Locke and Sydenham: James Tyrrell's Account

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Abstract: This paper examines Peter Anstey's interpretation of John Locke's medical interests and theoretical commitments in light of the "Tyrrell Memoir" recently recovered by Felix Waldmann. Anstey maintains that Locke's natural philosophical views remained broadly consistent from 1660s Oxford to the end of his life, and that if there was any influence between the two men, it was Locke that influenced Sydenham. Tyrrell's testimony about Locke's "obsession" with Sydenham and the dismissal of his recent collaborative work with Richard Lower provides further independent contemporary evidence that Anstey's interpretation of Locke's medical and natural philosophical commitments is untenable.

Keywords: John Locke, Thomas Sydenham, Richard Lower, First Earl of Shaftesbury (Lord Ashley), David Thomas, James Tyrrell, Pierre Des Maizeaux

1. *Anstey on Locke and Sydenham*

Peter Anstey has presented an interpretation of John Locke's natural philosophy in a number of articles and a monograph.[1] This interpretation might be characterised as one of "radical continuity". In Anstey's reading, John Locke developed a set of interests and principles at the outset of his natural philosophical career in 1660s Oxford, and retained these interests and principles largely unchanged throughout his career. In particular, Anstey asserts, while at Oxford Locke developed an interest in "mercurialist transmutational alchemy and a Helmontian approach to therapeutic medicine", which led to an "ongoing commitment" throughout the remainder of his life.[2] Moreover, Anstey holds,

[1] In the Bibliography the publications in which Anstey advances this interpretation are indicated by an asterisk *.

[2] Anstey, "Locke, Sydenham and the 'Tyrrell Memoir'", p. 124.

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Locke's move from Oxford to London in 1667, and his subsequent acquaintance and extensive work for and with the physician Thomas Sydenham, made no substantive difference to Locke's natural philosophical outlook. If anything, Anstey maintains,

> while Locke had enormous respect for Sydenham's therapeutic medicine, the direction of "philosophical" influence, if such there was, goes the other way: Locke influenced Sydenham's methodology.[3]

These claims have been systematically rebutted by the current author in a review of Anstey's book and in a further reply to Anstey's defence.[4] A few of the more perplexing aspects of Anstey's interpretation suffice to illustrate the difficulties of the whole.

Anstey rightly highlights the "Helmontian approach to therapeutic medicine" that Locke adopted as part of an eclectic medical theory elaborated in his essay "Morbus", likely written in late 1666 or early 1667 before he met Sydenham.[5] In Locke's theory here, health was maintained by quasi-spiritual Archei that directed the economy of the body, and change was enacted by "ferments" that imprinted their "ideas" on matter. Locke had read the works of Jean Baptista van Helmont in detail, as well as a number of other chymical writers from the period, and was clearly influenced by them in "Morbus". Anstey is also right that this theory was broadly "chymical" in nature, where elements had irreducible "chymical" properties unrelated to their mechanical attributes – most thinkers in this tradition positing at least 3 essential elements or attributes: salt, sulpher and mercury.

But, as we have noted, Anstey further maintains that Locke had an "ongoing commitment" to these theories that extended beyond his early career in Oxford. It is difficult to see how this can be squared with Locke's later views about natural agency developed in the writing of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*. For example, in Draft B of the *Essay*, written in 1671, Locke began to articulate a new perspective on how bodies interacted with one another. Section 138 was entitled "The efficacy of causes can be imagind to be noething but motion" and advanced Locke's new theory:

3 Ibid., p. 130.

4 Walmsley, "Review Article: Anstey, John Locke and Natural Philosophy", and "Peter Anstey on Locke's Natural Philosophy".

5 A transcription and exposition of this manuscript essay is included in Walmsley, "Morbus: Locke's Early Essay on Disease".

