



John Locke and  
Early Modern Medicine  
*edited by*  
*Guido Giglioni and Charles Wolfe*

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Introduction  
How to Marry Clinical Acumen  
with Medico-Political Expertise:  
Locke on Medicine

Guido Giglioni, Charles Wolfe

Infirmior omnino est malo medicina;  
nec ipsa mali experts.

Francis Bacon, *Novum organum*

The remedy reachd not the evil but  
became a part of it.

John Locke, *Of the Conduct  
of the Understanding*

Locke's contribution to the field of medicine, in both its epistemological and experimental components, rests on the assumption that the clinical art of observing, healing and caring for patients is the most valuable resource offered by that discipline. Through clinical medicine, Locke recovered the original meaning of Hippocratic learning understood as a distinctive approach in medicine expressly founded on the link between geography, climate and diet, on the one hand, and the mind, the senses and the mores of human beings, on the other. This view had been revived in England by Thomas Sydenham (1624-1689). The central methodological innovation that the original Hippocratic practitioners had introduced in their study of nature and culture was the attention paid to *historia* (ἱστορία) as a technique of observational and descriptive learning. For Hippocrates as well for Herodotus (who was another remarkable representative of the Ionian science of the sixth and fifth centuries BC), *historia* meant both direct autopsy and reliable witnessing. Inspection of sensible reality based on personal observations and reliance on corroborated testimonies: these were the fundamental methodological directions that both Sydenham and Locke associated with the practice of medicine. As Locke

explains in the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, “historical” means a method that consists in “plain” observation and can be taken as a synonym of “clinical”,<sup>1</sup> as is well put in a letter to Thomas Molyneux: “the history of diseases in all their changes and circumstances is a work of time, accurateness, attention and judgment”.<sup>2</sup> The clinical approach, however, is only one side of Locke’s continuous involvement with medicine. As remarked by several of the articles collected in this volume of *Studi lockiani*, the body politic as an organized collective entity corresponding to concrete communities and nations is for Locke also exposed to disorders of various nature and requires the attentive consideration of the philosopher, who in this case becomes a medico-political practitioner.

### 1. *From Anatomical to Political Complexions*

*Temperamentum, complexio, constitutio*: these are technical terms typical of the Galenic tradition of anatomical inquiry which kept being used in medicine long after the seventeenth century. Since ancient times, they denoted the material structure underpinning organs and bodies resulting from the combination of physical elements, qualities and fluids. Because of their humoral nature, these terms also worked as apposite analogical categories to tackle issues of moral and political agency. As discussed by the following articles, the medico-political theory of temperaments and constitutions is among the reasons that allowed Locke to use medicine as a multifunctional interpretative framework.<sup>3</sup> As a result, this volume returns to the question of medicine in Locke by laying bare the cultural and intellectual significance that the discipline had in the development of his thought. Locke studied anatomy in Oxford in the years in which innovative experimental research programmes were under way, led by such leading lights in the field as Robert Boyle (1627-1691), Thomas Willis (1621-1675) and Richard Lower (1631-1691); he acquired a remarkable clinical expertise in London while frequenting Sydenham; he also embraced the

<sup>1</sup> Locke, *Essay*, I.i.2., p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> John Locke to Thomas Molyneux, 20 January 1693, Letter 1594, in *Correspondence*, IV, pp. 628-30, as quoted by Walmsley in this volume, at p. 140.

<sup>3</sup> The early modern tradition of medico-political science is well represented by Rodrigo De Castro and his summa *Medicus-politicus, sive de officiis medico-politicis tractatus* (1662). On De Castro and early modern medico-political science, see Giglioni, “Reality and Metaphors in the Language of Renaissance Medicine”. On Niccolò Machiavelli’s medico-political attitudes, see Giglioni “Fate and Fortune in Machiavelli’s Anatomy of the Body Politic”.

sceptical frame of mind that was typical of a certain medical tradition. Locke's forays into the field of medicine are all pointed and noteworthy because, as the articles show, he had something relevant to say regarding physical health, mental health and social health.

In their contributions, Peter R. Anstey and Jonathan C. Walmsley hold different positions concerning the ways in which Locke handled the relationship between medicine, physics and ontology in the course of his philosophical career. For Anstey, Locke's medical interests were consistently part of a lifetime programme in natural philosophical research which was characterized by a basic continuity in methods and purpose. On the contrary, Walmsley argues that there was a radical change from Locke's original appropriation of Helmont's archeal chemistry during the 1660s when he was studying in Oxford to his rejection of theorising about unobservables, beginning in 1667 when he moved to London, to his limited adoption of mechanism as he began to write the *Essay* in 1671. Locke distanced himself from his initial attraction to Helmontian medicine, grounded in the view that incorporeal influences emanated from seminal ideas active in matter and advocated a general position in which physical change was deemed to depend on modifications of motion imparted on bodies through mechanical impact. This was a significant shift if we consider that between 1666 and 1667 Locke had written the short text entitled *Morbus* based on the Helmontian principle of medical diagnosis and therapy, while in a letter he wrote to Thomas Molyneux in January 1693, he clearly abandoned that model. For Walmsley, this is clear evidence that there was simply no place "for Archei, ferments or irreducibly 'chymical' agency in the austere mechanism that Locke came to articulate from the early 1670s onwards".<sup>4</sup>

In his article, Anstey concentrates on the question dealing with the reputation of Sydenham's character and professional skills. He does so by examining the relationships between Locke and Lower, Locke and Sydenham, Locke and Anthony Ashley Cooper, Ashley Cooper and Sydenham. For Anstey, Locke remained "chemically" Helmontian throughout his life: he "had an ongoing commitment to mercurialist transmutational alchemy and a Helmontian approach to therapeutic medicine".<sup>5</sup> Anstey counters Walmsley's account that Sydenham exercised a strong impact on Locke's philosophy. If there was an impact, this was limited to methodology and in fact it was Locked who influ-

<sup>4</sup> See Locke to Molyneux, Letter 1594. See Walmsley's article in this volume, at p. 137, and Walmsley, "*Morbus*: Locke's Early Essay on Disease".

<sup>5</sup> See Anstey's article in this volume, at p. 124.

enced Sydenham, not the other way around. It is interesting to note that these discussions concerning the role of Sydenham on Locke's philosophy may be used to clarify the type of medicine we are talking about in this context, an issue that can be taken as the leitmotif of this collection of Lockean studies. In other words, are we talking of clinical practice (Sydenham) or medico-political science (Ashely Cooper)? When arrived at the end of the volume, the ecumenical reader will realize, we hope, that these are in fact the two souls of Locke's medical commitment.

In her careful assessment of Locke's notion of medical rationality, Claire Crignon emphasizes the Baconian roots of Locke's philosophical project centred on the concept of natural history. This is one of the heuristic templates used by Locke to address medical issues along the line of 'historical' and 'clinical' knowledge. In the hands of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century humanists, natural history had become a tool of experimental, philological and demystifying analysis applied to the study of human traditions, habits and opinions, including prejudices and superstitious beliefs. Notably, Locke's contemporary, the physician Thomas Browne (1605-1682), had resorted to natural history to combat what he called the epidemic of false opinions (*pseudodoxia epidemica*). Crignon characterizes Locke as an epistemologist working on the body of medical knowledge as this was still being taught and produced in universities. The ongoing debate concerning the differences between official and alternative healing practices was an aspect of the medical culture of the time that drew Locke's attention. The contrast dividing learned from folk medicine is probably as old as the beginnings of any form of socially constructed healthcare. In Locke's time, however, the debate heated up due to the conspicuous enlargement of the materia medica. This growth of therapies and remedies depended on several factors, including the geographic discoveries and the printing press revolution, which resulted in the medical marketplace being flooded with chapbooks on household management and popular healing practices. Crignon reminds us that the healing expertise of all sorts of practitioners is broader in scope, methods and aims than medicine as a learned discipline and institutionalized profession. Physicians, therapists, witch doctors, diviners and even philosophers, all take part in the enterprise of providing relief to human pain and distress. Taking care of one's own and other people's health is an *ars* before being a science. Anstey's article, too, is rich in information regarding the use of new drugs, practical regimens and alternative therapies as they were tested and disseminated in London's medical marketplace during the second half of the seventeenth century.

Another important point made by the articles in this volume is that the shift from anatomical theory to clinical practice, from Helmont to Sydenham, from the criteria resting on the power of ideas and influences to those depending on physical motion and impact was not only a change of medical paradigms. More deeply, Locke moved from the anatomy of the natural bodies to the observation of bodies politic. In this sense, the social health of collective complexions became one of his primary interests. Here it should be said that health is a most elusive concept. Broadly understood in medicine as absence of diseases, this definition turns to be alarmingly loaded as soon as the context shifts from the medical to the philosophical and social domains as eugenics and utopia (not necessarily dystopia) become the spooky territories where all kinds of medicalizing initiatives are put to the test, even when these are carried out with the best intentions. The moral, social and political repercussions of such a shift are notoriously hard to handle and sometimes they are simply dangerous. What is a healthy mind? What is a healthy society? Which pathologies – in terms of thoughts, thinking subjects and members of communities – should be treated? In its Constitution, the World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being”. It is certainly no accident that nowadays well-being is a concept that is easier to designate than health. Significantly, the definition provided by WHO ends with a clause in which we are reminded that health is not to be understood as “merely the absence of disease and infirmity”.<sup>6</sup>

The complexities of health – physical, mental and social – are at the centre of Catherine Dromelet’s contribution, which focuses on the moral and social implications underlying the category of illness. She does so by discussing the religious, cognitive, pedagogical and political features of moral disease. Relying on the time-honoured concept of the body politic (the founding metaphor, as it were, of medico-political science), Locke is presented as applying medical analogies to address issues of moral corruption, economic stagnation, social instability and political decay. For Dromelet, Locke used medical metaphors to tackle the nature of moral depravity and its ruinous effects on the body politic. The author contends that the disciplinary boundaries separating medicine from philosophy were still porous at the time and that it was still common to use medical concepts to explain social behaviour. She examines Locke’s opinions on such questions as unemployment, destitution and mental illness

<sup>6</sup> World Health Organization, *Constitution*: <<https://www.who.int/about/accountability/governance/constitution#:~:text=Health%20is%20a%20state%20of,absence%20of%20disease%20or%20infirmity>>

to show how in some cases (for instance when describing unemployment as a phenomenon of unproductive idleness) his adoption of medical categories prevented Locke from detecting the social and economic import behind episodes of alleged moral decline. Dromelet is right in assuming that, when Locke discusses the theological question of the original sin, he did not adopt a medical imagery to endorse forms of traducianist determinism. Moral agency – a central topic in Locke’s theory of identity – demands that humans are free agents. On the other hand, there seems to be a short circuit between medical and moral knowledge every time Locke applies his clinical experience to the understanding of ethical issues, especially his notion of moral depravity. For Dromelet, Locke missed the opportunity to look at the intricacies of moral conflicts and added an interpretative layer regarding the concept of social unease. The problematic relationship between medicine and moral philosophy in Locke’s philosophy suffers, in Dromelet’s eyes, from the absence of a consistent social theory in his work. Somehow, though, in the way in which Locke deals with medicine within the general context of early modern medico-political knowledge, he anticipates many of the disciplinary divisions that characterize the reorganization of the sciences between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: psychology, anthropology, ethnology, statistics, sociology, economy and political theory.

## 2. *Freedom in Association and Thinking*

According to the article by Kathryn Tabb in this volume, Locke described madness as a pathology of ideas. Appropriately, she describes this kind of disorder as “ideational”: “Locke believes that the contents of thought, rather than the mental powers that produce them, become diseased”.<sup>7</sup> In Tabb’s view, Locke’s account of mental illness was “originally ideographic and ideational” in that the “unique experiences of the individual” were not “subsumed under general laws”, while “underlying causal mechanisms such as faculties or animal spirits” were ruled out as explanatory factors.<sup>8</sup> It should be added that a distinctive theory of disease as pathology of ideas diffused during the early modern period could also be traced back to the Paracelsian movement, a specific approach to the art of healing that in the seventeenth century cul-

<sup>7</sup> In this volume, at p. 185.

<sup>8</sup> See Tabb’s article in this volume, at p. 192.

minated in Jan Baptista van Helmont's system of medicine. There is a persistent tendency in history of science and medicine to look at iatrochemistry as a vitalist approach sometimes opposed to, sometimes reconciled with mechanical philosophies or Galenic traditions. However, the characteristically operative, instrumental, experimental and quantifying features of iatrochemistry have often been highlighted to the detriment of other aspects that are as significant as chemical experiments, distillations and tools, such as the emphasis on the power of spiritual and imaginative experience. The alchemical project of reforming matter, transforming reality and restoring the prelapsarian harmony of nature is modelled upon the far-reaching assumption that ideas are powerful agents of change as they are carriers of energy, structure and purpose.

It is precisely because of the ideational nature of human thinking that mental representations and their combinations take centre stage in Locke's philosophy. Associations and disassociations of ideas constitute the ordinary flow of thinking. A self is born out of the countless ways in which ideas connect to each other or rearrange themselves to produce new agglomerations. The mind, when it thinks as a self, that is, when it reaches a level of organization that makes it capable of recombining itself without losing its identity, is a variable and yet rather stable entity. Memory, in particular, is what individuals make of perceived things as their own reality. If we take this feature of mental connectivity into account, we find a way of understanding freedom of thinking which Locke probes, investigates and vindicates in his inquiries concerning the nature of the mind. I would call this freedom of thinking freedom of association. As already mentioned, there is a latitude in the manner in which the human mind combines ideas; some of these associations can be viewed as pathological, some others as healthy. In principle, one should say: Let ideas associate. Association, from magnetism and chemical bonding to human friendship and larger political frames, is the great engine by means of which the universe holds together. Although Locke remains sceptic about the ultimate nature of physical associations, be they rocks or nations, he clearly supports a view of reality in which ideas have a propensity of their own to merge and coalesce. The fact is that some associations – bodily or mental – generate conflict and destructions, often on a temporary and localized scale. And yet, despite this eventuality, minds, bodies and bodies politic keep associating. While in the posthumous *Conduct of the Understanding*, Locke concentrates on the ways of controlling and disciplining the associative tendencies of the human mind in their pedagogical and social outcomes, in the *Essay*, especially in Book 2, Chapter 27, he focuses on the theoretical scope and limits of thinking as a mental universe of

associations and disassociations. Indeed, at his most abstract, when he introduces his notion of personality, Locke presents conscious disassociations and conflation of identities as the peak of sound and stable thinking. Not only single ideas, but also entire agglomerations of them are annexable by a fit mind. For Locke, it is this ability to annex portions of mental life in terms of associated ideas that warrants the freedom of being what one is and owning what one has.

Clarifying the mechanism of mental association is therefore a central theme in Locke's theory of mental health. That the combination of ideas within the continuum of human thinking can have positive or negative effects is the topic that is variously scrutinized by the articles of Kathryn Tabb, Sorana Corneanu and Simone D'Agostino. In her article on Locke's views on prejudice, Corneanu investigates the results of the erring mind by situating Locke's inquiry at the intersection where the "medical history of illnesses of the mind" and the "normative account of reasoning" meet.<sup>9</sup> As Locke makes clear in his *Conduct*, the malfunctioning of the mind may depend on its "natural temper" (that is, its anatomical and humoral constitution) or on the formation of "ill habits" (that is, its functional efficiency).<sup>10</sup> Given his view that anatomical records are scarcely reliable, Locke is more interested in examining the associative tendencies that shape our thinking trends and patterns. This is a further reason why Locke mistrusts anatomy as a medical discipline.

Like Corneanu, Simone D'Agostino delves into Locke's *Conduct* to shed light on the question on how to deal with the errors of the intellect. Indeed, the two articles work as complementary investigations into Locke's medicine of the mind. The *Conduct*, as D'Agostino explains in his philologically attentive contribution, was meant to provide a "therapeutic counterweight", that is, an armoury of medicinal and practical directions to the logic of the mind outlined in the *Essay*, testifying to Locke's "growing interest in the remedies that his philosophy might offer to the problems raised by language, religious beliefs and assent in general".<sup>11</sup> For D'Agostino, Locke considers 'association' (not 'connexion') to be a defective way of thinking in which the mind turns custom into nature in a pathological fashion, without even realizing it ("spontaneously and unknowingly, that is, habitually"). Aptly, D'Agostino emphasizes how related the developments in Locke's mind were when, between 1695 and 1697, he was working on such topics as enthusiasm, association and conduct.

<sup>9</sup> See Corneanu's article in this volume, at p. 25.

<sup>10</sup> Locke, *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, § 38, p. 180.

<sup>11</sup> See D'Agostino's article in this volume, at p. 208.

In *Conduct*, Locke says that his account of association in the *Essay* is “historical”, that is, descriptive and neutral, based as it is on the direct observation of the phenomenon through the lens of inner reflection.

When we speak of ideas as subjective states of mind, they can be actively combined by the faculty of judgment or, less deliberately, by chance and habit (and, as already noted, the anatomical referent in this process becomes irrelevant). On the other hand, when ideas are understood as objective patterns of reality, they can be explained as either independent of or inherent in matter. This is clearly not the path followed by Locke in both his natural philosophy and medicine of the mind. The inherency of ideas in matter is the position held by Bacon, who regarded ideas as *formae* engendered in matter by specific material motions. In this case, an idea is a specific steady state condition of matter, which explains why the material substratum is continuously being folded and unfolded in countless ways to form all types of individual bodies. On the contrary, Helmont views ideas as independent of matter while being capable of ruling over it. For Helmont, full transparency between subjects and objects of knowledge, and full dominion over matter can only occur when nature will be restored to full purity after the Last Judgment (a theological view that, with all due differences, Bacon and Locke share with Helmont). The original aspect of Helmont’s pathology of ideas – an aspect that Locke knew, perhaps adopted in his early training in experimental medicine, but did not endorse after leaving Oxford – lay in his belief that the ideational power of *imagines* and representations was indeed operative and productive starting with the *minima* of matter and arriving at the loftiest visions of the ecstatic minds.<sup>12</sup>

If we compare three types of seventeenth-century mental pathologies which are different but related to each other, that is, Bacon’s, Helmont’s and Locke’s ideational frameworks, we are confronted with characteristic alternative views in which human thinking could in fact be seen as the most sophisticated attempt in nature to calibrate the motions of the mind with the motions of matter. Broadly speaking, we should say that, unlike Bacon and Helmont, Locke is much more interested in the motions of the mind than the motions of matter. Precisely because Locke believed in freedom of thinking understood as the fluid crossing over and recombination of associated ideas, he was extremely concerned, from a social and political point of view, with any kind of dogmatic solidification of this power, in terms of prejudices, superstitions and creeds. To put it simply, mental ideation was no social ideology for Locke.

<sup>12</sup> See Giglioli’s contribution in this volume, pp. 153-82.

