concerns how to best promote happiness, knowing what we do about human beings.

At this point, we've discussed the general framework of Gay's normative ethics. He argues that universal happiness is the criterion of virtue; that agents ought to act so as to promote universal happiness;

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[48] Butler, 'Dissertation', p. 466.

[49] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xx. Contemporary act-utilitarians recognize that there is a place for rules in moral decision-making. After all, we do not often have the luxury to engage in steady, prolonged deliberation about which actions to take. Rules can help guide our decisions, but an action's conformity with a rule does not determine its rightness. For the act-utilitarian, the criterion of rightness remains the general happiness.

and that their obligation to do so is established by God's benevolent will, which ensures that one's private happiness is secured by fulfilling this obligation. But the story does not end here. Most human beings do not act benevolently out of recognition that God obligates them to do so. As Gay points out,

the generality of Mankind do approve of virtue ... without being able to give any reason for their approbation; and also, that some pursue it without knowing that it tends to their own happiness; nay even when it appears to be inconsistent with and destructive of their happiness.[50]

Since most people unreflectively approve of virtue, and even act on this approval, Gay requires an explanation of why this is the case. The attempt to explain this phenomenon leads him to develop an innovative moral psychology that draws on some brief comments that Locke makes about 'the association of ideas' in the *Essay*.[51] I explore this topic in the next section.

III. ASSOCIATIONISM AND THE EMERGENCE OF BENEVOLENCE

According to Gay, people often seek to promote the happiness of others in a largely unreflective manner.[52] Francis Hutcheson explains this phenomenon by claiming that our natures are constituted for virtue. For him, we approve of actions that promote universal happiness via our moral sense, and we innately possess benevolent motives that drive us to promote the good of others.[53] Gay thinks we lack evidence for the existence of the moral sense and innate benevolent motives, and that positing either of their existences for the purposes of theory-building (as Hutcheson does) is philosophically suspect.[54] Nevertheless, Gay claims that Hutcheson is right when it comes to matters of moral phenomenology: we *do* approve of virtue for its own sake, and we *do* often act to promote the happiness of others without an eye to our self-interest. Gay offers an alternative explanation of Hutcheson's moral phenomenology, on which we *come to approve of* the pursuit of universal happiness and are thereby motivated to act benevolently.[55]

Starting from an Epicurean picture of human nature, then, Gay tries to account for our development into Hutchesonian moral agents. He does so by appealing to the principles of association, a psychological

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[50] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xiii.
[51] Locke, *Essay*, pp. 394–401.
[52] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xxix.
[53] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xiii.
[54] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xiv.
[55] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xiv.

mechanism that early modern philosophers like Locke and Berkeley (and later Hume) posit to explain how we construct complex ideas out of basic sense-perceptions.[56] Typically, psychological association was discussed in the context of epistemology, and viewed in a negative light.[57] Gay is the first philosopher to discuss the principles of association in the context of morality, and he does so in a positive light.[58] He argues that we naturally associate our own happiness with the happiness of others; that is, we come to view the two as inextricably connected. Upon internalizing this connection, agents begin to pursue universal happiness for its own sake. Before getting into how this process works, it is important to get clear on some aspects of Gay's psychology.

According to Gay, all human activity is aimed at achieving pleasure and avoiding pain.[59] He claims (following Hobbes and Locke) that we use 'good' to refer to objects that produce pleasure, and 'bad' to refer to objects that produce pain.[60] With each perception of an object as good or bad, there is a correspondent passion directed at the object: love, in the case of goodness; hatred, in the case of badness.[61] This passion of love or hatred is then followed by an affection of desire or aversion, which compels us to either seek the object or shun it.[62] Gay maintains that the majority of passions we recognize as 'implanted in our nature originally' are but modifications of love and hate.[63] Most important for our purposes is the passion of benevolence. Gay does not think that we possess naturally benevolent motives since each human being is

[56] Locke, *Essay*, pp. 394–401; George Berkeley, 'An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision', *Philosophical Writings*, ed. Desmond M. Clarke (New York, 2008), pp. 1–66, at 11–12; David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (New York, 2011), p. 416; David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch (New York, 1975), p. 20.

[57] The worry about psychological association is that through this process we can come to possess ideas about things we have not yet experienced. As a result, we can be tricked into thinking we know things about the world that we, as a matter of fact, do not know. This concern about the association of ideas is especially prevalent in Locke and Hume, though, for Hume, knowledge by association (or habit) is meant to replace much of traditional epistemology while still leaving room for a 'mitigated' form of scepticism. See Hume, *Enquires*, sect. XII.