> though in the effects we dayly see produced in the world we perceive or know very little of the ways whereby their causes operate yet I thinke I may venture to say we can hardly conceive their efficacy to consist in any thing but motion.[6]

This was a sweeping assertion: Locke was saying that all natural events could only be imagined or conceived of as the effects of the motion of bodies. Locke provided an argument for this position in Section 150 of Draft B, when discussing the "power" of one thing to alter and affect another:

> efficacy or action how ever various & the effects almost infinite we can I thinke conceive in Intellectuall agents to be noething else but modes of thinkeing in Corporeall noething else but modifications of motion, I say I thinke we cannot conceive to be any other but these two for what ever sort of action besides these produces any effect I confesse my self to have noe notion nor Idea of & soe are as far from my thoughts apprehension & knowledge & as much in the darke to me as the Ideas of colours to a blinde man or the apprehension of ten senses are to me.[7]

This view of the nature of corporal causation was repeated in subsequent drafts of the *Essay*. It was also articulated in the published *Essay*, where Locke discussed how bodies act on one another, and on us:

> The next thing to be considered, is, how *Bodies operate* one upon another, and that is manifestly *by impulse*, and nothing else. It being impossible to conceive, that Body should operate on what it does not touch, (which is all one as to imagine it can operate where it is not) or when it does touch, operate any other way than by Motion.[8]

There is simply no place for Archei, ferments or irreducibly "chymical" agency in the austere mechanism that Locke came to articulate from the early 1670s onwards. Anstey's assertion that Locke had an "ongoing commitment mercurialist transmutational alchemy and a Helmontian approach to therapeutic medicine" is baffling. It is manifestly inconsistent with Locke's repeated published and unpublished claims about natural agency from 1671 onwards.

Equally baffling is Anstey's account of the relationship between Locke and Sydenham. Anstey maintains that "Locke influenced Sydenham's methodol-

6 Draft B, § 138, p. 256.
7 Draft B, § 150, p. 262.
8 Locke, *Essay* (first edition, 1690), II.viii.11.

ogy". When the two men met in 1667, Sydenham was a 43 year old Civil War veteran who had been awarded his first medical degree at Oxford in 1648, and had in all likelihood received a Masters Degree in medicine in 1649.[9] He had begun medical practice after his move to London in 1655, and had recently published a ground-breaking work of therapeutic empirical observation based on this practice, the *Methodus Curandi Febres* of 1666. Locke, on the other hand, was a confirmed academic who had been at Oxford since 1652, and who, while he had studied medical texts assiduously since circa 1660, and had undertaken experimental work in chymistry and physiology, had never treated a single patient in the whole of his career. Sydenham was known to be contemptuous of academic medicine, as recorded by the diarist John Ward at some point between late December 1668 and early February 1669:

> Physick says Sydenham is not to bee learned by going to Universities, but hee is for taking apprentices and, says one had as good Send a man to Oxford to learne Shooemaking as practising physick.[10]

Sydenham made these remarks some several months after he had made Locke's acquaintance. Indeed, it is perfectly possible that he had Locke in mind when he made them.

Why does Anstey think that the experienced physician Thomas Sydenham would have been interested in anything the Oxford academic Locke had to say about medicine? What, precisely, does Anstey think Locke taught Sydenham at this point? It surely wasn't a natural historical method in medicine – Sydenham had just published a book based directly upon that practice. Does Anstey suppose that it was the "corpuscular pessimism" that Locke first elaborated in the essays "Anatomia" from 1668 and "De Arte Medica" from 1669?[11] This was the view that we can never pry into nature's operations to understand how they work. It's immediate corollary is that we should not speculate about the causes of disease, but confine our attention to an empirical study of

[9] Meynell, *Materials for a Biography of Thomas Sydenham*, pp. 17-18.

[10] Folger Shakespeare Library, MS V.a. 295, f. 143*v*. For the details of the dating see the "Appendix. Notes on 'Anatomia' and 'De Arte Medica'" in Walmsley, "Sydenham and the Development of Locke's Natural Philosophy".