When one considers Locke's philosophy of thinking, the universe that he holds to be encompassed by the human mind is extraordinarily varied and suggestive. The strength and originality of Locke's approach lies in his open-mindedness and willingness to explore that territory that is the murky borderland between knowledge and ignorance. Significantly, Locke's sceptical attitude is always devoid of moral condescension and epistemological sanctimony, so much so that, as a purely cognitive phenomenon, folly is as important as sanity and therefore worth studying. In this respect, thinking is the activity that in Locke's *Essay* holds the secret underlying the agglomeration of ideas. The *Essay* is a study of human thinking without relying on the postulates of logicism, psychiatry or neurobiology. The fluid and associative logic of mental representations that Locke elaborates when describing the process of thinking is so open as to include aspects that one might dub as alienation or confusion.

This freedom, however, has nothing to do with the description of religious enthusiasm as a form of social insanity. Locke's advocacy of freedom in thinking is not to be confused with his views concerning various kinds of mental illness, anatomical distemper, religious fanaticism, political authoritarianism, logical dogmatism, biological or philosophical nativism, cultural superstitions, delusions and prejudices. We don't think that, in purely epistemological terms, Locke can unambiguously and irrevocably distinguish true from false ideas. Above all, he cannot separate sanity from insanity. But even so, there is no reason to despair. Associative fluidity in mental health is the counterpart of probability in knowledge. Owing to the associative nature of human thinking, one can even posit a healthy state of self-estrangement. A self as a subject of imputable actions is a mind that remains the same while associating new segments of conscious life. Indeed, the only remedy against pathological and destructive associations of ideas is to cultivate freedom in thinking through the flexible resources of mental awareness, which means to steer and control the course of associations. Thinking in freedom, which is the ordinary state of the human mind, is tantamount to never being at rest within the boundaries of one's consciousness.<sup>13</sup> This freedom can be dangerous – it may lead to “the greatest, I had almost said, all of the errors in the world”<sup>14</sup> – and it can be unsettling, so much so that human beings feel the need to postulate innate principles, apriori schemata or original grounds to feel safer.

<sup>13</sup> See Giglioni at p. 161.

<sup>14</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xxxiii.18, p. 401, as quoted by Tabb.

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## Articles



# “This Great and Dangerous Impostor”: Locke on Prejudice

Sorana Corneanu\*

*Abstract:* “Prejudice” is an understudied chapter in the history of early modern conceptions of epistemic error. It is also a core, albeit largely neglected, notion in John Locke’s normative and practical account of reasoning. In this paper, I aim to analyse the Lockean contours of this notion by highlighting its relations with the idea of unexamined principles and with two of the most dangerous miscarriages of the Lockean mind: the association of ideas and enthusiasm. I also discuss three explanatory contexts that are variously related with medicine: the methodology of medical inquiry in its relation with the natural history of the erring intellect; the medical model of the prevention and cure of disease behind regulative logic; and the analysis of the epistemic role of the imagination in medico-logical literature. Finally, I comment briefly on Locke’s views on the prevention and cure of prejudice.

*Keywords:* Locke, prejudice, principles, medicine, logic

## 1. *Prejudice and the medical history of error*

The aim of this essay is to reconstruct the portrait of prejudice as it emerges from Locke’s *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1689) and the posthumous *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* (1706) – a text Locke worked on between 1697 and 1704 and saw as an extension of the *Essay* discussions of epistemic error.<sup>1</sup> “Prejudice” is an understudied chapter in the history of early modern conceptions of epistemic error. It is also a core, albeit largely neglected, element of Locke’s normative and practical account of reasoning. In this introductory section I will comment on the double logico-medical background to

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<sup>1</sup> Schuurman, “General Introduction”, p. 109.

Locke's analysis of prejudice as a key element of his natural history of the erring intellect, while the subsequent sections will deal with the reconstruction of its portrait.

### 1.1. *Logic and medicine*

Locke's *Conduct* has a double disciplinary background, logical and medical. The logical background is clear in the opening paragraphs: at issue in this text is the best manner of guiding the understanding in its pursuit of truth. The rest of the text makes clear that this aim presupposes a good knowledge of how the understanding works naturally, and of the many ways in which its functioning is impaired by internal and external factors. The only art available in the intellectual space of the late seventeenth century that set itself this task – Locke goes on – was logic. But in its scholastic format, logic was “not sufficiente”.<sup>2</sup> Even worse, Locke thinks, with Francis Bacon in the *Novum organum*, “the remedy reachd not the evil but became part of it”.<sup>3</sup> In other words, instead of fulfilling the role of a regulative, remedial art for the intellect, the practice of scholastic logic had become a source of obstacles to knowledge and of bad intellectual habits that would need to be addressed by a truer art of guiding the mind. Locke refrained from openly identifying his own *Essay* and *Conduct* as contributions to such an art, but his admirers were quick to do it for him.<sup>4</sup>

The medical background is twofold. On the one hand, the construal of logic as a regulative, remedial art is obviously indebted to a medical model of approaching the intellect as in need of care, cure and diet. Indeed, on several occasions in the early modern period logic was explicitly dubbed a “medicine for the mind”, including by Bacon in the *Novum organum*.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, as Locke explained in his late correspondence, the writing of the *Conduct* was indebted to the methodology of compiling medical natural histories. That is to say, he amassed observations on the distempers of the mind and their cures as he came across them, without digesting them in any systematic way. The hope was that others would continue his work of observation, both for the sake of

<sup>2</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, par. 2, p. 154.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, par 3, p. 155; Bacon, “Preface to the Great Instauration”, in OFB XI, pp. 18-19.

<sup>4</sup> See Buickerood, “Natural History of the Understanding”, pp. 163-69; Schuurman, “General Introduction”, pp. 88-95; Winkler, “Lockean Logic”, pp. 155-56.

<sup>5</sup> Bacon, *Novum organum*, l.xxx, l.lix, l.cxv, ll.xxviii, in OFB XI, pp. 75, 93, 172, 296. See also Clauberger; *Logica vetus et nova*, in *Opera omnia*, I, p. 770; Tschirnhaus, *Medicina mentis*; Lange, *Medicina mentis*.

better understanding the human mind in general, and in view of everyone’s personal effort of self-understanding and self-regulation.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, this aim is openly expressed in the *Conduct* as well:

There are several weaknesses or defects in the understanding either from the natural temper of the minde or ill habits taken up which hinder it in its progresse to knowledg. Of these there are as many possibly to be found if the minde were throughly studyd as there are diseases of the body, each whereof clogs and disables the understanding to some degree and therefor deserve to be looked after and cured. I shall set down some few to excite men espetially those who make knowledg their businesse to looke into them selves and observe whether they doe not indulge some weaknesse allow some miscariage in the management of their intellectuall faculty which is prejudicial to them in the search of truth.<sup>7</sup>

Locke’s general debt to the medical historical approach of Thomas Sydenham is now well understood.<sup>8</sup> As far as the *Conduct* is concerned, it is worth noting that the natural history of the “weaknesses and defects” of the intellect overlaps with the logical project. The overlap comes in three layers.

The first layer is constituted by the interest in “natural logic” that Locke shared with the early modern logics that saw themselves as alternative to the scholastic. The distinction between *logica naturalis* and *logica artificialis* was a commonplace in scholastic logic. In the scholastic context, “nature” connoted chance, or mere experience, while “art” connoted a mastery through theoretical grasp of the general rules of the thing in question (here, reasoning), as well as the capacity to apply them to particulars. The anti-scholastic philosophers, starting with the humanists, turned this distinction upside down. “Art” was re-interpreted as a systematization of natural operations in a given field, directed towards a useful end. For example, the art of logic was a systematization of the natural operations of the human mind (with the useful end of regulating it), therefore it must be governed by, rather than govern, natural logic.<sup>9</sup> Thus, for Ramus, Bacon or Descartes, the logical acts of the intellect

<sup>6</sup> Locke, “Letter to Peter King”, 4 and 25 October 1704, in Schuurman, “General Introduction”, p. 109.

<sup>7</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, par. 38, p. 180.

<sup>8</sup> Romanell, *John Locke and Medicine*; Meynell, “John Locke and the Preface to Thomas Sydenham”; Anstey and Burrows, “John Locke, Thomas Sydenham”; Walmsley, “Sydenham”.

<sup>9</sup> Jardine, *Francis Bacon*, p. 41; Lu-Adler, *Kant and the Science of Logic*, pp. 48-64; Corneanu and Vermeir, “Art of Thinking”, pp. 156-57.

(whether invention and judgment, induction, or intuition and deduction) were acts of a natural logic representing the workings of the natural mind.<sup>10</sup> There was certainly a polemical edge to this reversal, whereby “artificial” started to connote “unnatural” – a weapon in the battle against the scholastics.

Similarly, in the fourth book of the *Essay* Locke highlights repeatedly the natural powers of the mind which, according to him, are involved in correct reasoning, against the artificial logical rules of the Schools. The mind, he thinks, has “a native Faculty to perceive the Coherence, or Incoherence of its *Ideas*”; as well as a power to range ideas in a “simple and natural Disposition” that helps us better see their connections.<sup>11</sup> Perception of connections among ideas, together with ranging ideas in order and inference of conclusions, he attributes to “illation”; the prior discovery of intermediate ideas, he calls “sagacity”. Both illation and sagacity are natural faculties.<sup>12</sup> They constitute the natural mechanism of the mind, against the artificial, i.e., “unnatural”, and hence encumbering logical rules, especially those of syllogistic reasoning. While seemingly refuting the whole art of logic in the name of the need to look at how the mind works naturally, it seems to me that Locke’s observations are in fact in line with the early modern attitude to natural vs. artificial logic.

The second layer, building on the first, is represented by the interpretation of natural logic as a natural history of the understanding. Locke’s identification of the method of inquiry he adopted in the *Essay* as “this Historical, plain Method”<sup>13</sup> is at least partly indebted, I believe, to the revised conception of natural logic among the early moderns.<sup>14</sup> It is true, however, that none of the previous non-scholastic logicians had presented their natural logics as natural histories of the mind. The idea of a natural history of the intellect is announced by Bacon’s inclusion of a “history of the intellectual faculties: thinking, fantasy, discourse, memory, etc.” in his “Catalogue of Particular Histories” appended to the *Parasceve*. Yet Locke is the first to explicitly undertake the task *and* indicate

<sup>10</sup> Ramus, *La dialectique*, p. 2; Bacon, *De Augmentis scientiarum*, in *Works of Francis Bacon*, vol. IV, p. 410; Descartes, *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, in *Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. I, pp. 14, 16, 22.

<sup>11</sup> Locke, *Essay*, IV.xvii.4, pp. 671, 673.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.xvii.2, pp. 668-69.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, I.i.2, p. 44.

<sup>14</sup> For various positions on the relation between logic and the natural history of the understanding in Locke, see Buickerood, “Natural History of the Understanding”; Hamou, “Locke and the Experimental Philosophy”; Lu-Adler, “Logical Normativity”. This is a conversation worth pursuing further.

its relevance to logic – an approach with echoes in eighteenth-century Scottish conceptions of logic as rooted in, or even identical with, a natural history of the mind.<sup>15</sup>

The third layer has to do with the place of error in this mix. In the *Conduct* Locke seems to explicitly propose a natural history of error (or of the erring intellect), which is also novel. Bacon’s “Catalogue” includes “medical histories” of the illnesses and cures of the body, but not of the soul. In exchange, while Bacon’s doctrine of the idols of the mind is one of the obvious sources of the accounts of error in the new logics, it is never presented by Bacon as a natural history. Rather, it appears as the counterpart of the doctrine of “Sophistical Refutations” in the old logics.<sup>16</sup> The Baconian idols together with the Cartesian “childhood prejudices” were the two great models behind the new accounts of error, and featured together in such regulative logical accounts as those of Clauberg or Malebranche. Locke may well have drawn on these sources, as well as on the catalogues of ways in which the human mind can err in other types of work, such as Bishop Reynolds’ treatise of the faculties and passions of the soul, or Thomas Browne’s overview of errors in medicine. While comparable to these works, Locke’s own account presents itself as a natural history, which had not been the case before.<sup>17</sup> And yet, the regulative role of Locke’s natural history of error is the same as that of all these accounts, one indebted to the medical model behind the new logics: the description of the disease in relation to which the art proposed will function as either a preventive or a therapeutic instrument. Locke, therefore, makes the step of allowing the medical analogy inform his methodological approach: his account of error will be indeed a medical history of illnesses of the mind relevant not to mental pathology, but to a normative account of reasoning – in other words, to a logic understood as an art of guiding and regulating the operations of the mind in its search for truth.

In this essay, I aim to take up the “defect” of the mind that Locke places at the top of his medical historical investigation in the *Conduct*: prejudice. In the next subsection, I introduce the Lockean definition of this notion, while in the

<sup>15</sup> Bacon, *Parasceve*, in OFB XI, p. 481; Wood, “Natural History of Man”.

<sup>16</sup> Bacon, *Novum organum*, I: 40, in OFB XI, p. 79.

<sup>17</sup> Clauberg, *Logica vetus et nova*, in *Opera omnia*; Malebranche, *Search after Truth*; Reynolds, *Treatise*, chap. 38; Browne, *Pseudodoxia epidemica*, bk. 1. (Among these works, Malebranche’s is notable for subsuming its entire discussion of error under the notion of “prejudice”: see “Elucidations,” in *Search after Truth*, pp. 539-43.) The natural historical character of Locke’s account of the erring intellect has at least two notable consequences: its open-ended, rather than systematic, nature, and its role as the experimental ground for the formulation of rules.

rest of the paper I will describe its full portrait, and comment on the further debts it owes to the logical and medical backgrounds.

### 1.2. *Prejudice and unexamined principles*

In the *Conduct*, Locke introduces prejudice as a “great cause of ignorance and error” and the removal of it as one of the first tasks of the conduct of the understanding.<sup>18</sup> It has thus pride of place in Locke’s list of errors, and it comes as a culmination of his discussion of (unexamined) “principles”: paragraphs 11-38 constitute a coherent treatment of the most problematic type of erroneous behavior of the intellect, which starts with “principles” and ends with “prejudice”.<sup>19</sup> There are also important continuities with the *Essay*. Although “prejudice” is not very prominent in the *Essay*, I take Locke’s discussions of unexamined principles in Books I and IV as preparative for the *Conduct* sections. His chapters on the association of ideas and enthusiasm, which were added to the fourth edition of the *Essay* (1700) and on which he was working at the time he was composing the *Conduct*, are also directly relevant to the topic.<sup>20</sup>

Locke explains the nature and importance of prejudice in a couple of passages that I will use as the starting point of my analysis:

False or doubtfull positions relyd upon as unquestionable maximes keep those in the darke from truth, who build on them. Such are usually the prejudices imbibed from education party reverence Fashion Interest etc: This is the mote which every one sees in his brothers eye, but never regards the beame in his owne. For who is there almost that is ever brought fairly to examin his owne principles, and see whether they are such as will beare the triall. But yet this should be one of the first things every one should set about and be scrupulous in, who would rightly conduct his understanding in the search for Truth and knowledg.<sup>21</sup>

[Prejudice is] this great and dangerous impostor [...] who dresses up falsehood in the likeness of Truth and soe dexterously hoodwinks mens minds as to keep

<sup>18</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, par. 31, p. 175.

<sup>19</sup> There has been less commentary on “prejudice” and “principles” in Locke than these notions deserve. But see, for “prejudice”, Schouls, *Reasoned Freedom*, chap. 4; Wright, “Association, Madness”; Tabb, “Locke on Enthusiasm”; Dromelet and Piazza, “Habit and Custom”. And for “principles”, Schuurman, “General Introduction”, pp. 27, 30; Anstey, *John Locke*, pp. 148-52; Atherton, “Locke against the Nativists”; Stoneham and Thorson, “Locke on Cognitive Bias”, pp. 97-99.

<sup>20</sup> A first articulated account of these ideas is in Locke’s 1677 essay “Of Study”, in Axtell, *Educational Writings*, pp. 405-22, at 415-17.

<sup>21</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, par. 31, p. 175.

them in the darke with a belief that they are more in the light than any that doe not see with their eys.<sup>22</sup>

I take these passages to give us the general definition of prejudice, three of its defining features, and the remedial task meant to remove it, thus:

General definition: Prejudice is a belief or proposition that is neither true nor certain but is relied upon as an unquestionable maxim or principle.

What it means for a proposition to be relied upon as a principle or maxim, Locke spells out in the *Essay*: the proposition is taken as a measure of the truth of other propositions and/or as the starting point (the foundation) in a chain of reasoning.<sup>23</sup> Thus, at issue is not any type of proposition, but the kind of proposition that receives a special, albeit unmerited status in the economy of one’s epistemic life. The status is unmerited because it is grounded in anything but fair examination. It seems to me that the focus in this definition – and the reason prejudice needs to be addressed via a natural historical approach – is the “relying upon”: the question is, how does the mind come to behave in this way. The full portrait of prejudice which I will try to reconstruct in this essay is pieced together by way of an answer to this question.

Defining features:

- 1) Enabling factors for the “relying upon” include the work of teachers upon young minds (education), reverence towards an authority (e.g., a party.), the pressure of what others around think (e.g., fashion), one’s own interest, etc.
- 2) While prejudice is easily recognizable in others, one is usually blind to its existence in oneself.
- 3) Prejudice is a form of epistemic imposture.

The problem of recognition or diagnosis (the second feature in this list) is key to the preventive and curative scenarios. The problem is indeed momentous, as signaled by the biblical reference to the lack of transparency to self of the obstacle to knowledge and the ensuing hypocrisy of complaining of

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., par. 32, pp. 175-76.

<sup>23</sup> Locke, *Essay*, Liii.24, p. 82: “some revered Propositions, which are to him the Principles on which he bottoms his Reasonings; and by which he judgeth of Truth and Falshood, Right and Wrong”.

the same in others.<sup>24</sup> The problem of imposture (the third feature) also carries biblical echoes: a mind that acts in such a way that it dresses up falsehood in the garment of truth fails in its metaphysical role (“we fight against god who is the god of truth, and doe the work of the Devill who is the father and propagator of lies”).<sup>25</sup> This is to remind us that, for Locke, the medico-logical care of the intellect has what could be called theological amplitude, as it is directly pertinent to the fate of our souls. The same applies to the central task of the conduct of the understanding:

The task: the examination of the propositions relied upon as principles – a task to which we should devote ourselves “scrupulously”.<sup>26</sup>

The examination, as we will see, is to be understood as a long-term practice, and as one member of a set of practices meant to build good epistemic habits of inquiry and reasoning, and to achieve epistemic freedom. At times Locke calls this a duty following from God’s gift to us, the faculties of our minds, which we should strive to use well.<sup>27</sup>

In the next section I will examine each of the defining features in turn (in inverse order), as “the imposture”, “blindness to self”, and “the social setting”, in order to reconstruct the full Lockean portrait of the “disease” of prejudice. Doing so will hopefully further illuminate the overlap of regulative logic with the natural history of the intellect, including of the erring intellect, and will also bring to light other ways in which the latter is indebted to the intersection between medicine and logic. The final section will be devoted, briefly, to the task, in other words, to the regulative practices.

Before I proceed, I would like to already note the roots of all of this in Locke’s discussion of “innate principles” in the first book of the *Essay*. Here is a passage from the close of the discussion of innate practical principles:

Whoever shall receive any of these [borrowed Principles] into his Mind, and entertain them there, with the reverence usually paid to Principles, never venturing to examine them; but accustoming himself to believe them, because they are to be believed, may take up from his Education, and the fashions of his

<sup>24</sup> Matt. 7:3, commenting on hypocrisy in judgment.