[58] Hume would follow in Gay's footsteps eight years later, with the publication of *A Treatise of Human Nature*.

[59] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xiii.

[60] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xxii. Gay adopts this idea from Hobbes and Locke. See Thomas Hobbes, *Man and Citizen*, ed. Bernard Gert (Indianapolis, 1991), pp. 47–50; Locke, *Essay*, pp. 229–33.

[61] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xxiii.

[62] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xxiii.

[63] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xxiii.

naturally indifferent to the happiness of others.[64] Only by interacting with others and recognizing that our own happiness depends on the happiness of others do we become concerned with their happiness.[65]

This process of developing concern for the happiness of others is explained by the mechanism of psychological association. But before we see how association works in the moral case, it is important to see how the process works more generally. First, we perceive some object as conducive to our happiness. Second, we feel pleasure at the thought of the object's conduciveness to our happiness. Third, the perception of the object and the pleasure accompanying this perception become so connected that they are experienced as continuous with one another.[66] This last step, which connects the idea and sensation to each another in a way that the mind experiences them as one, is what Gay refers to as association. Because the thought/sensation package which results from psychological association is in some sense artificial, it can be destabilized through deliberate reflection but, like a habit, can be very difficult to undercut.[67] One helpful example Gay gives of association is our desire for money.[68] We perceive that money is conducive to our happiness in so far as its possession allows us to obtain security or other objects directly conducive to our happiness. We then affix pleasure to receiving money. Eventually, the idea of receiving money and the pleasure from recognizing it is conducive to our happiness become so intertwined that we feel pleasure just on account of receiving the money.

There's no inherent desire for money: one perceives 'the great many advantages from being possessed of money, and from thence conceive a pleasure in having it, thence desire it, thence discover to obtain it, thence receive an actual pleasure in obtaining it, thence desire to preserve the possession of it'.[69] Over time, 'the intermediate steps between money and happiness' are dropped and 'that which was at first pursued only as a *means*, be to them a real *end*'.[70] Because the association between the original object and our happiness has been

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[64] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xiv.

[65] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', pp. xxiii–xiv.

[66] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', pp. xxx–xxxi.

[67] The example Gay gives of how this process works is envy ('Preliminary Dissertation', pp. xxxii–xxxiii). Importantly, he does not think there is anything *moral* about the process of psychological association. What makes association a friend of morality is the *fact* that we are dependent on others for our happiness. It is this dependence that creates the initial links between people which are afterwards reinforced through association.

[68] John Stuart Mill uses this same argument in illustrating his 'proof' of the principle of utility. See John Stuart Mill, 'Utilitarianism', *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume X: Essays on Ethics, Religion and Society*, ed. J. M. Robson (Indianapolis, 2006), pp. 203–60, at 235–9.

[69] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xxxi.

[70] Gay, Preliminary Dissertation', p. xxxi.

forged, we begin to view the original object as choiceworthy, and to pursue it on its own terms. The association brings with it a kind of motivation. Because we associate receiving money with increased pleasure, we are motivated to seek money not simply as a means to our happiness but as its own end.[71] Of course, Gay stresses, if you run the desire for money 'to the fountainhead' you will recognize that it comes from its propensity to add to your happiness; however, you do not experience it as such because of the association.[72]

We are now in a position to see how we come to approve of moral ends and are motivated to act in accordance with these ends. We recognize that the happiness of others is conducive to our own happiness. Even if we admit that there are times when securing our own happiness conflicts with another individual's happiness, it can reasonably be said that our ability to achieve happiness is dependent on *some* individuals being happy.[73] Since we must interact with others to achieve our ends, we must 'keep them on our side', so to speak.[74] Further, Gay thinks, it is simply a fact about human beings that we are susceptible to the pains and pleasures of others. If we know that our happiness conflicts with, or undercuts, another's ability to be happy, the happiness we feel will be lessened by this knowledge, sometimes to the point that it undermines it completely. And so we naturally seek to have our happiness coincide with the happiness of others.[75]

Through association, the idea of other people's happiness becomes conjoined with the idea of our own happiness so much that the thought of one naturally brings with it the thought of the other.[76] The pleasure

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[71] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xxxi.

[72] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xxx. Gay's discussion of 'resting places' is important. We naturally construct principles of conduct based on prior experience, and these principles direct us to objects conducive to our happiness. We use these principles as 'resting places' in our deliberations so that we can make decisions quickly, without having to consider each variable that goes into acting in a particular way. That said, Gay notes that this '*habitual* knowledge' is a form of prejudice that is rarely examined and is difficult to root out ('Preliminary Dissertation', p. xxx). He also thinks that the prejudicial aspect of habitual knowledge leads philosophers like Hutcheson to believe in a moral sense ('Preliminary Dissertation', p. xxx).