[11] Anstey discusses this in a chapter of the same title in his monograph *John Locke and Natural Philosophy*, pp. 31-45. Both manuscripts preserved among the Shaftesbury Papers at the National Archive, shelfmarks PRO 30/24/47/2, ff. 31-8 and 47-56 respectively. They were most recently transcribed and published in Walmsley, "John Locke's 'Anatomia' and 'De Arte Medica': New Transcriptions".

different types of disease, their progress and their cure. Sydenham's *Methodus Curandi Febres* generally avoided discussion of the causes of disease because nature acts "secretly", and has a "power of hidden working", so these causes "cannot be laid down".[12] Sydenham believed that "aetiology [was] a difficult, and, perhaps, an inexplicable affair; and I choose to keep my hands clear of it".[13] It was this inability to pry into nature's workings which inspired Sydenham's rejection of contemporary medical theory and his adoption of natural history in the *Methodus*:

> To some it may appear that the method which I adopt is based upon insecure foundations. I am, however, on my part, fully convinced, and I truly affirm, that it [is] altogether proved by a manifest experience.[14]

Locke had never asserted any such pessimism prior to meeting Sydenham. Indeed, the Helmontian medicine Locke had detailed at Oxford relied fundamentally on claims about unobservable causes. Sydenham was a "corpuscular pessimist" before Locke was.

But if Locke did not persuade Sydenham on this point, did his influence extend to having Sydenham adopt the "mercurialist transmutational alchemy and ... Helmontian approach to therapeutic medicine" which Anstey believes was central to Locke's natural philosophical thinking? There is no evidence to support such a claim. Sydenham was and remained hostile to speculation about unobservable causes throughout his career. Indeed, there is no evidence that Locke himself ever advocated anything remotely resembling a belief in such theories after 1666.

Anstey concedes that "Locke had enormous respect for Sydenham's therapeutic medicine", but never articulates why that was so – why, in Anstey's interpretation, did Locke rate Sydenham's therapeutic medicine so highly? What was it about Sydenham's therapeutics that made them so appealing to Locke? Did Sydenham propose some specific combination of prescriptions that were notably potent? What was this effectiveness based upon? Was it some lucky accident? Did Locke think that Sydenham agreed with Locke's own methodological outlook (despite the above articulated differences in their views and approach at the time they met)? I am not aware that Anstey has ever advanced an answer to this question.

[12] Sydenham, *Methodus*, pp. 231, 232 and 59.
[13] Ibid., p. 103.
[14] Ibid., p. 9.

But perhaps the most perplexing aspect of Anstey's interpretation is that, in order to believe it, you must disbelieve practically everything that Locke said about Sydenham and his views about effective practice of medicine. Writing to Thomas Molyneux in 1692, Locke clearly identified and explicitly praised Sydenham's methodological innovation in medicine:

> That which I always thought of Dr. Sydenham living, I find the world allows him now he is dead ... I hope the age has many who will follow his example, and by the way of accurate practical observation, as he has so happily begun, enlarge the history of diseases, and improve the art of physick, and not by speculative hypotheses fill the world with useless, tho' pleasing visions.[15]

Sydenham disregarded hypotheses about the causes of medicine and advanced a natural historical method. Some weeks later, he elaborated on the same theme:

> I wonder that, after the pattern Dr. Sydenham has set them of a better way, men should return again to that romance way of physick. But I see it is easier and more natural for men to build castles in the air of their own, than to survey well those that are to be found standing. Nicely to observe the history of diseases in all their changes and circumstances, is a work of time, accurateness, attention and judgment ... To which purpose I fear the Galenists four humours, or the chymists sal, sulphur, and mercury, or the late prevailing invention of acid and alcali, or whatever hereafter shall be substituted to these with new applause, will upon examination be found to be but so many learned empty sounds, with no precise determinate signification.[16]

Only now, Locke here explains, does the world recognise what Locke himself had recognised: that Sydenham had set the right pattern for medical practice that everyone should follow. Does Anstey not believe Locke when he explains why he admires Sydenham's method? Does he not see that it was not the specifics of Sydenham's therapeutics that Locke thought important, but the overall innovation in method? Does Anstey believe that Locke is lying or attempting to mislead Molyneux when he is making these statements? Does he believe that Locke is disingenuously (and inexplicably) promoting Sydenham when the methodological innovations in medical practice were actually Locke's own? (And how does Anstey square this dismissal of the "chymists sal, sulphur,