<sup>25</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, par. 34, p. 177, referencing Deut. 32:4 and John 8:44 (as noted by Schuurman in the footnotes).

<sup>26</sup> The term bears echoes of Protestant devotional practices.

<sup>27</sup> E.g., Locke, *Essay*, I.iv.22, p. 99; IV.xvii.24, p. 687; *Conduct*, par. 77, p. 229.

Country, any absurdity for innate Principles; and by long poring on the same Objects, so dim his sight, as to make Monsters lodged in his own brain, for the Images of the Deity, and the Workmanship of his Hands.<sup>28</sup>

The Baconian ring of this passage is confirmed by the opening sentence of the section, speaking of the fact that “*Men* worship the Idols that have been set up in their Minds”: the absurd errors of the human mind are embraced and revered as if they were “*Characters of Divinity*”.<sup>29</sup> Locke uses this eloquent imagery (idols, monsters) to reinforce his discussion of the dangers of the doctrine of innate principles, following his assessment of what he takes to be its implausibility and uselessness. According to him, the very notion that there are such things as innate principles, whether speculative or practical, suggests to the mind – especially to young minds in educational settings – that there are propositions which cannot be questioned, which indeed must not be questioned. These propositions become thus “sacred” to them, which creates a species of epistemic behavior that is at the same time slavish, timorous and peremptory: enslaved to another’s “dictates”, afraid to look into them, but maintaining them with “zeal” and “obstinacy”.<sup>30</sup> The principles wrongly taken to be innate are in fact either self-evident propositions (such as mathematical axioms or the logical principle “it is impossible for the same thing to be, and not to be”) or conclusions of deductive reasoning (such as the moral principle “one should do as he would be done unto”).<sup>31</sup> But the “principles” at the core of prejudice are neither self-evident propositions nor certain demonstrative conclusions. They are uncertain, unexamined, potentially false propositions only taken as (or relied upon) as principles. Locke concludes that the supposition of innateness is not only false, but has a perverse effect on the process of the acquisition of knowledge. It encourages the notion that our minds are sometimes required to “take upon trust” propositions that will subsequently act as touchstones of our judgments and reasonings.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Locke, *Essay*, I.iv.26, pp. 83-84.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83. See Bacon, *Advancement of Learning* II, in *Major Works*, p. 228 (*de idolis animis*); Locke seems to have read the *Novum organum* only around 1690 (Schuurman, “General Introduction”, p. 31).

<sup>30</sup> Locke, *Essay*, IV.vii.11, pp. 599, 601 (continuing the discussion of innate speculative principles in I.ii); I.iii.21-25, pp. 81-83 (on innate practical principles). Both sets of passages refer to educational contexts: the School method of disputation and its effects on “civil conversation” in the first case; the moral “principling” of children in the second.

<sup>31</sup> Locke, *Essay*, I.ii.10, p. 52; I.ii.18, pp. 57-58; I.iii.4, p. 68.

<sup>32</sup> “Taking upon trust” and “implicit faith” are two of the most frequently recurring phrases in Locke’s discussions of epistemic slavery to unexamined principles. See further Atherton, “Locke Against the Nativists”.

## 2. *Prejudice: A Lockean Portrait*

In this section I would like to reconstruct the portrait of prejudice as it emerges from the *Essay* and *Conduct*. As mentioned above, I take the development of Locke's thinking about unexamined principles as feeding into his late notion of prejudice. I will look in turn at what I called its three defining features: the imposture, the blindness to self and the social setting.

### 2.1. *The Imposture*

After its first occurrence in Book I of the *Essay*, noted above, the taking up of unexamined principles appears again in Book IV as one of the wrong measures of probability. The discussion there rehearses the idea of the perverse effects of the doctrine of innate principles, as well as the identification of the authority of others, custom and education as enabling factors,<sup>33</sup> but also signals the relevance to this topic of the association of ideas and of enthusiasm. Locke gives two examples of "received traditional Principles" that play the role of wrong measures of assent. One is "that the Pope is Infallible", which, long "inculcated" into the young mind, will be the reason why the mature man "will believe that to be Flesh, which he sees to be Bread" (the doctrine of transubstantiation). The other is that "he or his Teacher is inspired, and acted by an immediate Communication of the Divine Spirit", which will ground all sorts of absurd notions in a "principled" mind.<sup>34</sup> The two examples point to the material Locke will elaborate in the chapters on the association of ideas and on enthusiasm added to the fourth edition.

"The Pope is infallible" is the more transparent formulation of one of the examples of the association of ideas in II.xxxiii: the inseparable joining together of the idea of "a Person" with the idea of "Infallibility" while no natural connection can be detected between the two, is such that "these two constantly together possess the Mind" and act as ground for further preposterous beliefs: "and then one Body in two Places at once, shall unexamined be swallowed for a certain Truth, by an implicit Faith, when ever that imagin'd infallible Person dictates and demands assent without enquiry".<sup>35</sup> By the time Locke conceived this chapter, the notion of "prejudice" seems to have acquired the weight he was going to give it in the *Conduct*. In the *Essay* he identifies the association of ideas

<sup>33</sup> Locke, *Essay*, IV.xx.8-10, pp. 711-12.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.xx.10, p. 713.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, II.xxxiii.17, p. 400.

as a species of prejudice,<sup>36</sup> and in the *Conduct* he makes explicit the connection with unexamined principles suggested in the *Essay*: in the association of ideas, “sandie and loose foundations | become infallible principles and will not suffer them selves to be touched or questiond”.<sup>37</sup> I will come back to the further significance of the association of ideas and of enthusiasm for the problem of prejudice. For now, I am interested in the mechanism of the imposture.

The *Essay* discussion of error subsumes the problem of unexamined principles under the topic of the wrong measures of assent, i.e., of that which substitutes itself to the two correct grounds of assent in erroneous judgment. The two correct grounds of assent are one’s own knowledge, observation and experience rightly pursued, and the testimony of others rightly assessed.<sup>38</sup> What the mechanism of the substitution might be is spelled out in the *Conduct*: it takes the form of justificatory enthymemes, implicit in the act of taking up an unexamined principle. An example is, “The founders or leaders of my party are good men and therefor their tenets are true”.<sup>39</sup> The scenario is something like this. Take tenet T, embraced as a principle by a member M of a religious, political or academic group. T is neither self-evident (arrived at through intuition) nor certain (the result of demonstrative knowledge), but should be backed up by good evidence (the correct grounds of assent) and take the form of a probable judgment. Instead, M does not bother to search for evidence, or else rejects the evidence another offers, and tacitly backs up T with the abbreviated syllogism, “The leaders of my party who have voiced T are good men, therefore T is solid, certain truth”. This is in fact arguing from authority, a type of fallacious argument which, when used to convince another, is called by Locke “*Argumentum ad Verecundiam*”.<sup>40</sup> But for the discussion of the wrong measures of assent and unexamined principles, Locke is concerned with what could be called a species of internal tacit arguing, which substitutes itself to the search for evidence.<sup>41</sup> Thus the argument (the

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., II.xxxiii.3, p. 395: “Prejudice is a good general name for the thing it self”.

<sup>37</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, par. 77, p. 229.

<sup>38</sup> Locke, *Essay*, IV.xvi.4, pp. 655-56.

<sup>39</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, par. 11, p. 160.

<sup>40</sup> Locke, *Essay*, IV.xvii.19, p. 686: “Whoever backs his Tenets with such Authorities, thinks he ought thereby to carry the Cause, and is ready to style it Impudence in any one, who shall stand out against them”.

<sup>41</sup> Such internal tacit arguing is already exemplified in the *Essay* as part of the discussion of the fourth wrong measure of probability, authority or common received opinion. E.g., “other Men have been, and are, of the same Opinion [...] and therefore I am secure in the Reception I give it” (Locke, *Essay*, IV.xx.17, p. 718). The roots of this notion are probably in Arnauld and Nicole, *Logic or the Art of Thinking*, Part III, chap. 20, p. 203 (“there is almost always a hidden inference embedded in what appears to be a simple judgment”).

enthymeme) functions as a wrong measure of assent and at the same time engages the mind in a flawed chain of reasoning: it is a faulty foundation for a proposition that will itself be embraced as a foundation (the unexamined principle T) of subsequent judgments and reasonings.

Further, in the sections on prejudice that close his discussion of unexamined principles in the *Conduct*, Locke suggests that another type of justificatory reasoning is tacitly taking place:

He that is | strongly of any opinion must suppose (unless he be self-condemned) that his persuasion is built upon good grounds; and that his assent is noe greater than what the evidence of the truth he holds forces him to and that they are arguments and not inclination or phansy that make him so confident and positive in his tenets.<sup>42</sup>

At issue here is the whole process of giving assent based on correct grounds and of proportioning the degree of assent to the type of evidence – what Locke formulates as the rule of probable judgment in the *Essay*, and identifies as one of the most difficult tasks in the conduct of the understanding in the *Conduct*.<sup>43</sup> The suggestion seems to be that in forming prejudices, a person is not only giving assent in the wrong way, but persuades herself that she is doing it right via a form of meta-reasoning of the type, “I am giving assent in the right way, based on good evidence and proportionably to the force of it, therefore my confidence in the proposition I embrace is legitimate”. In fact, however, as will be detailed in the next subsection, the confidence is owing to the force of her imagination, passions and interests, compounded by habit, education and custom.

I believe that the two types of tacit reasoning taken together explain the imposture of prejudice: while deeply flawed as a process of belief-formation and reasoning, the mechanism of prejudice is a fraudulent impersonator of legitimate belief-formation and correct reasoning, since it involves the two types of tacit justificatory arguments: one that substitutes itself to legitimate evidence and another that assesses the manner of assent giving. They are both such that they look right while being in fact flawed.

But what is it that allows the mechanism behind prejudice to look right? I believe the answer lies in Locke’s notion that there are natural operations of the mind (the operations of natural logic the observation of which is the task of the

<sup>42</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, par. 32, p. 176.

<sup>43</sup> Locke, *Essay*, IV.xvi.5, p. 656; Locke, *Conduct*, par. 67, pp. 216-17.

natural history of the understanding) which may however go wrong (hence the need of a natural history of the erring intellect). Here is what I mean.

What I called above the use of the justificatory enthymeme is the result, Locke suggests, of a natural tendency of the intellect to look for foundations of its beliefs and reasonings. He writes: “True or false solid or sandy the minde must have some foundation to rest it self upon and as I have remarkd in an other place it noe sooner enterteins any proposition but it presently hastens to some hypothesis to bottom it on` till then it is unquiet and unsetled”.<sup>44</sup> The “other place” is the *Essay* section on the use of hypotheses in natural investigation in Book IV. There, Locke had written: “the Mind, that would always penetrate into the Causes of Things, and have Principles to rest on, is very apt to” “take up [hypotheses] *too hastily*”.<sup>45</sup> But the thought was already present in Book I:

This will appear very likely, and almost unavoidable to come to pass, if we consider the Nature of Mankind: and the Constitution of Humane Affairs: Wherein *most Men cannot live, without employing their time in the daily Labours of their Callings; nor be at quiet in their Minds, without some Foundation or Principles to rest their Thoughts on.*<sup>46</sup>

Thus, according to Locke, looking for foundations in reasoning is an operation of the mind based on a natural inclination which, unfortunately, is often satisfied in the wrong way: the mind settles on principles without the labor of search and examination, and ends up with the justificatory enthymemes. Yet, even the distortion of this natural tendency indirectly indicates the correct work of the understanding, which is indeed to identify true principles in reasoning: “soe much do our owne very tempers dispose us to a right use of our understandings if we would follow as we should the inclinations of our nature”.<sup>47</sup>

Likewise, in reasoning, the mind naturally engages in a search for proofs, which are either intermediate ideas in demonstrative knowledge or grounds of belief in probable judgment. The proofs should be able to show or to suggest the agreement or disagreement of two ideas that are included in an initial question (say, “Is the Pope infallible?”). The mind also naturally engages in the ordering of all proofs in such a way that the agreement or disagreement can be perceived or entertained. Indeed, as we have seen, sagacity and illation, Locke’s names

<sup>44</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, par. 13, pp. 160-61.

<sup>45</sup> Locke, *Essay*, IV.xii.13, p. 648.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, I.iii.24, p. 82 (italics in the original).

<sup>47</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, par. 13, p. 161.

for these operations of the mind, are natural faculties. Further, in judgment, the mind is naturally inclined to weigh the proofs and proportion the degree of assent to the evidence at hand. All of these are natural operations based on natural inclinations of the human mind. Yet, just like in the case of the search for foundations, all of these operations may go wrong. The way they go wrong is by following the same inclination, so engaging in the same mechanism, yet with key modifications. The modifications are a matter of tempo and degree, of too fast and too much – as will become apparent in what follows. The point for now is that this seems to be the reason why the mind may ape its own natural mechanisms and end up with the imposture of prejudice.

One final observation here. The result of the imposture is the blocking of two key capacities of the human mind which are also key norms of good thinking for Locke: asking questions in the right way and choosing the right method for finding the answer.<sup>48</sup> To return to our example: a person who takes up “The Pope is infallible” as a principle does not even realize that this should be formulated as a question, so as the starting point of an inquiry, rather than as an unquestionable tenet. Further, she does not realize that she should figure out whether the inquiry should seek probable arguments or a demonstration – or, if the question were about substances, natural historical examination. The person is incapable of engaging in inquiry in the right way, because she is blind to what is going on inside herself.

## 2.2. *Blindness to Self*

In the *Conduct*, Locke identifies two major sources of “defects” in the understanding: “the natural temper of the minde or ill habits taken up”.<sup>49</sup> Here I would like to show how tempers and habits are indeed responsible for the distortion of the natural mechanism of the mind in reasoning, hence for the imposture, as well as for the blindness to self of the prejudiced mind. Habits have been a generally neglected topic in the history of early modern philosophy, although they have recently received powerful advocates.<sup>50</sup> While I concur with the advocacy, I would like to make a case for the equal importance of tempers.

<sup>48</sup> These are the fruits of “indifferency” (Locke, *Conduct*, pars. 69-70, p. 223), so, by consequence, they are blocked by prejudice. On wrong methods as “improper ways of search”, see Locke, *Conduct*, par. 43, p. 185.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 38, p. 180.

<sup>50</sup> Schuurman, “General Introduction”, pp. 29-31; Tabb, “Locke on Habituation”; Weinberg, “Locke on Intellectual and Moral Virtue”; Corneanu, *Regimens of the Mind*, pp. 154-60. More generally, see Dunham and Romdenh-Romluc (eds.), *Habit*.

Recall Locke’s conclusion to the passage describing the distortion of the mind’s need of foundations: “soe much do our owne very tempers dispose us to a right use of our understandings if we would follow as we should the inclinations of our nature”. So “tempers” name natural “inclinations”, which may be generally applicable to humans (a Lockean variant of Bacon’s idols of the tribe) or indicative of particular constitutions (recalling the idols of the cave). The impatient search for foundations clearly belongs to the former category. The distortion, Locke suggests, is a matter of tempo: it is with “haste” or “precipitancy” that the mind embraces unexamined principles, eager to find its “rest” or “peace”. This is already announced in the *Essay*<sup>51</sup> and becomes thematized in the *Conduct*, as we will see below. The *Conduct* adds that the hasty embracing of unexamined principles imprints a quality of excess – a matter of degree – to the manner in which the mind adheres to those principles, resulting in what Locke calls “obstinacy” or “stiffness”. It also suggests that the excessive adherence is transmitted to the reasoning built on those foundations, as indicated by the metaphors of “tincturing” and “infection”. Moreover, operative in both the haste and the obstinacy are the imagination and the passions of the mind. This will bring us back to the medico-logical territory, this time with respect to the analysis of the erring mind. Let us look at the relevant passages.

One area in which haste operates is in natural historical inquiry, and has to do, first, with the extracting of general axioms without careful investigation of particulars,<sup>52</sup> and subsequently with the taking up of those axioms as principles for deductions, which further estrange the mind from the investigation of particulars, while arming it for disputes. Locke gives the example of medical histories:

For example, were it my business to understand physick would not the safer and readier way be to consult nature her self | and informe my self in the history of diseases and their cures than espousing the principles of the Dogmatists, Methodists or Chymists engage in all the disputes concerning either of those systems and suppose it true till I have tried what they can say to beat me out of it.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> “Precipitancy” at Locke, *Essay*, I.iii.24, p. 82; “haste” at IV.xii.13, p. 648.

<sup>52</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, pars. 39, 59, pp. 181, 203-4.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 68, p. 222.

This recalls the defense of natural history as the correct method in the medical investigation of diseases and their cures in Locke's early *De arte medica* (1669), against the practice of "lay[ing] downe [...] fundamentall maximes & from thence drawing consequence & raising dispute", as well as the observation in the same text that the need of foundations is "agreeable to the nature of [h] mans understanding". Locke also proposes there that the taking up of principles is associated with the work of the imagination: "man still affecting some thing of a deity labourd to make his imagina<ti>on supply what his observa<ti>on failed him in".<sup>54</sup> The thought is also present in the *Conduct*, where the haste of assent is concurrent with the dissembling work of "this Court dresser the phansy".<sup>55</sup> Sydenham's methodological tenets are clearly behind *De arte medica*, but so is, it seems to me, the association with the imagination and its tincturing effect. Sydenham writes: "Writers, whose minds have taken a false colour under their influence [the influence of hypotheses], have saddled diseases with phenomena which existed in their own brains only".<sup>56</sup> In the same spirit, in the *Conduct*, Locke writes of how the imagination imprints "colours appearances resemblances" to the mind's thoughts,<sup>57</sup> or of how the mind imbibes the "tincture" of an authoritarian doctrine.<sup>58</sup>

The joined effort of imagination and "hasty determinations" is also at work in what Locke calls "anticipation", which may be a nod to Bacon in the *Novum organum*, so pertinent again to natural historical investigation, but may also be more generally applicable to any premature conclusion in reasoning. Here Locke stresses the resulting stiffness and obstinacy of the mind: "many men give them selves up to the first anticipations of their mindes and are very tenacious of the opinions that first possess them", but "this firmness or rather stiffness of the minde is not from an adherence to truth but a submission to prejudice".<sup>59</sup>

Indeed, in the opening sections on principles and prejudice, Locke writes of the same stiffness, a result of an excess of strength with which the mind adheres to a proposition, and the obstinacy in the face of opposition. The imagination is singled out again: "inclination or phansy" are responsible for the fact that a person may become "soe confident and positive in his tenets" and will hold

<sup>54</sup> Walmsley, "John Locke's 'Anatomia' and 'De Arte Medica'".

<sup>55</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, par. 67, pp. 218-19.

<sup>56</sup> Meynell, "John Locke and the Preface to Thomas Sydenham".