[73] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xxviii.

[74] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xxiv. An equally (if not more) important aspect of our dependence on others is our desire to be esteemed or loved ('Preliminary Dissertation', pp. xxv, xxvii–xxviii).

[75] Towards the end of the essay, Gay mentions our propensity to imitate others ('Preliminary Dissertation', p. xxxiii). Our imitative capacity helps explain social cohesion.

[76] 'We first perceive or imagine some real Good, i.e. fitness to promote our happiness in those things which we love and approve of. Hence . . . we annex pleasure to those things. Hence those things and pleasure are so tied together and associated in our minds, that one cannot present itself but the other will also occur' (Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', pp. xxx–xxxi).

of the contemplation of our own happiness is extended to the happiness of others and vice versa. Since we cannot pursue our own happiness without regard to the other's happiness, our deliberations about what to do will inevitably involve a concern for their happiness as well. What starts as a means to an end becomes an end-in-itself as the means and end become solidified in thought.[77] Although Gay does not speculate about why this process happens, he seems to assume that we are constituted in this manner to sustain cognitive economy.[78] If we know that the happiness of others positively contributes to our own, there is no need to reason about whether a particular instance of promoting universal happiness will be good for us. We simply do it.

We begin life with a small motivational set (i.e. we pursue things that bring us pleasure or relieve a sense of pain), but we develop new sources of motivation over time. And though these new motives develop on account of their conduciveness to our happiness, they become autonomous, in terms of their motivational force.[79] From the perspective of the agent who has recognized that the pursuit of her own happiness is tied up with the happiness of others, she is motivated to pursue the latter for its own sake. Importantly for Gay, explaining how a motive arises does not undercut the reality of the motive in question. The motivation to pursue the happiness of others is real in so far as it is experienced that way by the person who possesses the motive.[80] Because these motives are the natural result of our moral development, Gay can explain how we come to do good for others without having to explain how we reason ourselves into thinking it is in our interest to do so.[81]

In this way, Gay is able to split the difference between Hutcheson and the Epicureans. The Epicureans claim that pleasure and pain are the ultimate sources of value. On this view, an individual may come to act for the sake of another, but the explanation of *why* they do so will ultimately reduce to self-interest.[82] According to Gay, the Epicureans make the following mistake: from the observation that human beings do not possess innate benevolent motives, they infer that

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[77] Acting on behalf of others becomes an 'acquired' principle of action (Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xxx).

[78] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xxx.

[79] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xxxi. The other aspect of Gay's view about how associations develop motivational force is the love we naturally feel for agents who are conducive to our happiness. Love naturally gives rise to desire for the happiness of the beloved. This desire leads us to approve of the beloved and to act on their behalf ('Preliminary Dissertation', p. xxiv).

[80] Gay stresses that these associations appear as 'instincts' to the person who possesses them ('Preliminary Dissertation', pp. xiv, xxx, xxxiii).

[81] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xiv.

[82] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xiii.

humans only approve of benevolent actions on selfish grounds.[83] By using psychological association, Gay is able to explain how we come to approve of benevolence, and are motivated to pursue it for its own sake. In this way, he starts with a minimalist account of human nature (i.e. one on which our basic desires are to pursue pleasure and avoid pain) and accounts for the emergence of moral approval and other-regarding motivations for action. By naturalizing our moral sense and other-regarding motives, Gay takes what he finds positive in Hutcheson's theory – its account of moral phenomenology – and gives it a more parsimonious explanation.

Gay's comments on association are brief; however, later thinkers like Abraham Tucker, David Hartley, James Mill and John Stuart Mill flesh them out for the purposes of supplementing utilitarianism with a compelling moral psychology.[84] In this way, Gay commences a tradition of taking associationism to be the moral psychology of utilitarianism. After Sidgwick, utilitarians became less interested in questions of moral psychology, and so associationism dropped out of the tradition. Nevertheless, associationism and utilitarianism were inextricably connected throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By developing a moral psychology that was distinct from his criterion of virtue, Gay also began to differentiate the levels of a moral theory in a way not done by previous thinkers.[85] Like many contemporary philosophers, Gay saw considerations of normative ethics and moral psychology as distinct, though complementary in providing a fully developed moral theory.