[15] Locke to Thomas Molyneux, 1 November 1692, Letter 1556, *Correspondence*, vol. 4, p. 563.
[16] Locke to Thomas Molyneux, 20 January 1693, Letter 1594, *Correspondence*, vol. 4, pp. 628-30.

and mercury" as "learned empty sounds" with an "ongoing commitment mercurialist transmutational alchemy"?)

In his journals and commonplace books Locke referred to Sydenham by the abbreviation "Æs" - an allusion to "Asclepius", the Greek physician raised to the status of demigod, whose powers reputedly extended to raising the dead.[17] Does Anstey maintain that Locke thought he had instructed someone he considered to be a medical Demigod on the practice of medicine? Or does Anstey think Locke was lying to himself about his estimation of Sydenham when he made these private notes? Or perhaps that Locke was expecting people to find these notes, so decided to use this moniker to keep up a façade of admiration? When Sydenham, in a dedicatory epistle to his 1676 *Observationes Medicae*, said that Locke "agrees with me as to the method I am speaking of" (and not the other way around),[18] does Anstey think that Sydenham was also lying in print about the origins of his medical methodology? These and many similar points about this interpretation have been put to Anstey, but he has not yet addressed them in print.

2. *Tyrrell on Locke and Sydenham*

An alternative interpretation of John Locke's natural philosophy has been advanced by the author in a number of articles.[19] This might be characterised as one of "radical discontinuity", where Locke's views were subject to significant change at key points in his career – sometimes drastic change, sometimes evolutionary. In this interpretation Locke's natural philosophical outlook underwent a radical change when he moved from Oxford to London in early 1667 and made Sydenham's acquaintance shortly thereafter. In this interpretation Locke rejected the Helmontian and chymical theorising he had been engaged in at Oxford and wholeheartedly embraced Sydenham's approach to medicine, where it was pointless to speculate about the hidden causes of disease, so a practical empiricist approach of natural history in nosology and therapeutics was the only meaningful medical methodology.

[17] For examples of this practice by Locke see the transcription of his journals in Dewhurst, *John Locke (1632-1704), Physican and Philosopher*, pp. 115 and 178. For Asclepius see Graves, *The Greek Myths*, vol. 1, pp. 173-78.

[18] Sydenham, *The Works of Thomas Sydenham*, vol. 2, p. 6.

[19] In the Bibliography the publications in which the author advances this interpretation are indicated by a dagger †.

In this interpretation Locke's admiration for and adherence to Sydenham's thinking resulted in Locke working for Sydenham to further this medical project. Locke wrote a poetic encomium to Sydenham for the second edition of the *Methodus* in 1668, drafted apologetics for Sydenham's methodology – "Anatomia" and "De Arte Medica" – and assisted in the composition of Sydenham's own medical works, first helping draft a work on Smallpox in 1669,[20] later acting as Sydenham's amanuensis in the composition of his more expansive "Medical Observations" over the course of the next several years.[21] In this interpretation, Locke's adoption of a strict "corpuscular pessimism" was due to the influence of Sydenham, and extended to Draft A of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* written in 1671 immediately after the two men worked most closely.[22] But as Locke worked through Draft B of the *Essay*, he modified his thinking about unobservable causes to note that these could only conceivably be mechanical, as the idea of change through motion and impact is the only idea we have of corporeal change, as was noted above. This "corpuscular pessimism" married with a highly circumscribed mechanism endured through the first three editions of the *Essay*, until Locke's thinking about corporeal causation was modified from the fourth edition onwards to accommodate Newtonian gravitation.[23] In the author's view, such an interpretation explains the inconsistencies in Locke's thinking over time that Anstey does not address. Simply put, as Locke learned and thought more, he changed his mind on key natural philosophical questions, and what he had previously accepted, he later rejected.