<sup>57</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, par 67, p. 218.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 68, p. 222.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 60, pp. 204-5.

those tenets with an “excess [...] of adherence”. The passions are also attendant on the making of prejudice. The refusal to confront diverging arguments is the sure mark of a prejudiced mind, Locke tells us. And that is because “tis not the evidence of truth but some lazy anticipation some beloved presumption that he desires to rest undisturbed in”; “tis not evidence he seeks but the quiet enjoyment of the opinion he is fond of”.<sup>60</sup> Desire and love (with some admixture of self-love)<sup>61</sup> are ingredients in the distortion of the natural mechanisms of the mind, as is fear,<sup>62</sup> alongside the imagination. Passions and imagination are involved in the haste of the intellect in looking for and embracing foundations, general rules and conclusions, as well as in the resulting excess in the strength of its adherence to tenets, accounting for its stiffness and obstinacy. In other words, the too soon and too much in the distorted mechanism of the mind owe a lot to the passions and the imagination.

I have suggested that intimations of this picture of the mind are already in Sydenham and Locke’s own texts on the methodology of medical histories of diseases and cures. I would like to further suggest now that the picture is itself indebted to early modern investigations of the epistemic role of the imagination and the passions that were carried out in medico-logical contexts. Here are a few examples.

The idea of the intellect’s natural need to seek and find its rest in principles is not a Lockean novelty. Bacon had described the “unaided intellect” (*Intellectus sibi permissus*) in the same way in the *Novum organum*: “the mind longs to leap up to higher generalities to find its rest there”. According to Bacon, Aristotelian logic encourages the mind to hasten to embrace those generalities, which are the principles of demonstration, or the major premises of a syllogism. In contrast, Bacon’s own way respects the natural tendency of the intellect but tempers it by offering it the help of a gradually ascending path from particulars to axioms.<sup>63</sup> The mind’s natural propensity to abstraction with the attendant settling on poorly defined abstract words is also mentioned during the discussion of the idols of the tribe and of the marketplace.<sup>64</sup> The same holds for the idols of the theatre, with reference to the “empirical philosophers”: the hasty conclusions on the basis of only a few experiments are an expression of the “premature and precipitate onrush of the intellect [...] towards the generalities

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., par. 32, p. 176.

<sup>61</sup> See the association of obstinacy and self-love at Locke, *Essay*, II.xxxiii.2-3, pp. 394-95.

<sup>62</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, par. 32, p. 176: the “fear to put it to the proof”.

<sup>63</sup> Bacon, *Novum organum*, I.19-20, in OFB XI, pp. 70-71.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., I.51, in OFB XI, p. 89; I.60, in OFB XI, pp. 93, 95.

and principles of things”. The explanation here also involves the imagination, which, Bacon says, becomes “infected” with the handful of experiments and the conclusion they seem to suggest.<sup>65</sup>

In the earlier *Advancement of Learning*, Bacon had an interesting comment on the mind’s natural need of principles, seen there in terms of the relation between rest and motion, with a nod to Aristotle in *De motu animalium*: for there to be motion, there has to be a place of rest from where that motion can be initiated – in the behavior of animals, as well as in that of the cosmos (the latter nicely illustrated in the fable of Atlas). In the same way, Bacon suggests, principles afford the mind the place of rest from where the movement of reasoning can be initiated.<sup>66</sup> A similar idea is put forward in a rather unexpected place: the *Treatise of the Passions and Faculties of the Soule of Man* (1640) by Bishop Edward Reynolds, Locke’s tutor during his years at Christ Church. In that treatise, Reynolds devotes several chapters to an analysis of epistemic error and its causes. First on his list of causes is the “Abuse of Principles”. Reynolds explains: “For the Understanding must have ever something to rest it selfe upon: and from the conformity of other things, thereunto to gather the certainty and evidence of its Assents”. For an explanation of “rest” Reynolds also invokes Aristotle, but this time on the resolution of the complex into the simple (e.g., species into genus, effects into causes) in the *Physics*.<sup>67</sup>

Reynolds adds that the natural inclination makes the intellect impatient and thus prone to abuse: it may well land on “a private conceipt” rather than on a true principle, which will “mishape all Conclusions”. As “*Error Consequentia*, or *Illationis*”, error passes itself off as truth by making its “fancies more plausible, to fasten them upon undeniable grounds”.<sup>68</sup> Reynolds goes on to expatiate on the idea of imposture, with examples from artistic, moral, political and biblical quarters.<sup>69</sup> As “*Error Dependientia*, or *Subordinationis*”, in which principles from one science are transferred to another, error assumes the face of truth by acting as a “coloured Glasse”: all conclusions will be “dyed in

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., I.64, in OFB XI, p. 101.

<sup>66</sup> Bacon, *Advancement of Learning II*, in *Major Works*, p. 225; Aristotle, *Movement of animals*, 2-3, in *Complete Works I*, pp. 1087-88.

<sup>67</sup> Reynolds, *Treatise*, pp. 484-85; Aristotle, *Physics*, I.7, in *Complete Works I*, pp. 324-25.

<sup>68</sup> Reynolds, *Treatise*, p. 486.

<sup>69</sup> “Imposture” is indeed often associated in this moral-psychological literature with the work of the imagination and the passions. Bacon’s use of the term surely preserves these connotations: Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, in *Major Works*, pp. 142-43 (“imposture and credulity” among the “peccant humours” of learning), 227 (the mind of man is “like an enchanted glass, full of superstition and imposture”).

the colour of their own concepts”.<sup>70</sup> The phenomenon is compounded by the passions.<sup>71</sup> Besides the passions, the imagination is one of the prime corrupters of the understanding. One of the ways in which it blocks the latter’s access to truth is by its capacity to create “fixedness” of the mind, which Reynolds describes as a “peremptory adhesion and too violent intension of the Fancie on some particular objects”.<sup>72</sup> In its extreme forms, he adds, this is an ingredient in madness.

This approach to the imagination is largely indebted to a medical understanding of the epistemic effects of this faculty. At issue is the “strength” or “violence” of an impression, which accounts for the mind’s strength of adherence to a notion, and which is explained in terms of the materiality of the imagination. Reynolds and Burton use it to explain “melancholy”, while More and Casaubon involve it in their accounts of “enthusiasm”.<sup>73</sup> Very likely drawing on this literature, Joseph Glanvill in his *Vanity of Dogmatizing* (1661) attributes credulity and obstinacy to “a tenacious *Imagination*” which acts by “impressing a strong perswasion of the Truth of an Opinion, where there is no evidence to support it”, as is seen in cases of enthusiasm or hypochondria.<sup>74</sup> At the same time, the roving nature of the imagination, together with the volatile spirits of our brains, contribute to the precipitancy of the understanding’s assent.<sup>75</sup> This medical analysis of the imagination is part of Glanvill’s account of this faculty as a source of epistemic error, an account which he organizes in terms of the three acts of the intellect (apprehension, judgment and reasoning) which was the typical organization scheme of logical tracts, both old and new.<sup>76</sup>

In sum, it appears that the use of the imagination in medically inflected accounts of epistemic miscarriage was meant to account, among other things, for the way the mind hastens to conclusions, forms strong attachments to notions and beliefs and is, as it were, infected or tintured by them in its subsequent reasoning. Several writers deemed this analysis of the imagination pertinent to a logical account of the acts of the intellect. Locke was very

<sup>70</sup> Reynolds, *Treatise*, p. 489.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 497: “mens Minds prepossessed with any particular fancy [...] They cannot see it [the object of the mind’s sight] in its own proper colours, but according as their Concepts are any way distempered and transported by the violence of their Affection”.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>73</sup> Burton, *Anatomy*, I, 249; More, *Enthusiasmus*, p. 5; Casaubon, *Treatise*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>74</sup> Glanvill, *Vanity*, pp. 75-76.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>76</sup> Further on this material, see Corneanu, “Joseph Glanvill on Imagination”.

likely aware of this literature and my suggestion is that his account of the way the mind comes to rely upon unexamined principles preserves traces of this approach to the imagination.

Interestingly, Locke makes a brief remark at some point in the *Essay* whereby he explicitly includes the imagination in the mechanism of the taking up of unexamined principles – which serves there as an analogue to the functioning of the mind of a madman: “[Madmen] err as Men do, that argue right from wrong Principles. For by the violence of their Imaginations, having taken their Fancies for Realities, they make right deductions from them”.<sup>77</sup> This is not unlike Locke’s explanation of what is going on in the mind of an enthusiast, in the chapter added to the fourth edition of the *Essay*. The “strong though ungrounded persuasion” that one is in direct communication with God may be used as a ground for believing any sort of absurdity, which is “to set up phancy for our supreme and sole Guide”.<sup>78</sup> That persuasion is itself the product of the “Conceits of a warmed or over-weening Brain”. Mind and body are thus carried away forcefully, and imprint that force on everything that follows from the initial persuasion: “the whole Man is sure to act more vigorously, where the whole Man is carried by a natural Motion. For strong conceit like a new Principle carries all easily with it, when got above common Sense, and freed from all restraint of Reason, and check of Reflection”.<sup>79</sup>

I have so far insisted on the role of “natural temper”, with contributions from the imagination and the passions, in distorting the natural operations of the intellect, in Locke’s account of prejudice. This is not, however, to downplay the other great source of error, “ill habits”. Indeed, the process of acquiring habits – habituation or “accustoming” – is a key member of Locke’s account of the relying upon unexamined principles already in the *Essay*. Education or fashion are apt to push an individual into receiving and entertaining “borrowed Principles”, but also, most importantly, into “accustoming himself to believe them, because they are to be believed”, and thus into gradually losing the habit of using their power of reason.<sup>80</sup> The idea is firmly in place in Locke’s discussion of “principles” in the *Conduct*: he describes the fault in the conduct of the understanding he is dealing with here as “the *custom* of taking up principles that are not self evident and very often not soe much as true”.<sup>81</sup> The power of

<sup>77</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xi.13, p. 161.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.xix.11, pp. 703-4.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.xix.7, p. 699.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, I.iv.26, pp. 83-84.

<sup>81</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, par. 11, p. 159 (my emphasis).

accustoming is so great that it may prove impossible for a man to give his principles up, even after another has shown to him that they are fallible.<sup>82</sup> Locke explains: “the reason why they do not make use of better and surer principles is because they can not: but this inability proceeds not from want of natural parts [...] but for want of use and exercise, Few men are from their youth accustomed to strict reasoning”<sup>83</sup>

The power of accustoming is also one key ingredient in the explanation of the association of ideas, a form of madness,<sup>84</sup> and “the foundation of the greatest, I had almost said, of all the Errors in the World”.<sup>85</sup> In the *Essay* Locke explains that the profound nature of this epistemic phenomenon has to do with the accustoming of the mind to working with two ideas “cemented” together, never suspecting that they were unnaturally connected. The accustoming is doubled by a specific channeling of the motions of the animal spirits. The unnatural connections become thus naturalized (“as if they were Natural”).<sup>86</sup> Such is the case with many of our likes and dislikes, our disgusts, frights and hatreds, but also with propositions that glue together such ideas as “being” and “matter”, “God” and “figure and shape”, or “person” and “infallibility”. By long use, such propositions turn into “intellectual Habits and Defects”.<sup>87</sup>

Accustoming is thus a key element of the association of ideas. The work of the imagination is possibly an ingredient, too, as suggested by Locke’s language of “impression”, “captivation” and “possession”.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, in one place he refers to “phancy” as the operator of the association of ideas.<sup>89</sup> But both accustoming and the imagination-based epistemic behavior of the mind are marks of all varieties of prejudice. The association of ideas seems to be an extreme case, owing to the “cementing” of the ideas the mind puts together. It may be said that the accustoming in the association of ideas is complete, issuing in the thorough naturalization of the unnatural epistemic mechanism. This has obvious consequences for the problem of blindness to self.

In the previous subsection I described what seemed to me to be the mechanism of the imposture in the formation of prejudice, according to Locke.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., par. 13, p. 160.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., par. 15, p. 162.

<sup>84</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xxxiii.3-4, p. 395.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., II.xxxiii.18, p. 401.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., II.xxxiii.6-7, pp. 395-97; the “cementing” metaphor is in section 11, p. 398.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., II.xxxiii.17, p. 400.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., II.xxxiii.7-8, 17-18, pp. 396-97, 400.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., II.xxxiii.7, p. 397.

What I called the two types of tacit reasoning involved in that mechanism include, as it were, the promise of an incipient level of transparency to self, once the mind decides to look into itself and reflect on its own processes of belief-formation and reasoning. Yet, Locke seems to suggest that in the association of ideas, the mechanism of the imposture has become completely opaque to the mind: the mind does not suspect and lacks even the resources to ever start suspecting that something has gone amiss. The two ideas (say, “person” and “infallibility”) cease even to form a proposition, since a proposition presupposes that the discrete identity of the two terms remains intact, while the associated ideas seem to exist in an indiscrete continuum.<sup>90</sup> As a result, the thought, however inchoate, can never occur that one should account for the proposition in terms of the quality of its grounds and the legitimacy of the process of assent-giving. The occurrence of such a thought, even if initially used to justify the imposture, might open up the possibility of self-reflection and subsequent reformation. But in the case of the association of ideas, the thought is unavailable. That is why, in this case, “it is not in the power of Reason to help us”: time alone may assist, with its universal dissolution of all ties.<sup>91</sup>

I have argued that the distortion of the natural mechanisms of the mind which makes possible the imposture of prejudice is owing to alterations in their tempo and degree – the mind’s haste in settling on principles and on concluding from them, and the excess with which the mind adheres to principles and conclusions. Together with the power of habituation, this temper of the mind is responsible for the imposture of prejudice and for the mind’s inability to recognize its own imposture. This inability comes in degrees, however. The association of ideas is an extreme case of blindness to self. In less severe cases, there may be hope for the beginning of self-reflection. I will briefly address Locke’s positive scenario of reforming practices in the last section. Before that, I turn now to the third and final defining feature of prejudice, the social setting.

### 2.3. *The Social Setting*

The right method of inquiry in the case of probabilities, we have seen, is to look for grounds – one’s own knowledge, observation and experience rightly pursued and the testimony of others rightly assessed. But taking up unexamined principles, Locke tells us in the *Essay*, makes you reject all of these: the “Romanist” will not trust his own eyes (“will believe that to be Flesh, which

<sup>90</sup> See Tabb, “Locke on Habituation”, p. 391.

<sup>91</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xxxiii.13, p. 398.

he sees to be Bread”), while the enthusiast will refuse another’s testimony and arguments (“you in vain bring the Evidence of clear Reasons against his Doctrines”).<sup>92</sup> The *Conduct* enlarges the latter case: the mechanism of the fixation of prejudice is so powerful – involving as it does the natural temper of the intellect, the imagination, passions, tacit justificatory reasonings and long accustoming – that once confronted with a diverging opinion, the mind will either look but not see, or simply look away.

These are the two scenarios of testing “principles” and “prejudice” in the *Conduct*. The first is an akratic scenario that gives us a possibly sincere person who is simply accustomed to holding a false principle: another persuades her that the principle is false, yet she continues to use it, even if she initially seems convinced.<sup>93</sup> In other words, she looks but does not see – in the sense that the understanding of the falseness of the principle does not sink into her mind, i.e., does not reorganize her epistemic perspective and does not become habitual. The second scenario is about an obstinate, zealous believer: another brings arguments against what he believes, but he refuses to even hear what the other has to say, let alone examine, weigh and reflect on the arguments.<sup>94</sup> Our believer simply looks away. In different ways, both cases are ultimately cases of refusing the testimony of another. To this is added the suggestion in the *Essay* that the prejudiced mind may even refuse its own testimony (the testimony of its own senses). The other side of the blindness to self is the rejection of and insulation from the other, where the other includes both other human beings and the world around as available through the senses.

The prejudiced mind, Locke suggests, is an isolated mind – rarely individually isolated, though, more usually isolated within a partisan group. This, it seems to me, is one of the foremost worries that he expresses in both *Conduct* and *Essay* and that elicits from him a generally uncharacteristic wealth of eloquence. For example, the *Conduct* gives us the memorable line, “all the world are borne to orthodoxie” – in other words, we are socialized into biased groups from birth;<sup>95</sup> or the portrait of “one muffled up in the zeale and infallibility of his own sect” who refuses to read anything or talk to anyone that may raise doubts about his “sacred” beliefs.<sup>96</sup> The concern with the phenomenon of partisan, divisive epistemic-social isolation – what in the language of

<sup>92</sup> Locke, *Essay*, IV.xx.10, p. 713.

<sup>93</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, par. 13, p. 160.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 32, p. 176.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 67, p. 219.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 98, p. 250.

the time was called the divisiveness of “sects” – is visible in the *Essay* as well. Locke believes that one key enabling factor behind it is education, both formal and informal. Both are guilty of inculcating in the young minds the notion that “principles” – whether speculative or moral – are not to be questioned.<sup>97</sup> The former is also guilty of corrupting children via the method of disputation, which has consequences for “civil conversation”. Locke sees disputation as a training in contentiousness and obstinacy.<sup>98</sup>

Education is a key enabling factor of prejudice because it can instill wrong habits of thinking. Another problem with education, according to Locke, is that it can instill wrong habits of study, in particular what he calls “partiality”. We can start to appreciate this understudied Lockean theme from the perspective of the social setting of prejudice. A good portion of the *Conduct* is devoted to partiality in study and knowledge gathering. Inquiry and right reasoning are enhanced, Locke thinks, by an accustoming of the mind to all sorts of ideas, from all quarters of the ocean of knowledge. Partial familiarity with only one sort of ideas, one sort of knowledge, or one method of inquiry makes the mind fall in love with its “dareling”, grow “stif in it”, acquire “a tincture” from it and become “possessed” with it.<sup>99</sup> The language describing the effects of partiality in study is similar to the language Locke used to depict the prejudiced mind. This is not by chance, I think, as Locke suggests that prejudice and partiality are closely related, as forms of epistemic isolation:

[T]he principles from which we conclude the grounds upon which we bottom our reasoning are but a part some thing is left out which should goe into the reconing to make it just and exact. [...] [Even sincere intellects are prone to erring owing to partiality:] They converse but with one sort of men they read but one sort of books: They will not come in the hearing but of one sort of notions. The truth is They canton out to them selves a little Goshen in the intellectual world [...].<sup>100</sup>

The mind becomes stiff not only because of lack of exercise in right reasoning, but also because of lack of exercise in consulting the diversity of notions and perspectives the vast world of knowledge offers. Both lacks have a hand in the making of the prejudiced mind, as does the epistemic vice of pride or “pre-

<sup>97</sup> Locke, *Essay*, IV.vii.11, p. 599; I.iv.24, p. 101.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.vii.11, p. 601; Locke, *Conduct*, par. 23, p. 168.

<sup>99</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, par. 44, pp. 187-88.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 98, pp. 246-47.

sumption”, with its echoes of the first act of self-isolation in sacred history – the divisive act of the first man.<sup>101</sup>

Epistemic isolation goes hand in hand, Locke argues, with epistemic slavery. Prejudice presupposes a type of relation of self to itself and to others of the order of “imposition”.<sup>102</sup> Succumbing to the imposture of prejudice is a form of self-imposition, aided by the often unacknowledged imposition on our minds that the authority of others exert, and issuing most of the time in an imposition we ourselves come to exert on the minds of others.<sup>103</sup> There is a chain of transmission of prejudice within the biased (divisively isolated) group and at every step of the transfer, “blind Credulity” is born at the crossroads of the weakness of one and the love of power of another.<sup>104</sup> The result of this power game within the isolated epistemic-social group is, we have seen, the rejection of the testimony and dialogue of an outsider other.

