

Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?

- Harold Prichard, “Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake”, in *Moral Obligations* or *Moral Writings* both OUP
- Phillipa Foot, *Natural Goodness*, chapter one.
- Thomas Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*, chapters one and four.

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Prichard's Case Against Moral Philosophy

- Prichard's case against moral philosophy is **conditional**: *If* moral philosophy is conceived as an inquiry that aspires to a certain form of moral knowledge *then* moral philosophy rests on a mistake.
- Two questions:
 - What's the nature of the fugitive form of moral knowledge?
 - Why does Prichard doubt its possibility?

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Why Do Our Duty?

The fugitive form of moral knowledge can be specified as an adequate response to a certain kind of demand:

- We take ourselves to know that we are subject to moral obligations.
- When we are subject to moral obligations in the face of conflicting desire or in the absence of supporting desire, it is natural to ask: *Why should we do what we took to be our duty?*

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The Fugitive Moral Knowledge

- The skeptic's challenge: What proof can you provide that you ought to do what you took to be your duty?
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Prichard's Dilemma

In offering a straight solution to the skeptic's challenge, either one offers a **moral reason** to do what you hitherto took to be your duty or a **non-moral reason**:

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