The most pointed example of a radical shift in Locke's thinking concerns his early work on physiology. Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood prompted a great deal of experimental work in 1660s Oxford.[24] One notable figure in these endeavours was Richard Lower. Lower came to Christ Church from Westminster school in 1649, was a lecturer in Greek from 1656 to 1657 and was a Censor in Natural Philosophy from 1657 to 1660.[25] Following in Lower's footsteps, Locke came up in 1652, was made a Lecturer in Greek in

20 See note 43 below for more details.

21 See note 45 below for more details.

22 See Walmsley, "Locke's Natural Philosophy in Draft A of the *Essay*".

23 This account is elaborated in Walmsley, "The Development of Locke's Mechanism in the Drafts of the *Essay*" and "Sydenham and the Development of Locke's Natural Philosophy".

24 The definitive account of the work being done on respiration in Oxford at this time is provided by Robert G. Frank in *Harvey and the Oxford Physiologists*.

25 Lower's biographical details are taken from Frank, *Harvey*, pp. 179-80.

1660, and Censor for Moral Philosophy in 1664. Lower was drawn to medicine and worked closely with Thomas Willis, the two sharing a medical practice *circa* 1662-4.[26] Lower was also acquainted with Robert Boyle and the two corresponded on a number of natural philosophical issues. Locke took many notes from Lower from 1660 to 1666. Lower was well versed in the skills of vivisection and the study of anatomy, this latter put to use in a collaboration with Thomas Willis on the structure of the brain. Willis gave lectures as a part of the requirement of tenure as Sedleian Professor of Natural Philosophy. Locke attended these, as did Lower.[27] Indeed, Lower is the likely source of at least one of the sets of notes that Locke made.[28]

As part of the burgeoning research effort of the time, Locke read widely on physiology, respiration and the circulation of the blood, and began to record a number of experimental findings in his commonplace books, attributing several directly to Lower. Some of these experiments appear to have been conducted jointly, with notes on the outcome attributed to both "JL" and "Mr Lower". Locke started to develop his own detailed theory regarding the purpose of respiration in notes scattered across his commonplace books, its sophistication and accuracy increasing markedly as he incorporated examples from his reading and experimental work with Lower.[29]

Locke elaborated this theory in a Latin manuscript disputation, "Respirationis Usus", most likely written mid-1666 as a condition of retaining his Studentship at Oxford.[30] There Locke proposed a "nitrous" agent in the air which was drawn in by the lungs, that was turned into a volatile agent by a "fermentation" in the heart, "which, when diffused everywhere throughout our arteries and nerves, imparts motion, feeling and heat to the body; which appears to be the fundamental reason and whole driving force of our life".[31] Locke then sought to corroborate his theory with a wide range of examples and tackle potential objections, drawing on the results he had noted from his Oxford contemporaries, Lower included. Locke would later correct this theory with another experimental result from the September 1667 issue of

[26] Ibid., p. 180.

[27] The lectures have been published from Locke and Lowers notes in Dewhurst, *Thomas Willis's Oxford Lectures*.

[28] At the end of one set of lecture notes Locke wrote "Willis praelectio a RL accepta", Bodleian Library, MS Locke f. 19, p. 48.

[29] A full account of Locke's work is provided in Walmsley, "John Locke on Respiration".

[30] See Walmsley and Meyer, "John Locke's 'Respirationis usus': Text and Translation".

[31] Ibid., p. 19.

the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*.[32] The Fracassati experiment noted venous blood would turn florid when exposed to the air, but if that florid blood was removed, the venous blood below would also become florid in turn. Locke immediately noted the significance of this result:

> If the melancholy bloud exposed to the aer turns florid (v. phil transact p 493) it seemes to prove that the aire in breatheing mixes with the blood since the arteriall bloud in animals is much more florid then the venall JL.[33]

This result would shape Lower's thinking on the volatisation of the blood in his *Tractatus de Corde*, placing it exclusively in the lungs directly from the air. Locke had immediately inferred the theory that Lower would shortly publish. Had Locke published his thinking on respiration in late 1667, it might have secured him a place in the history of medicine as a physiologist at the cutting edge of contemporary research. As it was, Locke's thinking had been developed with Lower's input, and was almost certainly a result of direct collaboration between the two men.