### 3. *Regulative Practices: A Sketch*

The main purpose of this essay has been to reconstruct the Lockean portrait of prejudice. Given the regulative scenario in which it is inscribed, however, a word on the preventive and curative practices is in order. In this final section, I will try to give only a rough sketch.

The key thing is Locke’s insistence on practices, in other words, on long-term exercise, which alone, he thinks, may set the mind right. The sections on “principles” and “prejudice” in the *Conduct* are interspersed with sections on “practise” and “habits”, introduced by the notion that “tis only the exercise of those powers [our natural powers] which gives us ability and skill in any thing and leads us towards perfection”.<sup>105</sup> The mind, just like the body, performs in the way it does only on account of the habits it has acquired, for better or

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., par. 98, p. 249.

<sup>102</sup> Alongside “taking upon trust”, “imposition” is one of the most frequently used terms in Locke’s discussion of unexamined principles and prejudice.

<sup>103</sup> Locke, *Essay*, I.iv.22, p. 99 (those who take things upon trust “misemploy their power of Assent, by lazily envailing their Minds, to the Dictates and Dominion of others”); IV.xix.2, p. 698 (“For how almost can it be otherwise, but that he should be ready to impose on others Belief, who has already imposed on his own?”).

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., I.iv.24, p. 102 (“Nor is it a small power it gives one Man over another, to have the Authority to be the Dictator of Principles, and Teacher of Unquestionable Truths”).

<sup>105</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, par. 6, p. 156.

worse.<sup>106</sup> Locke's view of reasoning is normative in the sense that the healthy activities of the understanding, as collected by its natural history, provide the norm against which the erring distortions of those activities, as collected by the natural history of error, can be measured. But it is also practical, in the sense that the activities, both healthy and erring, are performed by means of practices that are apt to either express, approach or abandon the norm. Prejudice is the result of faulty practices (such as scholastic disputation, moral "principling", or other forms of relying on unexamined principles) that create bad intellectual habits. Both the prevention and cure of prejudice can therefore only take the form of practices working towards the instilling of healthy habits – a diet and medicining of the intellect.<sup>107</sup>

In the *Conduct*, Locke closes the discussion of unexamined principles and prejudice with a double-headed recommendation: to counter prejudice, we need to practice "examination" and "indifferency". Naturally, examination of principles (whether they are true, certain or solid) is the first requirement, seeing that the unexamined nature of the propositions relied upon as if they were unquestionable maxims was the issue to begin with. Whether Locke means here to point to preventive or curative practices is not clear. We can however corroborate this with what he offers as "cures" for the association of ideas in the same *Conduct*, where he does indeed distinguish between cure and prevention. By way of cure Locke mentions, first, a "vigor of mind" that might be able to confront the already entrenched habit and start examining the unexamined principles – an almost impossible task; second, the practice of self-study (observing the motions of one's own mind), which might be able to de-naturalize the habit. Compared to the *Essay*, he seems to be wondering here whether the mechanism of the imposture might after all become visible even in this extreme case of blindness to self, although he admits that there is a thin chance that this might happen. The real hope lies in the prevention, and that bears the name of education: only constant practice, starting with the youngest years, of examining the agreement of ideas will be able to prevent the formation of the disease.<sup>108</sup>

The same, I believe, is Locke's meaning in his general recommendation of "examination". There is a chance, a better one than in the case of the association of ideas, that a person may be able to confront her epistemic demons

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., par. 7, p. 157.

<sup>107</sup> See Crignon, "Galenic Heritage"; Corneanu *Regimens*, chap. 5.

<sup>108</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, pars. 77-79, pp. 229-31.

and start taking apart the mechanism of the imposture. That task, however, would require a massive amount of courage, sincerity and force of will, which is probably quite rare. The promise of success lies more clearly in the prevention offered by education. Alongside examination, what Locke calls “indifferency” (another name for the love of truth) is also a matter of training and practice, since a sudden transfer of attachment from one’s party or sect to the truth itself is as rare as the decision to ask, all of a sudden, whether the Pope is indeed infallible or not, after years of having thought this was unquestionably the case. The regulative practices of education, together with the attendant growth of healthy intellectual habits, are of the essence in this case as well.<sup>109</sup>

The practices of right reasoning Locke describes in both *Conduct* and *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* are such that they regulate the too fast and too much that distort the natural operations of the human mind. In other words, they teach patience and measure. The key is that the child, and subsequently the young person, forms habits of distinguishing between distinct ideas, of searching for the ideas that may act as proofs apt to answer an initial question, of observing the connections of ideas in trains of deduction and tracing them to their true principle, and of calibrating her confidence in the result proportionally to the evidence at hand. Together with a general attitude of reflection and concern for truth, these habits are apt to prevent the haste in embracing principles and the excessive strength of adherence to tenets that make possible the imposture of prejudice. Locke includes among the practices conducive to this end the early conversations between tutor and child seeking to identify reasons for actions, encouraging curiosity, and training reflection on various topics; the practice of mathematics and the pursuit of study and reading with an eye to the mechanism of the connections of ideas and of the “bottoming” of chains of reasoning on true principles; and the general cultivation of a love of knowledge and truth, meant to counter the partial loves, desires and fears involved in the growth of obstinate beliefs.<sup>110</sup>

Besides practices of examination and inquiry, of reasoning and reflection, meant to develop healthy habits,<sup>111</sup> Locke seems to also recommend practic-

<sup>109</sup> Locke closes his discussion of “principles” and “prejudice” in the *Conduct* with a paragraph on the task of education, which is “to give [the learner’s] mind that freedom that disposition those habits that may enable him to attain | any part of knowledge he shall apply him self to or stand in need of in the future course of his life”: *Conduct*, par. 37, p. 179.

<sup>110</sup> Locke, *Some Thoughts*, pars. 118, 166, 180, pp. 183-85, 219, 236; Locke, *Conduct*, pars. 17, 21, 25, 52-7, pp. 164, 167, 169-70, 198-201.

<sup>111</sup> See further Weinberg, “Locke on Intellectual and Moral Virtue”; Tabb, “Locke on Habituation”.

ing certain social-epistemic attitudes, for example epistemic humility towards oneself, and epistemic tolerance towards others.<sup>112</sup> Further, exposure to people thinking otherwise than oneself, to a diversity of methods of inquiry and reasoning and to provinces of knowledge one is not familiar with is apt to groom “universality” and “suppleness” of mind, and to give one the “large sound round about sense” that may prevent the stiffness of partiality.<sup>113</sup> At the same time, the practice of self-knowledge via a natural history of the errors of the understanding for one’s own, self-regulating use is both explicit in the *Conduct* and suggested by the very nature of this text.<sup>114</sup> All of these practices form the regulative regimen of Lockean education, which extends well beyond the early years of a child.

One upshot of this discussion is that, for Locke, the medico-logical training of the mind is at the same time a pedagogical project. Another is that there is an important social dimension to this project. Locke’s regulative practices are often communal (because pedagogical) while also requiring individual struggle. Their goal is what Locke calls “the freedom of the understanding”<sup>115</sup> – in other words, epistemic freedom, as opposed to the epistemic slavery attached to the prejudiced mind. Locke worried about the blindness to self and rejection of others that were the marks of the latter and about the epistemic isolation of divisive groups that enabled it. This raises problems for a strict individualist reading of Locke’s epistemology: it seems to me that Locke’s education for freedom was what opened, rather than closed, the individual mind to others.<sup>116</sup>

### *Abbreviations*

OFB XI: Bacon, Francis, *The Instauration Magna Part II: Novum organum and Associated Texts*, *The Oxford Francis Bacon*, vol. XI, eds. Graham Rees and Maria Wakely, Clarendon Press, Oxford 2004.

<sup>112</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, pars. 13, 25, pp. 160, 170; Locke, *Essay* IV.xvi.4, p. 659.

<sup>113</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, pars. 44, 98, pp. 187, 246.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 38, p. 180.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 36, p. 178.

<sup>116</sup> On the social aspects of the Lockean mind, see Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, chap. 2; Waldow, *Experience Embodied*, chap. 2.

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# Locke's Approach to Health and Healing: Between the Scientific and the Popular

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*Abstract:* One might be tempted to view Locke's skepticism with regards to the very nature and purpose of advances in Western medicine as one example in a long tradition of philosophical tirades against physicians, often followed by a call for self-treatment and gentle remedies. The article aims to show that this analysis corresponds to only one aspect of Locke's views on medicine. Locke's critique of anatomy and his doubts about what we can expect from the use of instruments such as the microscope and his skepticism towards emerging technical advances in medical instruments do not mean that he contested the value of health. Locke's approach to medicine must be seen within the context of the Baconian project of a natural history of nature and diseases. An appreciation of the growing influence of Baconianism in medicine during the 17th century is crucial in order to understand why natural and experimental philosophers such as Locke, Glanvill or Boyle favored therapeutics over causal explanations of diseases. Criticism of speculative philosophy, and insistence on observation and experiment are not specific to Locke's reflections on progress in medicine. Many philosophers of this period valued the knowledge of a wide variety of people who did not have access to medical knowledge, such as North American indigeneous peoples, illiterates, artisans or women natives while highlighting the inadequacies of knowledge inherited from scholasticism. What is remarkable in Locke's use of natural history in medicine is that he includes popular beliefs, prejudices and errors, as well as diseases and natural phenomena in the very process of description and observation. Observing common knowledge and understanding how ordinary or apparently ignorant persons sometimes discover cures by chance or are hindered from discovering the right therapy because of prejudice is useful when examining the dynamics behind the evolution and progress of the art of medicine progress. The inquiry into the intellectual virtues required of a practitioner of the natural history method becomes an example or even a case study of the natural history method itself. It is also a way of questioning the limits of rationality in medicine and of placing the art of medicine art at the intersection of what the historian and philosopher of

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biomedical sciences Georges Canguilhem (1904-1995) called a “scientific” approach and a “folk” approach to health.

*Keywords:* Learned, speculative / folk medicine, natural history, indigenous knowledge, Locke, Bacon, *Sylva sylvarum*

### *Introduction*

Over the last thirty years, Kenneth Dewhurst, François Duchesneau, and more recently Jonathan Craig Walmsley, Peter Anstey and Lawrence Principe have shared Locke’s critical reflections on medical art, and anatomy, as well as his note-taking and observations on the history of the future Earl of Shaftesbury’s disease and treatment.<sup>1</sup> All these works have considerably improved our understanding of the nature of Locke’s collaboration with the English physician Thomas Sydenham (1624-1689). We now understand better how the philosopher and the physician worked on the characterization of a new method of treatment (*methodus medendi*) based on observation and on natural history. Locke’s involvement in the medical debates of his time was crucial to our understanding of the genesis of his philosophical project of inquiry into human understanding. Unlike Descartes, Locke does not seem particularly confident in the ability of medicine to appropriate the title of science, likely to elucidate the causes of diseases. Many diseases remained incurable and most treatments were ineffective. Instead, he recommends not relying too heavily on physicians and states that as a philosopher, he “wishes well to the practice of physic, tho’ he meddles not with it”.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, focusing solely on Locke’s pessimism as regards the possibility of progress in medical knowledge and his criticisms of anatomy would be as simplistic as solely focusing on Descartes’s confidence in founding medicine on infallible demonstrations.<sup>3</sup> Descartes did not only trust demonstrative medicine; he also paid heed to psychosomatic and dietetic medicine and approved of self-medication. In the same way, Locke did not merely discuss physicians’ abilities to find the remote causes of diseases. Nor did he only

<sup>1</sup> See Dewhurst, *John Locke (1632-1704), Physician and Philosopher*; Duchesneau, *L’empirisme de Locke*; Walmsley, *John Locke’s Natural Philosophy (1632-1671)*; Anstey, *John Locke and Natural Philosophy*; Principe and Anstey, “John Locke and the Case of Anthony Ashley Cooper”.

<sup>2</sup> John Locke to Thomas Molyneux, 20 January 1693, in Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 4, p. 630.

<sup>3</sup> Romano, “Les trois médecines de Descartes”, pp. 675-96.

question the role of instruments in the potential progress of medicine. He also offered optimistic perspectives on what to expect from medical art, provided that its most speculative tendency was discarded.

This paper aims to show how Locke's commitment to Baconian natural history led him to consider the physician's proper focus as therapeutics over causal explanations commonly offered by learned and speculative physicians. Locke never denied the fact that the highest value of medicine is the elimination of disease itself and the achievement of health. He defends the idea that health is not the privilege of the medical profession. Lay people, North American indigenous peoples, poor people living in the countryside and women practicing medicine without specific formal education but with a certain degree of "folk" wisdom and the practical skills in the observation of nature (roots, plants, animals etc.) were all involved in healing practices and played a crucial role in the transformation of medicine into a valuable art for the improvement of human life.

The first section of this paper recalls Locke's diagnosis of medical art in early manuscripts and his criticism of a theoretical approach to the body. Rather than questioning the effectiveness and the possibility of progress in medicine, Locke criticizes the human tendency to deliver causal and dogmatic explanations of disease. In the second section, we highlight the positive side of Locke's diagnosis of medicine. Referring to his medical manuscripts, correspondence and journal, we show how Locke referred to valuable arts developed by lay people, peasants, the poor, women, North American indigenous peoples, and individuals who had no speculative knowledge of the body. One of the main criteria for defining the usefulness of medical art is the ability to integrate popular practices and beliefs into the construction of medical knowledge and think globally about diseases and health, taking foreign and not-so-foreign popular healing practices into account. In the third and final section, we show how the Baconian legacy in natural history, and more specifically *Sylva Sylvarum* (1626) played a crucial role in Locke's interest in the subjective and non-rational part of the healing process. Natural history is concerned with physical diseases and its accurate description. But it also explores the beliefs, prejudices and biases in the minds of physicians and patients. Finally, we conclude by pointing out the ambivalence of Locke's references to folk practices in medicine and trying to interpret them not only as a way of dominating and assimilating indigenous knowledge, or as a manifestation of curiosity but more profoundly as a way of rethinking the limits of rationality in medicine.

### 1. *Locke's diagnosis of medicine*

Locke's epistemological pessimism as regards progress in medicine is well-documented thanks to the very active research conducted on his medical manuscripts over the last twenty years.<sup>4</sup> In both *Anatomia* (1668) and *De Arte Medica* (1669), Locke seems to adopt Bacon's legacy on the question of the conditions and criteria for progress in medical knowledge. Sixty years after Bacon's statements in his treatise *On the Proficiency and Advancement of Learning*, Locke does not say that medicine is "a science that has been much more professed than advanced" or that he sees no "addition". On the contrary, he emphasizes the "great improvements some parts of medicine have received within these few years", and the "confidence" that "it is yet capable of great additions (...)"<sup>5</sup>

Still, one might be surprised to find him particularly critical of anatomy and the advances that were to be expected from recent discoveries in the field. Writing some forty years after Harvey's discovery of blood circulation (*De Motu Cordis*, 1628) and fifteen years after Francis Glisson's works on the physiology of the liver (*Anatomia Hepatis*, 1654), Locke seems skeptical as to why more should be expected from anatomy as a scholarly discipline than from "remote speculative principles", divorced from "useful knowledge".<sup>6</sup> "Knowing the natural shape, size, situation, & color of any part" is not a sufficient condition for knowledge of diseases and their cure.<sup>7</sup> We should not expect this kind of "subtle anatomy" to diminish the "large catalogue of yet incurable diseases".<sup>8</sup> In this manuscript, Locke disqualifies anatomy as an art able to contribute to medical progress. "If therefore anatomy shows us neither the causes nor cures of most diseases, I think it is not very likely to bring any great advantages for removing the pains and maladies of mankind".<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Here we should here point out that since the second half of the 20th century, K. Dewhurst and F. Duchesneau have pioneered research on Locke's medical empiricism and on the close relationship and collaboration between Locke and Thomas Sydenham. However, it is only since the 2000s that readers have benefited from stabilized versions of Locke's medical manuscripts thanks to C. Walmsley and P. Anstey (even though they often diverge in their interpretations). Locke's medical manuscripts will be published following Peter Anstey's transcriptions in *The Clarendon Edition of the Works of John Locke*. I am referring to the transcriptions established by Anstey and Principe.

<sup>5</sup> Locke, *De Arte Medica*, NA PRO 30/24/47, 50r.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 51r.

<sup>7</sup> Locke, *Anatomia*, NA PRO 30/24/47/2, 32v.

<sup>8</sup> Locke, *De Arte Medica*, 49r.

<sup>9</sup> Locke, *Anatomia*, 32r.

What is the goal of medical art? It is to alleviate suffering and cure diseases, but also to try to increase "length of life with freedom from infirmity and pain".<sup>10</sup> Rather than searching in vain for remote causes of diseases – a stance that leads to endless controversies and disputes – physicians should instead focus on "industry and observation".<sup>11</sup> This position was expressed by Celsus in *De Medicina* at the beginning of the 1st century explaining the disagreement between rationalists and empiricists in medicine: rationalists pretend to gain access to remote causes while empiricists only pretend to observe correlations between phenomena.<sup>12</sup> This is also Sydenham's thesis in his *Observationes Medicae* (1676). Physicians should seek to promote a kind of knowledge that is commensurate with the capacities of their understanding. Rather than pretending to know the essence of disease, they should observe "outward appearance" and describe the "circumstances" of disease, gathering information from the history of disease rather than trying to "solve problems" in a dogmatic way.<sup>13</sup>

Sydenham and Locke question the state of medical knowledge and its progress or stagnation through the prism of its interest and benefit to humanity.<sup>14</sup> Both were convinced that, to achieve this goal, medicine should move closer to the mechanical arts, which, Bacon believed, had made considerable progress. In their view, trying to find ways of healing the body is akin to developing efficient techniques in more prosaic disciplines such as farming and gardening.

In modern times, natural philosophers widely shared this position in debates about medical method. As S. Shapin has well noted, it was closely linked to the "modern assault on school knowledge" and the "criticism of the schools hierarchical forms".<sup>15</sup> Anatomy is associated with speculative medicine, dogmatism, quarrelsomeness and pedantry. On the contrary, the modern physician is someone who can use his knowledge of nature to work on the health of the body and transform its relationship with the environment:

No matter how much the physician's role - though not the surgeon's or apothecary's - was argued to belong to the world of polite and pure learning,

<sup>10</sup> Locke, *De Arte Medica*, 49r.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 52r.

<sup>12</sup> Celsus, *De Medicina*, pp. 17-19.

<sup>13</sup> Sydenham, *Observationes Medicae*, III.2.8, p. 71; III.2.13, 73; III.2.30, p. 77.

<sup>14</sup> Locke, *De Arte Medica*, 49r: "Length of life with freedom from infirmity & pain as much as the constitution of our fraile composure is capable of is of soe great concernment to mankind, that there can scarce be found any greater undertaking then the profession to cure diseases (...). He that shall go about to do this shall noe question deserve the thanks of mankind for soe good an intention (...)"

