Huron University College, Western University

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Harold Arthur Prichard (1871–1947)

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PRICHARD, HAROLD ARTHUR
(1871–1947)

Harold Arthur Prichard was born on 30 October 1871 in Kilburn, London, and educated at Clifton College and New College, Oxford. He received firsts in mathematical moderations in 1891 and in literae humanitates in 1894. He was a fellow of Hertford College 1895–98, and of Trinity College 1899–1924. Prichard wrote very little for publication. In his most well-known essay, "Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?" (1913), Prichard defends an intuitionist position, and in the posthumous Moral Obligation (1949) he sought to clear from the field all other, defective moral theories. He held that the rightness of an action is knowable through an intuitive faculty. Thus, for Prichard, any consequentialist reasoning was both unnecessary and doomed to yield conclusions contrary to ordinary moral thinking. Moral obligation, he argued, cannot be justified by factors external to themselves, even if these are statements about some good. To try to do so is to descend to fallacy and unnecessary because common sense principles, such as those condemning theft, are self-evident. The implication for utilitarianism, as with many other moral theories, is damning.

BIBLIOGRAPHY
George Hanke
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See also INTUITIONISM.

PRIESTLEY, JOSEPH (1733–1804)

Joseph Priestley was born on 13 March 1733 in Bensall Fieldhead in the Calvo-

nym field of the West Riding of York-

shire. He entered the Dissenting Academy at Darwen, Lancashire, in 1752, where he received an excellent education in philosophy, science, language and literature, and became a "vicious freethinker" in religion. Renouncing the Calvinist doctrines of original sin and atonement, he embraced the rational principles of Unitarianism that rejected the Trinity and upheld the perfectibility of man. After ministering at Salford and Chesham, he joined the faculty at the Warrington Academy in 1761. He was ordained as a Dissenting minister in 1762, the same year in which he married Mary Wilkinson, daughter of the ironmaster Isaac Wilkinson. During his time at Warrington, Priestley developed in essays such as An Essay on a Course of Liberal Education for Civil and Active Life (1765) and The History and Present State of Electricity with Original Experiments (1767) a philosophy of lan-
guage, education, history and science, which highlighted the experience and association of ideas of the individual and linked Bacon's vision of the improvement of society through the practical benefits of a science-based con-
tinuous to the entrepreneurial and commercial interests of the English Dissenters. His "orig-
inal experiments" in electricity caused him to be the first to do an election to the Royal Society in 1766. Priestley returned to the ministry at Mill

Hill Chapel, Leeds, in 1767, where he deployed the doctrine of pure utilitarianism to champion, as part of God's providen-
tial plan for the progressive amelioration of mankind and nature, the national struggle of Dissenters for greater civil, political and eco-

nomic liberties. He also started his extensive inquiries into pneumatic chemistry, which he published in the Philosophical Transac-
tions and the transitive Experiments and Observations on Different Kinds of Air. He

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