But as we have noted, Locke had left Oxford in 1667, and by 1668 had become acquainted with Thomas Sydenham, whose *Methodus Curandi Febres* Locke had read and made detailed notes on.[34] Around January 1669, John Ward recorded in his diary that "Dr. Sydenham is writing a book which will bring many physitians about his ears to decrie the usefulnes of natural philosophy and the necessitie of knowledge in Anatomie in subordination to physick".[35] Locke's manuscripts "Anatomia" and "De Arte Medica" date from 1668 and 1669 respectively.[36] Both rebuke traditional medical practice as attempting to postulate unknowable causal structures, creating empty speculation as a result. Both enjoin physicians to use clinical experience rather than waste time creating aetiological theory, or prying into the fabric of the body. Both appear to have been written to support Sydenham's projected book – "Anatomia" even contains an inserted opening sentence in Sydenham's hand which seems intended to integrate Locke's text into a wider work.[37] To illus-

[32] Fracassati, "*An Experiment of* Signior Fracassati *upon Bloud grown cold*".
[33] Bodleian Library, MS Locke f. 19, p. 303.
[34] Bodleian Library, MS Locke d.11, ff. 79*v* and 268*r*-267*v rev*.
[35] Folger Shakespeare Library, MS V.a. 295, f. 143*v*.
[36] See note 11 above.
[37] National Archives, PRO 30/24/47/2, f. 31*r*.

trate his point, in "Anatomia" Locke turned to physiology – the subject he had only some months previously been working at the cutting edge of:

> whether respiration serve to coole the bloud, or give vent to its vapours, or to adde a ferment to it, or to pound & mix its minute particles or whether any thing else is in dispute amongst the learned from whose controversys about it are like to arise rather more doubts then any cleare determination of the point & all that anatomy has donne in this case as well as severall others. is. but to offer new conjectures & fresh matter for endlesse disputations.[38]

This is a radical change. Locke in 1668 is explicitly repudiating the work that he and his contemporaries at Oxford had been undertaking. Where he had himself just a few months earlier been engaged in detailed work on the purpose of respiration, and had constructed a sophisticated and largely accurate theory of physiology, he now asserts that all of this is merely more "matter for endless disputations". This is a clear and pointed discontinuity of thinking on Locke's part, occasioned in what is likely less than a year. A year in which he met, and began working closely with, Thomas Sydenham. As far as the author is aware, Anstey has never acknowledged this discontinuity, or attempted to account for it.

Every interpretation should account for the facts. As outlined above, Anstey's interpretation does not succeed in accounting for key facts about Locke's work and the changes in his thinking. But an interpretation is also prediction – a prediction that any new evidence will consist with the interpretation presented. In intellectual history, such predictions are seldom put to the test, as it is rare indeed for new evidence to emerge several centuries after the fact. Felix Waldmann's recovery of James Tyrrell's account of the relationship between Locke and Sydenham is therefore particularly welcome as it presents entirely new contemporary evidence of Locke's relationship with Sydenham at this pivotal point in his career.[39]

A "radical discontinuity" interpretation of Locke's natural philosophical career is a prediction that new evidence would consist with a radical shift in Locke's thinking in his move from Oxford to London – a firm rejection of his earlier academic, theoretical work in Oxford and an ardent embrace of the practical, empirical method of Sydenham. This is what Tyrrell's memoir conveys:

[38] Ibid., f. 33*v*.

[39] Waldmann, "John Locke as a reader of Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*".