<sup>15</sup> Shapin, "The Man of Science", p. 184.

the value of the physician's knowledge was nevertheless vouched for by its ability both to explain the vicissitudes of the human body and, where possible to guide those practices that maintained health and alleviated disease.<sup>16</sup>

The “decline of the old medical regime” and of the “learned profession” does not mean that natural philosophers and physicians gave up all rationalist ambitions in medicine.<sup>17</sup> Within the community of natural and experimental philosophers, there was intense debate about a possible complementarity between anatomy's speculative and experimental dimensions. The “compleat physician”<sup>18</sup> is someone who can combine the exercise of the mind or intellect, “Speculation” with the “work of the hands”, and “dissection”.<sup>19</sup>

Locke is well aware of this rationalist ambition in medicine. It was through Sydenham that Locke's writings on medicine became known.<sup>20</sup> But we should not forget that Thomas Willis, Sedleian Professor of Natural Philosophy at Oxford, introduced him to medical knowledge and practice in the 1660's. The rationalist aim of physics is clearly stated in the Preface to *Pharmaceutice Rationalis*. Many discoveries in the field of arts and sciences come from “experiments and observations either by chance or on set purpose”. Nevertheless, physicians should not give up their ambition to understand “the aetiology or the reasons” of diseases and cures.<sup>21</sup> In his *Medical-Philosophical Discourse of Fermentation*, Willis also describes the value and limitations of the three main theoretical hypotheses used at the time to think about the human body and to characterize health and disease. Firstly, the Galenic definition of health, based on the balance between the four elements in nature and the human body humors. Secondly, the atomistic hypothesis grounded in the Epicurean philosophy that “undertakes Mechanically the unfolding of things and accommodates Nature with Working tools, as it were in the hand of an Artificer, and without running to Occult Qualities, Sympathies and other refuges of Ignorance”. Willis distances himself from these first two hypotheses. The Galenic hypothesis does not help us to penetrate “the more secret recesses

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>17</sup> Cook, *The Decline of the Old Medical Regime in Stuart England*, and Siraisi, “Medicine, 1450-1620, and the History of Science”.

<sup>18</sup> Merrett, *The Character of a Compleat Physician or Naturalist*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>19</sup> “In the true notion of Anatomy then two acts are comprehended; a work of the hands, Dissection, and an exercise of the Mind or Intellect, Speculation”. Charleton, *Enquiries into human Nature*, Preface, D2.

<sup>20</sup> Anstey, “The Creation of the English Hippocrates”.

<sup>21</sup> Willis, *Pharmaceutice Rationalis*, The Preface to the reader, *Works*, A2.

of Nature". The mechanical one "rather supposes than demonstrates its principles". It is productive of "Notions extremely subtil" but "remote from the sense" and it does not "sufficiently quadrate with the Phaenomena of Nature when we descend to particulars".<sup>22</sup> The rejection of the "art of physic" as a "speculative science" is clearly expressed in Willis's *Treatise on Feavers* (1659), as well as his call for a reform of medicine that would return to observations and experiments, as recommended by Hippocrates.<sup>23</sup>

The speculative nature of the Galenic and Epicurean hypotheses is the main reason why Willis prefers the third, the "chemical hypothesis". Introduced by Paracelsus and transmitted by Van Helmont in the 17th century,<sup>24</sup> this hypothesis asserts that "all bodies are composed of spirit, sulphur, salt, water and earth". Principles do not mean abstract entities, but "such kind of substances only, into which physical things are resolved, as it were into parts, lastly sensible". These principles help the physician to understand the "intestine motions" inside the body and allow him to approach the dynamic of physiological and pathological processes. The chemical hypothesis is more respectful of nature and its complexity because "it determinates Bodies into sensible parts, and cutts open things as it were to the life".<sup>25</sup>

Locke seems to have acted as an assistant to David Thomas during his time at Oxford, carrying out chemical experiments and collecting drugs, "partly at Boyle's instigations".<sup>26</sup> From the beginning of *Anatomia*, written in 1668 in close collaboration with Thomas Sydenham, he clearly rejects a speculative practice of anatomy and expresses his adoption of a living and practical dissection of the physiological processes, based on the history and observation of correlations between phenomena. However, he does not unreservedly embrace the experimental medicine model that developed after the rise of experimental philosophy.<sup>27</sup> Unlike Bacon he does not believe that natural history and experiments carried out with the aid of instruments are "the basic stuff and raw material of the true and legitimate induction".<sup>28</sup> Locke is cautious about what we might expect from the use of techniques such as dissection or instru-

<sup>22</sup> Willis, *Medical-Philosophical Discourse of Fermentation*, *Works*, ch. I, pp. 1-3.

<sup>23</sup> Willis, *Treatise of Feavers*, The Preface to the reader, *Works*, p. 45.

<sup>24</sup> About the importance of the chemical hypotheses in medicine during the 17th century, see works of W. Debus and A. Clericuzio. About Helmontian medicine in Locke's philosophy, see Anstey, "John Locke and Helmontian medicine".

<sup>25</sup> Willis, *Of Fermentation*, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> Bourne, 1991, p. 132.

<sup>27</sup> On this question see Crignon, *Locke médecin*, pp. 359-60.

<sup>28</sup> Bacon, *A Description of the Intellectual Globe*, p. 105.

ments such as the microscope. The discovery of the human body is not just about the use of instruments or access to the physiological workings and causes of these processes. Such an approach to medicine will not familiarize us with our bodies. What matters here is our ability to understand the intimate and invisible processes by which we can feel, perceive, breathe, nourish ourselves, grow, and then diminish and perish. While we can observe phenomenal correlations, e.g., to describe the effects of the coincidence of somatic and mental phenomena, the knowledge of causes or any demonstrable learning about this mutual influence remains beyond our reach.

What is left for people who still want to understand the functioning of their bodies, i.e., how breathing, digestion and blood circulation work? Locke's answer is well known: empirical practices and observations are more likely to improve our living conditions and our earthly existence:

Experiments and Historical Observations we may have, from which we may draw Advantages of Ease and Health, thereby increasing our stock of Conveniences for this Life: but beyond this, I fear our Talents reach not, nor are our Faculties, as I guess, able to advance.<sup>29</sup>

When people try to “find new inventions” and increase their knowledge of nature, it is only to “procure new and beneficial productions whereby our stock of riches (i.e., things useful for the conveniences of our life) may be increased or better preserved”.<sup>30</sup> But what sort of things should we be observing? And what kind of “natural history” can offer us this kind of practical knowledge that will help us bridge the gap between the speculative approach to the body and intimate access to our sensations and feelings when we suffer from illness and pain?

## 2. *Making the art of medicine useful: observing local healing practices at home and abroad*

What insights can observation and natural history give us about the human body, health, disease and pain? In the following section, we will look at the positive side of Locke's diagnosis of medicine. Locke does not simply reject speculative medical knowledge. He proposes alternative models that are more

<sup>29</sup> Locke, *Essay*, IV.xii.10, p. 645.

<sup>30</sup> Locke, “Understanding” (1677), in *Political Essays*, p. 261.

likely to produce the useful knowledge he demands. Natural history seems to be a good candidate for defining a method that will render the art of medicine useful.<sup>31</sup> A question may be asked here: how can we explain the rejection of speculative medical knowledge since the beginning of the modern era? What changes occurred that made the use of observation and experimentation absolutely necessary?

The expansion of the genre of medical observation and the appeal of experimentation are linked to several factors. The first was "the prevalence of epidemic diseases" (such as smallpox, plague and syphilis). The second was "(...) contemporary controversy over the possibility of 'new' diseases unknown to the ancients". The discovery of the New World plays a crucial role in establishing an analogy between discovering unknown territories and discovering new diseases.<sup>32</sup>

Some natural philosophers, such as Joseph Glanvill, compare the human body to unexplored regions of the world, such as America: "For our own bodies, though we see, and feel, and continually converse with them, yet their constitution, and inward frame is an America, and yet undiscovered Region".<sup>33</sup> Like Glanvill, Locke uses an analogy between the exploration of the body and that of unknown or even hostile territory. Those who "hope to bring men by such a system to the knowledge of the infirmities of bodys, the constitution nature signs changes & history of diseases with the safe & direct way of their cure" should act like explorers seeking to explore a territory overgrown "with briars & thornes". It is necessary "to take a view & draw a map of the country".<sup>34</sup> The survey of a territory cultivated by a geographer or a cartographer has nothing to do with the speculative vision of the anatomist. The goal of this overview is a very practical one: to identify obstacles that might impede exploration and efforts to master nature and to take possession of a place.

What kinds of skills are needed to achieve this? Locke's answer is clear: those who spend their time speculating and following the "maxims of the schools" do not contribute to advancing the "conveniencies of human life". We owe much more to artisans, to "plowmen, tanners, smithes, bakers, dier painters"

<sup>31</sup> About the distinction between speculative and experimental philosophy in natural philosophy and its use in "particulars branches of natural philosophy", such as mechanics, astronomy, chemistry, physiology or medicine, see Anstey, "Experimental versus Speculative Natural Philosophy".

<sup>32</sup> Siraisi, "Medicine, 1450-1620, and the History of Science", p. 504. See also Cook, "Medicine", pp. 416-23.

<sup>33</sup> Glanvill, *Scepisis Scientifica*, p. 31.

<sup>34</sup> Locke, *De Arte Medica*, 52r.

and to those who devote “their time & thoughts about the works of nature”.<sup>35</sup> It is remarkable how Locke approaches the question of the goal of medical knowledge by focusing on what can reasonably be expected from it. The pursuit of health is no different from the pursuit of food, the desire to have “faire gardens” or to cultivate “fruitful fields”. If someone wants to enjoy a good meal, they should go to a chef rather than a nutritionist. If someone wants to grow a beautiful garden, they should go to “a ploughman” or to an “illiterate gardener” rather than a “scholar” or a “speculative philosopher”.<sup>36</sup> The advancement of knowledge is something that could be compared to the process of extracting resources “from the earth”: it is to help people achieve the “advantages of Ease and Health” and to increase their “stock and conveniences for this life”.<sup>37</sup>

Echoing Bacon’s insistence (e.g., in *De Augmentis Scientiarum*)<sup>38</sup> on improving the mechanical arts in order to benefit natural philosophy, Locke seeks to reassess the importance of technical and practical knowledge of nature and natural bodies. The “improvement of useful arts” relies on the “meaner sort of people who (have) weaker parts” and “less opportunities” to devote themselves to knowledge than “the most acute & ingenious part of men” who are only involved “by custom & education” in “idle speculations”.<sup>39</sup> But who are these ordinary people who are deprived of a speculative knowledge of the body whereas they have an understanding of the healing processes?

In the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, Locke argues that we owe to “craftsmen and mechanics” all the arts that are “useful to our lives”.<sup>40</sup> However craftsmen are not the only ones who can claim this kind of “sagacity”. In his manuscripts and correspondence, Locke refers to the secular or “indigenous knowledge”<sup>41</sup> of women,<sup>42</sup> poor men, peasants, and indigenous peoples. These people did not have access to formal education but relied on observation to solve everyday problems and accumulate a kind of empirical knowledge. The uneducated but “sagacious Indian”, the “savage American” appears in Locke’s manuscripts and correspondence as a key figure for this kind of profane and useful knowledge in natural philosophy. In Locke’s *Essay concerning Human*

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 54r.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Locke, *Essay*, IV.xii.10, p. 645.

<sup>38</sup> Bacon, *Of the Advancement of Learning*, pp. 64-65, and *De Augmentis Scientiarum*, pp. 473-75.

<sup>39</sup> Locke, *De Arte medica*, 53r.

<sup>40</sup> Locke, *Essay*, III.x.9, p. 495.

<sup>41</sup> Irving Stonebraker, “The Sagacity of the Indians”.

<sup>42</sup> See for instance Locke, *Anatomia*, NA PRO 30/24/47/2, 38r, where Locke ascribes the knowledge of the efficacy of medicine to “old womens experience” rather than to “learned mens theories”.

*Understanding*, America appears as a place where people could discover many things thanks to their "ignorance in useful arts and want of the greatest part of the conveniences of life".<sup>43</sup>

Locke's medical manuscripts offer notable examples of references made to this profane knowledge, whether acquired abroad or outside the cities, in the English countryside. In *Anatomia* (31v-32r), Locke compares the sagacity and ingenuity of Indians and their ability to cure "many diseases" despite their minimal tools ("they had not so much as knives") and lack of education (they were "illiterate", "unlearned"), with the inability of the "best read Doctors" in Europe despite their extensive knowledge of anatomy. Medical knowledge was vital for travelers and sailors who discovered new diseases as they explored new countries. America is known to have "provided information about several aspects of natural history that were of interest to Locke".<sup>44</sup> Beyond America, Locke was deeply curious about foreign substances and practices from distant lands. In *Some Thoughts Concerning Reading and Study for a Gentleman*, he recommends travel books, such as those by Sandys, Roe, Brown, Gage, Dampier or Thévenot.<sup>45</sup> The discovery of the New World and travel accounts of native practices play a crucial role in Locke's interest in natural history. They provided him with a wealth of information about the natural environment (soils, weather), about flora and fauna, and the medicinal properties of plants and animals.

The manuscripts on Lord Ashley Cooper's history of illness and the healing of a liver abscess<sup>46</sup> illustrate that learned physicians are often powerless in the face of the lived experience of pain and often refer either to indigenous knowledge or to local country practices. In his observations, Locke mentions many substances coming from foreign countries. He was well aware of the use of Peruvian bark (*cinchona calisaya*), an antipyretic remedy derived from the cinchona tree, discovered by a Jesuit missionary called Bernabé Cobo and introduced to Europe around 1665.<sup>47</sup> Sydenham explicitly prescribes it in his advice on the illness of Lord Ashley Cooper, who was suffering from a liver abscess and had sent requests to the best physicians of the day demanding the best way to cure him. Although the efficacy of the remedy was debated (some apothecaries replaced it with the cheaper cherry bark because of its high cost), Sydenham presents it in

<sup>43</sup> Locke, *Essay*, IV.xii.11, p. 639.

<sup>44</sup> Irving, *Natural Science and the Origins of the British Empire*, p. 120.

<sup>45</sup> Locke, "Some Thoughts Concerning Reading and Study for a Gentleman" (1703), in *Political Essays*, p. 353.

<sup>46</sup> Principe and Anstey, "John Locke and the Case of Anthony Ashley Cooper".

<sup>47</sup> Dewhurst, *Dr. Thomas Sydenham (1624-1689). His Life and Original Writings*, p. 41.

his *Observationes Medicae* (1676) as a specific treatment for agues.<sup>48</sup> In his *Dissertation on Hysterical and Hypochondriacal Passions*, he extolled the wonderful effects of remedies derived from nature rather than from art.<sup>49</sup> In a review of Boyle's *Treatise on Specific Remedies* (1686), Locke mentions the use of quinine for fevers, and asserts that experience is the only guide possible to observing symptoms without knowing the causes, but also to noting the efficacy of a remedy without knowing its corpuscular composition:

On guérit très promptement la morsure des Scorpions, en mettant sur la blessure de l'huile de Scorpion [...]. Le kinkina est encore un remède spécifique contre les fièvres, et particulièrement contre la fièvre quarte.<sup>50</sup>

Locke's correspondence offers some notable examples of accidental discoveries as to the medicinal properties of animals or plants. Appointed secretary to the Lord Proprietors of Carolina by Anthony Ashley Cooper, later 1st Earl of Shaftesbury, to further the establishment of colonies in North America, Locke received a great deal of information from members of the army between 1667 and 1675. Sir Peter Colleton, for example, deputy governor of Barbados, sent him several letters discussing "trade between the West Indies and England" and "the medicinal proprieties of American plants."<sup>51</sup> The healing power of certain natural substances were discovered by chance, on a warship or on the battlefield. In his letter, Peter Colleton describes the healing power of the "Tarara Root" when applied to wounds caused by poisoned arrows. This discovery is attributed to "Major Walker", a relative and "Captain in the princes Regiment of Dragoons". It was, however, purely accidental and was attributed to the Major's good powers of observation. An Indian accidentally stabbed himself in the thumb with a poisoned arrow while aboard a ship where no medicine could have cured him. At that moment, the Major by chance discovered the presence of this root in the Indian's belongings. The Major observed how his face brightened when he found this natural substance. He concluded that it had healing properties and applied it to the wound. What is remarkable about this story is the fact that the Westerner guessed at the Indian's lay knowledge simply by

<sup>48</sup> Sydenham, *Observationes Medicae*, I, 5, 33, p. 130.

<sup>49</sup> Sydenham, *Of the Disease called in Women the Hysterical, in Men the Hypochondriacal Passion*, Dr. Sydenham's *Compleat Method of Curing Almost all Diseases*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>50</sup> Locke, *De Specificorum Remediorum cum corpusculari Philosophia Concordia*, p. 266. Boyle, *Of the Reconcilableness of Specifick Medicines to the Corpuscular Philosophy*.

<sup>51</sup> Sir Peter Colleton to John Locke, 12 August 1673, in Locke, *Selected Correspondence*, n° 275, p. 37.

observing his behavior. The letter contrasts the Western physicians' disdain for these native remedies with their success among the people: "I find amongst the people it hath an extreme high reputation, but our Doctors who think it not for their profit that any should have the power of healing but themselves (...)."<sup>52</sup>

Peter Colleton's remarks on the ability of Indians to heal wounds and Locke's comments about the ability of old women to treat diseases that were considered incurable by learned physicians came at the same historical moment, as noted by Sarah Irving Stonebraker in her commentary on William Dampiers' Diaries and Remarks on the "sagacity of Indians".

(...) the intellectual framework of Baconian natural history, with its conception of the usefulness of knowledge, and its resistance to theorizing, provided a space in which it was possible to view indigenous people not merely as objects of knowledge but also as authors of knowledge.<sup>53</sup>

However, Locke was not only dealing with stories about the efficacy of indigenous remedies that he read in travel books. Daniel Carey points out that he also "employed the distinctive method exploited by the Royal Society of compiling inquiries for voyagers bound for distant countries", such as Persia, Virginia, Guiana, Brazil, and the Caribbean. Following Boyle's method of writing a natural history of a country,<sup>54</sup> Locke is attentive to all information transmitted by natives or navigators, travellers, illiterates, craftsmen, and peasants. Indeed, Boyle maintains a proximity to nature that experimental philosophers cannot emulate:

I shall not on this occasion altogether overlook this Circumstance, That an Experimental Philosopher so often increases his Knowledge of Natural things, by what He learns from the Observations and Practises, even of Mean, and perhaps of Illiterate Persons, (such as Shepherds, Plowmen, Smiths, Fowlers, &c.) because they are conversant with the Works of Nature.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., pp. 45-46. William Dampier describes a similar situation in his *New Voyage around the World*. A buccaneer and surgeon who had accompanied Dampier on various expeditions, suffered from sore legs. The application of a vine leaf gave him relief, a remedy handed down through encounters with the Indian population during their expedition to the Isthmus and Darien (modern-day Isthmus of Panama) between North and South America. See Dampier, *A New Voyage*, p. 449, and Irving Stonebraker, "The Sagacity of the Indians", p. 557.

<sup>53</sup> Irving Stonebraker, "The Sagacity of the Indians", p. 544.