IV. THE LEGACY OF GAY'S 'PRELIMINARY DISSERTATION'

Gay's 'Preliminary Dissertation' is one of the great understudied philosophical texts of the eighteenth century. Despite earlier scholars like Ernest Albee and Élie Halévy noting its significance in the history of utilitarianism, and ethics more generally, Gay's place in narratives about this history has diminished over time. Treatments of Gay's essay are typically confined to discussions about the reception of Locke and

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[83] Gay, 'Preliminary Dissertation', p. xiii.

[84] David Hartley, *Observations on Man, his Frame, his Duty, and his Expectations*, vols. I–II (London, 1834); James Mill, *An Analysis of the Human Mind*, vols. I–II, ed. John Stuart Mill (London, 1878); J. S. Mill, *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume VIII: A System of Logic Ratiocinative and Inductive, Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation* (Books IV–VI and Appendices), ed. J. M. Robson (London, 1974); Abraham Tucker, *The Light of Nature Pursued*, vols. I–VII (London, 1777).

[85] Aaron Garrett, 'A Lockean Revolution in Morals' (Unpublished Lecture, 2015).

Hutcheson, or to the history of 'theological utilitarianism'.[86] Now that I have canvassed the contents of Gay's essay, I will touch briefly on its legacy.

The first strand of Gay's legacy concerns his defence of utilitarianism. In section III, I argued that Cumberland's and Berkeley's voluntarist based rule-utilitarianism bore only superficial relation to Gay's act-utilitarianism. It is hard to say how much traction act-utilitarianism had prior to Bentham, who did not read Gay. We do know that Bentham admired Joseph Priestley's abridged version of David Hartley's *Observations on Man*, and that Hartley acknowledged Gay's influence on his own work.[87] John Brown, Abraham Tucker and William Paley do not refer to Gay by name, though it is difficult to overlook the commonalities in their collective views. For example, the structure of Brown's 'On the Motives to Virtue' mirrors that of Gay's 'Preliminary Dissertation'.[88] Further, as Albee points out, Brown references Gay when he defines virtue as 'the conformity of our affections with the public good: or the voluntary production of the greatest happiness'.[89] Gay's connection to Tucker and Paley is less clear, though Sidgwick himself notes that 'a simple outline of Paley's ethical view may be found more than a generation earlier in ... Gay's dissertation'.[90] Albee even goes so far as to say that 'however much these authors [Tucker and Paley] did to fill in the outline – and Tucker, at least, did a very great deal – it must be granted that the whole outline of Utilitarianism ... is to be found in Gay's *Preliminary Dissertation*'.[91]

The other strand of Gay's legacy concerns his associationism, which has its roots in Locke. While Locke discusses the 'association of ideas' in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Gay's use of the concept is distinctive in three ways.[92] First, Locke introduces association to explain how custom is responsible for some of the ideas that we possess, but he is not interested in how the mechanism works. Gay provides the

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[86] Crimmins, *Secular Utilitarianism*, pp. 68–72; Heydt, 'Utilitarianism before Bentham', pp. 25–30; Irwin, *The Development of Ethics*, pp. 870–1; Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy*, pp. 405–10.

[87] Halévy labels Joseph Priestley a 'disciple' of Gay (*Philosophical Radicalism*, p. 8). Here, Halévy also mentions that Bentham read Priestley (*Philosophical Radicalism*, p. 8). See also Hartley, *Observations on Man*, p. iii.

[88] Regarding the structure of the two essays, Brown begins as Gay does: with an attempt to show that the dominant moral theories of the time unwittingly assume the principle of utility as their criterion of virtue. John Brown, 'On the Motives to Virtue, and the Necessity of the Religious Principle', *Essays on the Characteristics*, 4th edn. (London, 1755), pp. 109–240, at 111–36.

[89] Albee, *A History*, p. 85.

[90] Henry Sidgwick, *Outlines of the History of Ethics* (Indianapolis, 1988), p. 237. See note 2 for Paley's reference to Gay.

[91] Albee, *A History*, p. 83.

[92] Locke, *Essay*, pp. 394–401.

mechanism of association by using Lockean language of sensations and ideas. Second, Locke is especially concerned with association in the context of knowledge acquisition, while Gay extends association to the moral sphere, showing how this process leads to the development of previously non-existent motives for action.[93] Third, Locke is suspicious of association, saying that 'irreconcilable opposition between different sects of philosophy and religion' can be blamed on the 'wrong and unnatural combinations of ideas' to which association gives rise.[94] Gay is instead rather optimistic about the process of association: he thinks it can help explain how we come to care for another's happiness, despite only being naturally concerned for our own.