> [Locke] had become obsessed with Dr Sydenham, next to whom Dr Lower was esteemed a dunce and was not even credited with common sense.[40]

The fact that Tyrrell presents these assertions about the two men in contrast indicates that he believed them to be connected; Lower was rejected because Sydenham was embraced. This is entirely consistent with an interpretation of "radical discontinuity" where Lower, and the work that he and Locke had done on physiology in Oxford, were summarily dismissed, Sydenham's medical methodology replacing Lower's experimentation in Locke's estimation.

Anstey struggles to account for this change. He says "This assertion is, prima facie, difficult to maintain in the light of what little extant evidence we have of Locke and Lower's relations", as if Tyrrell were advancing an interpretation of their relationship based on the previously evidence available, rather than presenting new independent contemporary primary evidence of their relationship. As Anstey is aware, Tyrrell knew Locke intimately for most of his life, and, as the memoir demonstrates, they were particularly close in Oxford and London around this time. If anyone was in a position to provide a well-informed assessment of Locke and Lower's relations in this period, Tyrrell was.

Anstey attempts to connect Tyrrell's statement to Lower's having fallen out with Charles II in 1679 – but has to acknowledge that this account is "pure speculation".[41] While apparently willing to concede that Tyrrell's claim is "plausible", Anstey later asks, apparently rhetorically, "Did Locke really regard the author of *Tractatus de corde* to be a dunce?" Anstey is certainly right about the tone of Tyrrell's memoir – it is vitriolic and bitter, and therefore presents matters in heightened contrast. Perhaps, alongside much of the exaggerated tone in the memoir, "dunce" is an exaggeration, but, as we have seen, in "Anatomia" Locke dismissed all the work that he and Lower had recently undertaken in physiology as "like to arise rather more doubts then any cleare determination of the point". This newly discovered evidence from Tyrrell is entirely consistent with an interpretation of "radical discontinuity" in Locke's natural philosophical career. Locke did indeed reject Lower's (and his own earlier) approach to medical matters. Moreover, Sydenham appears to have had a very similar view regarding Lower's colleague, Thomas Willis, as John Ward recorded in 1665-6 (before Locke and Sydenham met):

40 Ibid., p. 275.
41 Anstey, "Locke, Sydenham and the 'Tyrrell Memoir'", p. 127.

> Sydenham and some others in London say of Dr. Willis that hee is an ingenious man but not a good physician, and that he does not understand the way of practice.[42]

In Sydenham's view it was one thing to be "ingenious", and another to be a good doctor. It would appear that Locke came to share this perspective and rejected theorising about biological function, when practical observation about how to actually cure disease was required.

Anstey spends most of his time in the article above attempting to portray Sydenham as the target of his contemporaries' ire. He suggests that the Locke's patron Anthony Ashley-Cooper and Tyrrell were both "strong critics of Sydenham". There is no evidence of Tyrrell's attitude on this point – Tyrrell is merely reporting the views of the various parties involved, but at no point positively subscribes to them. Tyrrell portrays the Lord Ashley as sceptical of the mutual admiration between Locke, David Thomas and Thomas Sydenham, who is presented as having a very high opinion of himself. Tyrrell then recounts Ashley's tale of an inquisitor attempting to correct the enthusiasms of a set of overzealous pilgrims as a parallel to the 3 men. But it is one thing to think someone conceited or supersilious, and another to "distrust their medical expertise" as Anstey infers Ashley thought of Sydenham. If Ashley thought so little of Sydenham's medical expertise, why was Sydenham allowed to practise medicine in the Ashley household,[43] why was Sydenham consulted about the treatment of Ashley's hydatid cyst of the liver, and why was Sydenham's advice followed?[44] Indeed, if Ashley distrusted Sydenham, why did he allow Locke to spend so much time on Sydenham's medical practice and publications from 1667 to 1671?[45] Locke was, after all, a member of Ashley's household,

[42] Folger Shakespeare Library, MS V.a. 294, f. 47*r*.