<sup>54</sup> Boyle, *General Heads for a Natural History of a Country*. Anstey and Hunter, "Robert Boyle's Designe about Natural History", p. 108.

<sup>55</sup> Boyle, *The Christian Virtuoso*, p. 313. See Parageau, *The Paradoxes of Ignorance*, p. 138.

His *Journal* contains many observations on diseases or poisonous bites unknown in Europe but also on foreign therapeutical practices and unusual cures. He underlined passages about unusual cures in travel books he was reading, such as *Histoire Naturelle et Politique de Siam*, written by Nicolas Gervaise, published in Paris in 1689. In this book, the author describes admirable simple plants ignored by French apothecaries, which grow abundantly without being cultivated and proven to be much more effective than European medicines.<sup>56</sup> The reader will not find any explanation of the causal relationships between the use of a substance and the healing process. Gervaise simply describes how he used some remedies discovered in the Kingdom of Siam.<sup>57</sup> Travelogues generally contented themselves with observing phenomenal correlations, such as “the employment of a porous stone applied to the wound to draw out venom”.<sup>58</sup> Members of the Royal Society collected these observations and then discussed them publicly. In *The History of the Royal Society*, Thomas Birch describes the therapeutic use of this stone.<sup>59</sup> Locke is not interested in analyzing the causal relationship between the use of a substance and recovery. Nevertheless, the very process of collecting an observation in a foreign country, checking that it has been reported by a reliable person, and submitting it to a scientific institution such as the Royal Society where it is publicly discussed, sometimes also asking for supplementary information (i.e., queries), is a very good way of testing the value of the empirical correlation observed. However natural philosophers don’t always have to travel as far to make useful observations. Everyday practices, those observed in the countryside or in households, are also of interest. One of the texts attached to the manuscripts of Lord Ashley Cooper’s case refers to a similar event: an incident involving a poor man, someone who could not consult the learned physicians of the College but whose wound was cut with “a penknife”, the only instrument available in this “poor village”.<sup>60</sup> The letter is addressed to George Talbot (1606-1695), an English physician who may have been involved in Lord Ashley Cooper’s treatment and who prescribed the use of a popular remedy to cure the abscess, powder of sympathy, a remedy that

<sup>56</sup> Gervaise, *Histoire naturelle du Royaume de Siam*, ch. IV, “Des fleurs et des plantes qui croissent dans le royaume de Siam”, pp. 20-21.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. IX, “Des insectes et des reptiles”, p. 39.

<sup>58</sup> For this reference to Gervaise, see Carey, “Locke, travel literature, and the natural history of man”, pp. 330-31.

<sup>59</sup> Birch, *History of the Royal Society*, vol. 2, p. 274, and vol. 4, p. 39, and p. 43.

<sup>60</sup> Thomas Strickland to Sir Gilbert Talbot, 26 October 1668, NA PRO 30/24/47/2, 14r, in Principe and Anstey, “John Locke and the Case of Anthony Ashley Cooper”, p. 489.

was supposed to act at a distance, not directly on the wound, but on the blood flowing from it. This remedy was popularized by Kenelm Digby who described its therapeutic effects in *A Late Discourse... Touching the Cure of Wound by the Powder of Sympathy* (London, 1658).<sup>61</sup> Boyle also acknowledged its efficacy in *Certain Physiological Essays*, writing that he could observe its action "as an Eye-witness".<sup>62</sup> It was also discussed by members of the Royal Society in 1661, thanks to reports by Gilbert Talbot.<sup>63</sup>

In mid-17th-century England, the hierarchy between scientific medicine and folk practices was not always easy to establish. Some natural philosophers were curious about folk practices and recognized their usefulness. However, the majority of writers tended to ignore them, sometimes even disqualifying them as not scientifically based or not rigorously proved. This rejection of folk practices culminated in the mode of writing discussing popular errors in medicine. James Primerose, for example, whose treatise *De vulgi in medicina erroribus*, published in Amsterdam, 1639 and translated into English in 1651, assiduously explored this issue, devoted an entire chapter to women who "meddle with physic and surgery" to distinguish their ignorant nursing practices from those of the learned.<sup>64</sup> It is striking that the skills ascribed to women in this chapter are precisely those that Locke ascribes to craftsmen and mechanics, but also to the lay people who took care of the ordinary aspects of human life, to cooks, to gardeners, to those who strove to work "for the good of mankind": "(...) they know how to make a bed well, boyle pottage, cullices, barley broth, make Almond milke, and they know many remedies for sundry diseases". Moreover, they are "especially busied about surgery", and claim to be able to heal "ulcers and wounds" that require "a skilfull physician". The fact that women take "remedies out of England books, or else make use of such as are communicated to them by others"<sup>65</sup> is, according to Primerose, an excellent reason to be suspicious of their practice.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Digby, *A Late Discourse* [...] *Touching the Cure of Wounds by the Powder of Sympathy*. The use of the powder of sympathy is mentioned in Locke's observations on the Case of Lord Ashley, see *Obs.* 68, NA PRO 30/24/47/2, 25v, in Principe and Anstey, "John Locke and the Case of Anthony Ashley Cooper", p. 428.

<sup>62</sup> Boyle, *Certain Physiological Essays*, pp. 73-74.

<sup>63</sup> Birch, *History of the Royal Society*, vol. 1, p. 25, and p. 31.

<sup>64</sup> Primerose, *Popular Errors*, lib. I, ch. v, pp. 19-21.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>66</sup> About the changing relations between learned knowledge and folk practices, see Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. The term "folk" medicine is probably a 18th century phenomenon. The rejection of popular knowledge culminates during the 17th with the publication in 1646 of Thomas Brown, *Pseudodoxa Epidemica*.

Conversely, non-Western peoples, women, peasants and the poor, who did not have access to the remedies of mainstream medicine, were often able to develop alternative healing methods. Although Primerose rejects their practice, his writings show that women could heal ulcers with foreign remedies, such as exotic plants. People's expectations of medicine varied depending on whether they saw it as a demonstration-based science limited to a particular professional group (white men living in Europe), or as a widespread method of treatment throughout the world, passed on from country to country and built up collectively.

Locke's writings on medicine clearly reflect this ambivalent relationship between learned and popular medicine. Although he sometimes refers to these practices to highlight the inadequacies and flaws of learned European medicine, he also refers to the tradition of popular errors in medicine, pointing to the importance of writers such as Laurent Joubert (1529-1583), professor of Medicine at Montpellier, and Scipione Mercurio (1540-1615), an Italian physician who collected and described the errors "made by women and ordinary doctors":

The eminent scholars Joubert (writing in French) and Scipio Mercurius in his book on Obstetrics and on Popular Errors have included almost all the points about childbirth in which mistakes are usually made both by women and ordinary doctors.<sup>67</sup>

### 3. *Baconian natural history as a case example to observe popular ways of thinking about cures and healing*

Let us summarize Locke's references to folk and popular practices in medicine, whether practiced in foreign and remote countries or locally: in the countryside or households. These practices were performed by individuals such as peasants, women and individuals commonly referred to as "empirics" or even "quacks". The idea of learning from indigenous knowledge is not unique to Locke. Consider Robert Boyle's remarks in his treatise on the *Usefulness of Experimental Naturall Philosophy* (1663), the second part being devoted to medical knowledge:

<sup>67</sup> Locke, *Journals* (1675-1679), in Dewhurst, *John Locke (1632-1704). Physician and Philosopher*, p. 136. Laurent Joubert wrote *Erreurs populaires touchant la médecine et le régime de santé*, Rouen, Raphaël Du Petit Val, 1601. Scipio Mercurio is the author of *De Gli Errori Popolari d'Italia*, Venice, 1603.

Nor should we onely expect some improvements to the Therapeutical part of Physick, from the Writings of so ingenious People as the Chineses; but probably the knowledge of Physitians might be not inconsiderably increased, if Men were a little more curious to take notice of the Observations and Experiments, suggested partly by the Practice of Midwives, Barbers, old Women, Empiricks, and the rest of that illiterate crue, that presume to meddle with Physick among our selves; and partly by the Indians and other barbarous Nations, without excepting the People of such part of Europe it self, where the generality of Men is so illiterate and poor, as to live without Physitians.<sup>68</sup>

Earlier, Boyle described Chinese doctors as “much inferior, in point of Learning to ours”. This is also true for midwives, barbers and elderly women. However, the text suggests that they possess other skills that could potentially improve the practice of physicians, particularly in the field of therapy. Hence, two questions arise. The first is, how should we understand this paradox? What tradition are Boyle and Locke following when they refer to locally acquired therapeutical practices through chance and observation? Secondly, does Locke's writing contain any original ideas regarding the ability of peasants or indigenous peoples to cure diseases unmanageable by European doctors?

This section aims to demonstrate that Locke adheres to Baconian ideas when employing the natural history method to observe common medical practices and beliefs. Locke does not limit himself to stating that the knowledge held by ordinary people is superior to the speculative knowledge held by learned physicians, which is a trivial assertion. He employs Baconian natural history to observe the process which allows lay people to discover therapeutics by chance and cure diseases that elude learned physicians. In addition, he employs Bacon's definition of natural history as a form of magic to draw attention to the subjective aspects of the healing process, including beliefs, prejudices and, at times, superstitions.

The influence of the Baconian method of writing natural histories on Locke's approach to natural philosophy has been documented by Peter Anstey.<sup>69</sup> In *The Politics of Locke's Philosophy*, Neal Woods highlighted the fact that Baconianism influenced many natural philosophers practicing medicine or writing about medicine such as Bathurst, Willis, Boyle, Lower and Sydenham.<sup>70</sup> Bacon initiated a comprehensive project on writing natural histories, which are collections of facts and observations about distinct objects or qualities, including

<sup>68</sup> Boyle, *Usefulness of Natural Philosophy*, II, I, ch. X, p. 426.

<sup>69</sup> Anstey, “Locke, Bacon and Natural History”.

<sup>70</sup> Woods, *The Politics of Locke's Philosophy*, pp. 65-83.

but not limited to, that of atmospheric phenomena such as air and winds, and biological phenomena such as life and death, and of physical properties describing density and rarity. Additionally, the project also encompassed the history of man, anatomical history, the history of body parts, the history of mental faculties, the history of sleep, the history of human reproduction and nutrition etc.<sup>71</sup>

Locke's medical manuscripts, particularly *De Arte Medica* (1669), reasserted Bacon's diagnosis in *The Advancement of Learning* (1605) regarding the lack of progress in the field of physic and about the need of delivering human life from infirmities and pain:

Length of life with freedom from infirmity & pain as much as the constitution of our fraile composure is capable of is of soe great concernment to mankind, that there can scarce be found any greater undertaking then the profession to cure diseases.<sup>72</sup>

Locke's thinking about the relationship between learned and popular knowledge was strongly influenced by another Baconian text. While studying medicine and beginning to write on the subject at Oxford in the mid-1660s, Locke was reading Bacon's *Sylva sylvarum* (published posthumously in 1626).<sup>73</sup> This text belongs to the natural history genre and is composed of ten books, each containing a hundred observations or experiments. In his commonplace books, Locke made reference to Bacon. He owned a copy of *Sylva sylvarum* in his library.<sup>74</sup> During the 17th century, *Sylva* was widely known and read. The book was published with the *New Atlantis*, Bacon's scientific utopia in which he narrated a European expedition's discovery of an unknown island. In this text, the situation between Europeans and the indigenous population is reversed. Bacon portrays Europeans as ignorant, powerless and vulnerable, while the inhabitants of the *New Atlantis* seem to possess extensive knowledge of occidental customs and habits. This text describes the island's natural resources, including water, minerals, plants and animals. Additionally, it highlights the ingenious experiments that the inhabitants conceived to improve their living conditions and eradicate physical pain as well as diseases. This illustrates the significance of travel literature during the 17th century in stimulating discus-

<sup>71</sup> Bacon, *Catalogue of Particular Histories, Parasceve*, in OFB XI, pp. 474-85.

<sup>72</sup> Locke, *De Arte Medica*, 49. See Crignon, *Locke médecin*, p. 408.

<sup>73</sup> Anstey, *John Locke Critical Assessments*, p. 305.

<sup>74</sup> BL MS Locke f. 19, fols 169 and 264; LL, p. 78.

sions about making practical discoveries. Many of the observations and experiments alluded to in the *New Atlantis* are drawn from *Sylva*. In *Sylva* but also in his *History of Life and Death* (*Historia Vitae et Mortis*, 1623) Bacon makes observations and conducts experiments on nutrition, life, death and prolongation of life. The sixth century of *Sylva sylvarum* describes the expected medical benefits of collecting plants from foreign lands and transplanting them from the Indies to Europe.<sup>75</sup> One of Bacon's legacies is his advocacy of travel in order to gather information from other regions of the world so as to enhance our understanding of human health and advance the healing process:

We have dispensaries, or shops of medicine. Wherein you may easily think, if we have such variety of plants and living creatures more than you have in Europe (for we know you have), the simples, drugs, and ingredients of medicines, must likewise be in so much the greater variety.<sup>76</sup>

Robert Boyle clearly expresses this Baconian agenda in natural history in *Certain Physiological Essays*, a text published in 1663 when Locke was working closely with him and collecting data on air, blood and respiration.<sup>77</sup> Boyle explicitly presents his text as a continuation of Bacon's *Sylva*:

(...) I must inform you that many of the Particulars which we are now considering, were in my first Design collected in order to Continuation of the Lord Verulam's *Sylva Sylvarum*, or Natural History.<sup>78</sup>

Two aspects of *Sylva* are particularly noteworthy. Firstly, Bacon does not content himself with describing natural phenomena, such as those belonging to the "history of nature free", the "history of arts" and the "history of strange and irregular phenomena".<sup>79</sup> He is also interested in describing the dispositions that lead the observer to acquire useful knowledge or, on the contrary, to fail in the very process of experimentation. In this posthumous treatise, he develops the idea of "experiential literacy" (*experientia literata*), a kind of discovery that involves recourse to mediations and is deployed in various ways, giving rise to descriptions and detailed observations. "Experiential literacy" (as opposed to

<sup>75</sup> Bacon, *Sylva sylvarum*, "Experiments in Consort touching Forraine Plants", 574, 575, 576, pp. 415-16.

<sup>76</sup> Serjeantson, "Natural knowledge in the *New Atlantis*", p. 91, and Bacon, *New Atlantis*, p. 483.

<sup>77</sup> Anstey, "Locke, Bacon and Natural History".

<sup>78</sup> Boyle, *Certain Physiological Essays*, A Proemial Essay, p. 17.

<sup>79</sup> Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, p. 62.

“experiential illiteracy”) integrates failure and error into the very process of experimentation, whether it is with sounds and acoustics, chemical, meteorological or botanic experiments.<sup>80</sup> Great discoveries depend more “on luck and chance rather than on knowledge of causes”,<sup>81</sup> and “the example of medicine is clear evidence of this fact”.<sup>82</sup> In *The Wisdom of the Ancients* (1609), Bacon describes the process of “*experientia literata*”, a process of accidental discovery that includes error and failure in the very process of experimentation: “the discovery of things useful to life and the furniture of life”, such as agriculture (or medicine), is not to be expected from “abstract philosophies”, but from the accidental and “sagacious experience” of Pan, who “by a kind of accident, and as it were while engaged in hunting, stumble upon such discoveries”.<sup>83</sup> Hunting, gardening, and traveling are ways of observing and experimenting that can help us understand processes better than logic or reasoning.

Secondly, in *Sylva*, Bacon makes a remarkable claim: *Sylva* is “so to speak” not just natural history, but “a high kind of natural magic”: “For it is not a description of nature only, but a breaking of nature into great and strange works”.<sup>84</sup> In his introduction to the book, William Rawley described the “purpose of the *New Atlantis* as ‘the producing of great and marvellous works for the benefit of men’”.<sup>85</sup> To characterize natural history as natural magic does not mean that natural history is concerned with supernatural phenomena. Bacon is merely referring to the Renaissance meaning of magic when writers such as Della Porta, for example, explained that magicians were concerned with producing wonderful and inexplicable effects.<sup>86</sup> According to Bacon, magic and mechanics are two ways of manipulating matter and two aspects of operative philosophy. Bacon defines magic as a kind of learning that “applies the knowledge of hidden forms to the production of wonderful operations, and by uniting (...) actives with passives, displays the wonderful works of nature”.<sup>87</sup>

Medical practice and knowledge offer remarkable examples of the active dimension of knowledge of nature. In the first century of *Sylva*, Bacon describes

<sup>80</sup> Parageau and Crignon, “Bacon and the Forms of Experimentation: A Reappraisal”, pp. 11-12.

<sup>81</sup> Bacon, *De Augmentis Scientiarum*, V, II, p. 505. On *experientia literata* as a kind of sagacity, see Bacon, *Of the Advancement of Learning*, p. 115.

<sup>82</sup> Giglioni, “Learning to Read Nature: Francis Bacon’s Notion of Experiential Literacy”, p. 420.

<sup>83</sup> Bacon, *De Sapientia Veterum*, “Pan”, p. 831.

<sup>84</sup> Bacon, *Sylva sylvarum*, 93, p. 378.

<sup>85</sup> Rawley, “To the Reader”, p. 84.

<sup>86</sup> Porta, *Magia Naturalis* (1558). See Rusu, *From Natural History to Natural Magic. Francis Bacon’s Sylva sylvarum*.

<sup>87</sup> Bacon, *De Augmentis Scientiarum*, p. 474.

several observations and experiments on the process of purging. These observations reveal what was considered hidden or secret in the human body or mind, especially that which belongs to the transmission of thoughts or the work of imagination. The last century of *Sylva* is devoted to the question of the power of imagination. This power could act on the body of the person who imagines, it could act on natural substances, such as plants, wood, stones, metals, and finally on "the spirits of men and living creatures" (exp. 945). Understanding the power of imagination in the human mind is crucial when describing a process such as healing and what defies causal explanation.

In experiment 997, Bacon tells us the story of the wife of the English Ambassador in Paris and relates how she cured him of warts he had since childhood, by using a "Peece of Lard" with which the warts were rubbed and then exposed to the sun "upon a Poast of her Chamber Window, which was to the South".<sup>88</sup> This experiment illustrates the active effects of "sympathy" between "Individuals that have been Entire, or have Touched". The act of imagining the corruption of a piece of external matter is a powerful aid to the patient's mind in regard to the corruption of warts. Approaching the healing process as a magical operation and experimenting with these operations is a way of revealing what has hitherto been considered hidden and unbelievable. This means that understanding the healing process involves observing mental processes, experimenting with the powerful effects of the imagination and also including the beliefs and even prejudices of the caregiver and care recipient in the process of experimentation.

These two aspects of the Baconian legacy in the field of natural history applied to medicine might help us approach the positive significance of the reference to indigenous practices in Locke's writings on medicine. First, it allows Locke to acknowledge the value of experience and chance in the process of acquiring knowledge. If mechanics, illiterates, peasants, women, and natives cannot rely on either habit or education to acquire useful knowledge of nature, what means or tools are available to them? What benefits can we expect from this apparently inadequate knowledge that we ascribe to those "branded with the disgraceful name of mechanics".<sup>89</sup> Locke's response in *De Arte Medica* (1669) can be considered Baconian. He argues that "chance" and "well-designed experiments" are more likely to lead to "happy discoveries"<sup>90</sup> than philosophical speculations. According to this manuscript, ignorant and uneducated

<sup>88</sup> Bacon, *Sylva sylvarum*, 997, pp. 669-70.