The connection between Gay and Hume on the content of psychological association is remarkably close. Hume claims to be the inventor of associationism.[95] Gay's 'Preliminary Dissertation' was published eight years before Hume's *A Treatise*, and there's significant overlap in how they each use associationism, but Hume never mentions Gay in his work. That said, Ernest Mossner gives two pieces of evidence that Hume read Gay. First, Hume had access to William King's *An Essay on the Origin of Evil*, because he cites it in his 'Early Memoranda'.[96] Second, Hume's references to Bayle in the 'Early Memoranda' are taken from the editorial notes that Edmund Law made in his 1731 translation of King's work (to which Gay's essay was affixed).[97] As Mossner notes:

> Scrutiny of Hume's five notes on 'King' indicates that he was using the 1731 translation and was, therefore, exposing himself to the ideas of Law and Gay, as well as King. This fact is of importance, for example, because Gay's short dissertation is the earliest known reconcilement of ethical utilitarianism with psychological associationism, two doctrines that were to be employed by Hume himself.[98]

While this evidence is not definitive, some scholars have seen Mossner's case for there being a non-coincidental relation between Hume and

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[93] Locke, *Essay*, pp. 398–9.

[94] Locke, *Essay*, p. 400.

[95] Hume, *A Treatise*, p. 416. Importantly, Hume did not claim to have invented the *principles* of association, so much as the use to which Gay, and later figures like Hartley and James Mill, put them. He also develops the principles of association in far more detail than Gay did in the 'Preliminary Dissertation'. In this way, Hume's claim that he is the first philosopher to 'enumerate or class all the principles of association' is probably true (*Enquires*, p. 20).

[96] E. C. Mossner, 'Hume's Early Memoranda, 1729–1740: The Complete Text', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 9.4 (1948), pp. 492–519, at 496.

[97] Mossner, 'Hume's Early Memoranda', p. 496.

[98] E. C. Mossner, *The Life of David Hume* (New York, 2001), p. 80.

Gay as persuasive.[99] Building a direct line of influence from Gay to Hume would require another article, but compelling evidence does exist, especially given the overlap on how they use the concept of association in their writings.

Setting aside Hume, we can trace the path of Gay's influence through the history of associationism. David Hartley, the father of associationism, notes in the preface to *Observations on Man*, that 'Rev. Mr. Gay ... asserted the possibility of deducing all our intellectual pains and pleasures from association. This put me upon considering the power of association.'[100] Furthermore, in the preface to the second edition of James Mill's *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind* (the second great work of associationistic psychology), John Stuart Mill notes that while Aristotle, Hobbes and Locke all contributed to the development of associationism, it was 'Dr. Hartley ... who first clearly discerned that this [association] is the key to the explanation of more complex mental phenomena'.[101] Mill then points out that 'he [Hartley], *too*, was indebted for the original conjecture to an other-wise forgotten figure, Mr. Gay' (emphasis mine), thereby implying that James Mill was indebted to Gay as well.[102] Though John Stuart Mill does not refer to Gay in his own psychological work, his influence is felt in Mill's own 'proof of the principle of utility' in *Utilitarianism*, where he argues that we come to desire the happiness of others as an end-in-itself, despite initially viewing it merely as a means to our own happiness.[103] Mill even uses Gay's example of how we come to desire money for its own sake to illustrate how the process of association works.[104]

A cursory examination of modern moral philosophy reveals that Gay's 'Preliminary Dissertation' was on the minds of many figures writing after him. In his *La Formation du radicalisme philosophique*, Élie Halévy wrote that 'Gay, who, moreover, claimed to be a disciple of Locke, can be considered as the true founder of the new philosophy, the Utilitarian morality and the psychology of association'.[105] The aim of this article has been to rediscover the indebtedness that utilitarianism has to this obscure Anglican clergyman who left us but one piece of writing: an essay, anonymously affixed to a translation of a popular work on natural religion. I hope that this article helps

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[99] Albee, *A History*; Garrett, 'A Lockean Revolution in Morals'; Garrett, 'The History of the History of Philosophy'; Halévy, *Philosophical Radicalism*; Taylor, *Reflecting Subjects*.
[100] Hartley, *Observations on Man*, p. iii.
[101] Mill, *An Analysis*, pp. x–xi.
[102] Mill, *An Analysis*, p. xi. See also Sidgwick, *Outlines*, p. 219.
[103] Mill, 'Utilitarianism', pp. 235–9.
[104] Mill, 'Utilitarianism', p. 236.
[105] Halévy, *Philosophical Radicalism*, p. 7.

revitalize interest in Gay's essay, not only in its own right, and in connection with the eighteenth-century reception of Locke, but also as it relates to the history of utilitarianism and moral philosophy more generally.[106]

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