[43] Noted by Anstey, "Locke, Sydenham and the "Tyrrell Memoir", p. 128, n. 53. These manuscripts are also in the Shaftesbury Papers at the National Archives; an Epistolary Dedication to Lord Ashley (PRO 30/24/47/2, ff. 60-63), a Preface proper (PRO 30/24/47/2, ff. 64-69), and a small 19-line note endorsed by Locke "Small pox Preface 70" (PRO 30/24/47/2, f. 57). Transcriptions of the Epistolary Dedication and the Preface are available in Dewhurst, *Thomas Sydenham*, pp. 101-2 and 102-9 respectively. A transcription and photographic reproduction of the note is presented in Romanell, *John Locke and Medicine* pp. 70-72. The transcription is accurate for the most part, but it must be noted that word 11 on line 18 is "woods", not "words".

[44] As documented in Anstey and Principe, "John Locke and the case of Anthony Ashley Cooper".

[45] Some sense of the length, depth and intimacy of their collaboration from 1667 to 1671 is visible in Sydenham's manuscript *Medical Observations*, (Royal College of Physicians MS 572) the antecedent of the *Observatione Medicae*, containing roughly 50 seperable essays on different diseases. Locke acted as Sydenham's amanuensis in the preparation of this manuscript, drafts for 7 of them surviving

who served at Ashley's pleasure. Further, if Ashley distrusted Sydenham, why would he "not suffer [Locke] to practice Physick out of the house to any but his particular Friends",[46] when he knew Locke was "obsessed" with the medical practice of a man he "disliked" and "distrusted"? There's no doubt Sydenham was denigrated by his many of his medical contemporaries, and it's clear from Tyrrell's account that Ashley wasn't as impressed with Sydenham as Locke was – but a more measured view does not make Shaftesbury a "strong critic" who "disliked" and "distrusted" Sydenham, it merely makes him level-headed. But even if Anstey was right, and both Tyrrell and Ashley were "strong critics" of Sydenham, this would have no bearing whatever on Locke's view of Sydenham, or the role that the two men played in their respective careers. Locke didn't become "obsessed" with Sydenham because of his popularity.

The key import of Tyrrell's testimony is that it reports a significant change of mind on Locke's part. The reason Anstey struggles to account for this change is that it is inconsistent with his own interpretation of a "radical continuity" in Locke's views. In his account, Locke never changed his mind, so it cannot reflect Locke's thinking and must therefore be an unaccountable anomaly, or a puzzling rhetorical flourish attributable solely to Tyrrell's bitterness. But as demonstrated above, Locke did change his mind about the utility of research into physiology, and did so in short order. Tyrrell's account is just one more piece of evidence – albeit a new, entirely unexpected piece of evidence from an independent source – that Anstey's interpretation cannot accommodate. So Anstey ends his article not with any clear conclusion, because he cannot reconcile this evidence with his interpretation, but with an assertion that "in the final analysis, the 'Tyrrell Memoir' raises more questions than it answers". This would only be the case if you subscribe to a "radical continuity" account of Locke's natural philosophical career.

Tyrrell's account of Locke's change of mind upon meeting Sydenham is a new, entirely unexpected confirmation of a "radical discontinuity" interpretation, pointed in the clarity and sharpness of the change it portrays when Locke abandoned the work he did with a former colleague, to embrace a new mentor's

in Locke's manuscripts in the Bodleian Library. Roughly one sixth of the text on the 60 leaves of the *Medical Observations* were copied by Locke in his hand. Locke made fair copies of 34 of the essays in his own manuscripts. Locke worked day-by-day, side-by-side with Sydenham as his apologist and amanuensis for several years. An exhaustive analysis of this manuscript and it's relations to Locke's manuscripts, and the final printed book can be found in Meynell (ed.), *Thomas Sydenham's* Observationes medicae *and his Medical Observations*.

[46] Le Clerc, *Life and Character of Mr Locke*, p. 6.

approach to medicine. It answers the question "Did Locke make a radical change in his medical thinking after meeting Sydenham?" with an emphatic "Yes". Anstey's "radical continuity" interpretation of Locke's natural philosophical career struggled to plausibly accommodate the previously available evidence. This new unexpected independent account of a radical discontinuity in Locke's career only makes that interpretation more transparently untenable.

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