<sup>89</sup> Locke, *De Arte Medica*, 54r.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 53r.

people possess special abilities like “innocence, honesty, common sense, inventiveness”<sup>91</sup> which allow them to make useful and unexpected discoveries. They can discover by chance things that educated people and scholars are unable to find or neglect to consider, which they can then share with learned physicians.

Secondly, the use of “*experientia literata*” as a distinct tool in the natural history methodology is an effective way of paying attention to what we now perceive and disqualify as the subjective experience of the observer. The use of natural history in medicine enables two things. Firstly, to observe the prejudices and methodological biases in the minds of physicians. Secondly, to include popular beliefs and representations in the minds of patients.

One should observe the physician’s disposition and state of mind when, for example, they propose a new treatment. One should also pay attention to the patient’s mood and ability to accept or tolerate a treatment. This acceptance depends on the habits, customs, prejudices or opinions they have been taught since childhood. Incorporating prejudices and habits into medical knowledge is a prerequisite for it to be useful. Usefulness should not be limited to the efficacy of remedies proven by experiments. It also incorporates the beliefs about cures passed on from one era and population to another.

Let us begin with the first aspect (observing the caregiver’s mind). In the manuscripts and letters on Lord Ashley Cooper’s disease, Locke points out that the usefulness of a cure or treatment does not depend on the certainty of medical knowledge but rather on moral dispositions: “diligence” and “faithfulness” in observing and telling the story of a particular disease (Locke to De Briolay, 59r), the desire to act for the good of patients and to save their lives rather than to preserve one’s reputation. It is also closely linked to practical skills: “Nicely to observe the history of diseases in all their changes and circumstances, is a work of time, accurateness, attention and judgement (...)”<sup>92</sup> A good physician does not claim to provide a certain knowledge about the human body and its functions. They can only offer “opinions”, which may be “mistakes”.<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, they must concentrate on their task and try to improve the situation and condition of the patients who have entrusted their lives to them, even if they cannot define with certainty what would be the most beneficial treatment for the individual concerned. The difficulties in giving advice about bodies and the doubts that may arise when deciding on

<sup>91</sup> Parageau, “Colomb ignorant trouva le nouveau monde”, p. 46.

<sup>92</sup> Locke to Dr. Thomas Molyneux, 20 January 1693, in Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 4, p. 629.

<sup>93</sup> Locke to Dr. Denis Grenville, 13/23 March 1678, in Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, p. 558.

treatments should not prevent the physician from acting or making decisions in situations of uncertainty. Nevertheless, we should not neglect that some caregivers behave like quacks, trying to manipulate or to mystify patients and taking advantage of their illness. Locke was well aware that some practitioners often used the superstitious dimension of some remedies to mystify patients and make them believe in the efficacy of a cure. Referring to the use of vomiting to cure epilepsy, he mentions the success of a certain "Dr. Godfrey" and immediately points out that quacks are always ready to exploit them:<sup>94</sup>

take the stick of elder that grows on a sallow. Cut it into short pieces, and soe threaded and hung to the pit of the stomach. This after vomiting Dr. Godfrey has found succeed in epilepsies of grown people as well as infants and vertigos too. This Hartman relates but he addes some superstition to it [in order to mistify].<sup>95</sup>

Secondly, we must observe the patient's state of mind, their desires, passions, interests, prejudices received since their childhood.<sup>96</sup> Locke's attitude to folk medicine is often critical or questioning. Nevertheless, he pays attention to the patient's condition: do they feel better? Are they comfortable after treatment? He usually observes a practice, reports it, and then questions it. As in the case of Lady Northumberland, who suffers from trigeminal neuralgia, with toothache pain and severe headaches:

This morning my Lady Northumberland had, till she eat at dinner, perfect ease in her teeth without any paine, itching or any the least alterity which she had not had (for soe long an interval as this which was of 4 or 5 howers) these neare 3 months last. Q. Whether this be to be imputed to her sweating a little gently this morning upon the use of Godard's drops or from any alteration they have made in her bloud or succus nervosus, she having now taken them these 3 nights last past in this methode.<sup>97</sup>

Locke here is alluding to a popular pharmaceutical remedy (also called *Guttae Anglicanae* or *Guttae Goddardiana*) which, according to different interpretations, was invented either by Jonathan Goddard (1617-1675), physician to

<sup>94</sup> Locke, *Journals*, Fri. Nov. 25, in Dewhurst, *John Locke (1632-1704), Physician and Philosopher*, p. 147.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. Added in shorthand.

<sup>96</sup> Beliefs, prejudices and common representations in the field of physic are subjects Locke deals with in his *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, § 1-30.

<sup>97</sup> Locke, *Journals* (1675-1679), in Dewhurst, *John Locke (1632-1704), Physician and Philosopher*, p. 102. Dewhurst, "A Symposium on Trigeminal Neuralgia", pp. 21-36.

Oliver Cromwell, Professor of Physic at Oxford, or by Dr. William Goddard (dates unknown) educated in Padua and Fellow of the College of Physicians.<sup>98</sup> It was a very popular medicine used for a wide range of purposes: for fainting, apoplexy, or to cure bladder stones. It was made from “five pounds of human skull (of a person hanged or dead of some violent death), two pounds of dried vipers, two pounds of hartshorn, and two of ivory (...) minced, distilled, shaken, filtered and redistilled”.<sup>99</sup>

It should be noted that Locke neither approves nor disapproves of the use of this remedy. Observing an improvement in the patient’s condition (she felt better), he proposed two hypotheses and two possible effects of its methodological use. Even if this remedy is more akin to a magical charm handed down by tradition than to a medicine whose composition would have been based on scientific experiments, the correlation between its use and an improvement in the patient appears to be a matter of fact. The operative dimension of treatment, its effects on the mental and physical condition of the patient, even in situations where causes remain unknown and where remedies seem more akin to superstitious practices than to scientifically tested cures, should be considered as part of the art of medicine.

Locke also offers to put these beliefs, prejudices or mystifications to the test. Following Bacon in *Sylva*, he observes popular practices, describes them and points out their magical dimension. At the same time, he experimented with them, applying them to Europeans, or even to his own relatives, to see if they still worked when the magical dimension was suppressed:

It often happens to them (i.e., in the Maldives) that, having been long in the sun of the height of the day, after sunset they cannot see a speck, whatsoever fire or light is brought near them (...) they feel no other ill effect. This is called the Rosnan disease. To cure it they cook the liver of a cock, write on it words and charms, and swallow it at the moment of sunset. My companion and I suffered greatly from this for some time, but having learned the above prescription we took the cock’s liver and omitted the charms, to see if that would suffice, and found that we were cured just the same. Pyrrard, 486 pp. 201.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>98</sup> Dewhurst, *John Locke (1632-1704), Physician and Philosopher*, p. 102, n. 1, and Wootton, *Chronicles of Pharmacy*, vol. II, p. 179.

<sup>99</sup> Goddard, “Goddard’s Drops: a Paradox of the C17th”.

<sup>100</sup> Locke, *Journal (1675-1679)*, in Dewhurst, *John Locke (1632-1704), Physician and Philosopher*, p. 121. F. Pyrrard (1578-1621) was a French navigator and explorer. He is the author of *Voyage de François Pyrrard de Laval contenant sa navigation aux indes orientales, Maldives, Moluques, et au Brésil*, Paris, Thiboust, 1619 (1st ed. 1611).

There remains, of course, one important difference between Locke's use of natural history and the Baconian method of interpreting nature. Bacon was not content with observing, describing and performing experiments. He also viewed natural history as a first step leading to induction, and as a way of gaining access to demonstrative knowledge (and discovering axioms in nature).<sup>101</sup> According to Locke, we can neither access real essences nor discover remote causes of disease. We must therefore rely on observation, experiment and the "testimony of experienced witnesses".<sup>102</sup> As he writes in book IV of the *Essay*, this is particularly true when it comes to the knowledge of bodies:

We are able, I imagine, to reach very little general Knowledge concerning the Species of Bodies, and their several Properties. Experiments and Historical Observations we may have, from which we may draw Advantages of Ease and Health, and thereby increase our stock of Conveniences for this Life.<sup>103</sup>

Nevertheless, Locke uses this first step to include in medical knowledge elements that tend to remain invisible or that are not considered relevant: everything related to chance discovery and what Georges Canguilhem called "bottom-up rationality".<sup>104</sup> Locke is well aware of the limits of rationality in medicine and of the various levels of rationality: starting from what people consider to be rational or reasonable could help to improve medical knowledge. He uses this first step of Baconian natural history to defend the idea that healing is not only a "scientific concept" but also, and perhaps above all, a "popular notion".<sup>105</sup> We cannot explain the operations that improve or heal bodies and minds. Nevertheless if we want medicine to produce real effects, to work on bodies and minds, and to provide ease and comfort, we should probably abandon the ambition of providing authoritative explanations of diseases (especially causal explanations) and start with an observation of popular representations of disease and the healing process.

<sup>101</sup> Bacon, *De Augmentis scientiarum*, V, ii.

<sup>102</sup> Anstey, "Locke, Bacon and Natural history", p. 39.

<sup>103</sup> Locke, *Essay*, IV.xii.10, p. 643.

<sup>104</sup> On this question, see Canguilhem, "Puissance et limites de la rationalité en médecine", p. 401.

<sup>105</sup> Canguilhem, "La santé concept vulgaire et question philosophique", p. 52: "(...) il n'y a pas de science de la santé. Admettons-le pour l'instant. Santé n'est pas un concept scientifique, c'est un concept vulgaire. Ce qui ne veut pas dire trivial, mais simplement commun, à la portée de tous".

#### 4. Conclusion

How should we interpret the frequent references to “indigenous knowledge” or local therapeutical practices in Locke’s writings? As we have seen, they might come either from travel books and observations made in remote countries or from folk practices and traditions delivered by peasants, women, quacks and illiterate persons. Firstly, it is important to note the very comprehensive meaning of ‘indigenous knowledge’. We can define it as knowledge that is “contingent, historically situated, particular to the specifics of locality, group dynamics, place and time”.<sup>106</sup> It includes non-European knowledge systems and idiosyncratic forms of belief or knowledge shared by certain people in a particular place or at a specific time. In this paper, we have defended the idea that Baconian natural history allowed natural philosophers such as Locke to pay attention to alternative health approaches and to test the efficacy attributed to certain folk remedies. It is part of the Baconian legacy in the field of natural history to value knowledge acquired empirically, thanks to sagacity, a quality that leads to the discovery of things by chance.

The reasons given for valuing indigenous knowledge (acquired through experience and chance) are ambivalent. It is characteristic of “early modern navigators and colonists” to emphasize “the indigenous population’s knowledge of nature – of its operations and creatures – which they described as empirical knowledge of sagacity”.<sup>107</sup> Yet they are symptomatic of Locke’s view concerning the value of ignorance. As Parageau points out, Locke is “particularly attentive to the social and cultural dimensions of knowledge and ignorance” and is convinced that there is a great diversity of human understanding.<sup>108</sup>

Paying attention to the ignorance of old women who practice medicine or to the sagacity of Indians is a way of recognizing the diversity of people’s understandings according to their family, social, political and cultural contexts. While Indians are ignorant of so-called learned medicine, Europeans are themselves ignorant of the therapeutic use of many plants and natural substances. According to Locke, ignorance should not be seen as a curse sent by God to punish people for their sins; it is inherent in human nature.<sup>109</sup> Nevertheless,

<sup>106</sup> Agrawal, “On Power and Indigenous Knowledge”, p. 177.

<sup>107</sup> Parageau, *The Paradoxes of Ignorance*, p. 139. See Scott Parrish, *American Curiosity*, ch. 6, “Indian Sagacity”, and Irving Stonebraker, “The Sagacity of the Indians”.

<sup>108</sup> Locke, *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, p. 29.

<sup>109</sup> Parageau, *The Paradoxes of Ignorance*, pp. 145-58.

man can overcome ignorance. Natural history, observation, and experimentation are good ways to improve our faculties and in our attempts to get closer to nature. It is also an excellent way to approach diversity of understanding and knowledge in the world. Applied to medicine, this means that it will help physicians to become more aware of the variety of diseases in the world and the appearance of new ones. It will also enable them to use foreign remedies (from plants, herbs, animal substances etc.) to cure diseases and relieve pain. The introduction of the natural history method into medicine meant arousing the curiosity of practitioners about common medical practices handed down by laymen, amateurs, travelers, explorers or rank soldiers. In this way, a link can be established between the "ways of knowing" nature and the "ways of believing" in nature, without excluding popular beliefs from medical knowledge.<sup>110</sup> The use of this diversity in medical practice could be very promising, especially for those who do not have access to trained physicians.

However, recognizing the value of indigenous knowledge through the use of natural history remains ambivalent. Firstly, because, as Jonathan Pickstone points out, natural history is a way of knowing but also a way of possessing nature: "In this culture of possession, natural history was necessarily a matter for the craftsmen and traders who supplied it, but also for the surgeons, apothecaries and physicians (...)."<sup>111</sup> The promotion of mechanical arts and crafts is also aimed at taking possession of the human body, mastering physiological functions, life span, etc. According to Boyle, experimental natural philosophy aims to restore "the empire of men over inferior creatures" and more broadly over nature, "whereas physick only enables man to master his own body".<sup>112</sup> For all these reasons, we must admit that European physicians and philosophers tended to regard the information, remedies and practices they observed in their travels and explorations of new lands merely as raw materials or rudimentary knowledge inferior to their own, in order to reassess their domination over foreign peoples and minds. Secondly, we should not forget that Locke borrowed heavily from travel books full of idealized representations of the noble savage. He also adopted the "underlying dichotomies of these travelogues between the darkness of pagan savagism and the

<sup>110</sup> Pickstone, *Ways of Knowing*, pp. 76-77.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>112</sup> Boyle, *Usefulness of Natural Philosophy*, p. 407, and Irving, *Natural Science and the Origins of the British Empire*, p. 77.

lightness of Christian civility”.<sup>113</sup> The opposition between the savage Indians and the civilized Europeans is ambiguous, even if it tends to emphasize unexpected abilities of the former. Locke was practically involved in the colonial administration. Curiosity and respect for indigenous practices is also a way of assimilating them culturally.<sup>114</sup>

Nevertheless, we agree with S. Irving-Stonebraker here when she emphasizes the “complexity of English attitudes towards indigenous culture and knowledge”. Correspondence extracts and references to foreign practices in Locke’s manuscripts show a genuine curiosity about alternative healing methods, especially where speculative and learned medicine appeared powerless. The Baconian legacy in the field of natural history, and more specifically the influence of *Sylva Sylvarum*, allowed Locke to observe and describe non-rational dimensions of healing, whether from the point of view of the healer or the patient. Again following Bacon, he does not observe popular practices in order to entertain his readers: “fabulous experiments and secrets, frivolous impostures” should not be collected only “for pleasure and strangeness”.<sup>115</sup> Strange phenomena and popular practices are also “sound matter for the intellect”, with the help of which “we may build philosophy and the sciences” and distinguish them from “popular errors and fables”. Locke’s commitment to Baconian natural history led him to characterize the proper focus of the physicians as therapeutics, but also to scrutinize and test a variety of cures and their effects on patients, including popular and foreign ones. Not excluding popular cures is perhaps not just a matter of curiosity, but of thinking about the limits of rationality in medicine.

### *Abbreviations*

- LL: Harrison, John, and Laslett, Peter, *The Library of John Locke*, 2nd ed., Clarendon Press, Oxford 1971.
- OFB XI: Bacon, Francis, *The Instauratio Magna Part II: Novum organum and Associated Texts, The Oxford Francis Bacon*, vol. XI, eds. Graham Rees and Maria Wakely, Clarendon Press, Oxford 2004.

<sup>113</sup> Arneil, *John Locke and America*, p. 33.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21-44.

<sup>115</sup> Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, p. 63.

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# Medical Metaphors in Locke's Account of Moral Depravity: A Charitable Interpretation

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*Abstract:* This paper offers a charitable interpretation of Locke's use of medical metaphors in his moral description of economic and social issues – poverty, idleness, madness, and religious enthusiasm – which he frames in terms of moral depravity (or corruption of manners). First, I address and compare his perspectives as a physician and as a moral philosopher, highlighting methodological disparities amounting to a tension between scepticism in medical hypotheses and dogmatism in deductive moral science (Section 1). Second, I introduce Locke's description, explanation of, and solution to moral depravity, which is presented as a social 'disease'. His medical vocabulary indicates that he subscribes to the idea that society is a 'body politic', and that moral depravity is a moral issue that requires a fourfold treatment: religious, rational, pedagogical, and political (Section 2). Third, I discuss three tensions in Locke's moral approach on the corruption of manners and suggest to reframe this phenomenon as a social issue (Section 3). Finally, I discuss and exclude two possible interpretations of the purpose of medical metaphors in Locke's moral philosophy and present a third and more probable one (Section 4). I conclude that Locke's use of medical metaphors is constitutive of his views on society and reflect his struggle at providing a consistent social theory.

*Keywords:* John Locke, medical metaphors, moral philosophy, depravity, social theory

## *Introduction*

In *Some Thoughts concerning Education*, Locke writes that children should be kept from the “the ill Examples, which they meet with amongst the meaner Servants [...] For the contagion of these ill precedents, both in Civility and Vertue, horribly infects Children, as often as they come within reach of it”.<sup>1</sup> In

<sup>1</sup> Locke, *Education*, § 66, p. 40.

*Some Thoughts on the Conduct of the Understanding*, he writes that “Association of Ideas [...] is a Disease of the Mind as hard to be cur’d as any”.<sup>2</sup> And in the *Second Treatise* he writes that “many [*Penalties*] tend to the preservation of the whole [of Society], by cutting off those Parts, and those only, which are so corrupt, that they threaten the sound and healthy, without which no severity is lawful”.<sup>3</sup> The main question here is: what is the meaning and import of Locke’s use of medical metaphors in his epistemological, pedagogical, moral, and political writings? To put it differently: Are Locke’s medical vocabulary and analogies innocent remains of a tradition, or do they indicate underlying connections between his interests in various dimensions of human life? Do they reflect a habitual way of thinking crafted during Locke’s significant medical training, or do they aim at providing a genuine theoretical apparatus to address sociopolitical issues?

Locke expressed his interest in epidemiology and “social medicine”,<sup>4</sup> but he did not thematize his medical gaze on moral and political issues and there is no reason why he should have done so. This specific topic is not extensively discussed in Locke scholarship, but we can mention the works of Constantine George Caffentzis and John Baltes.<sup>5</sup> The metaphor of society as a living body has roots in ancient philosophy and medicine, and for more than a century before Locke, it was common for medical and political discourses to cross paths when it came to the question of sin and corruption in society.<sup>6</sup> Arguably, Locke used the metaphor to elaborate strategies against the “money madness” in England<sup>7</sup> and to promote the culture of industry during the economic crisis.<sup>8</sup> Nineteenth-century “social physicists” and early sociologists compared society to an organism before this analogy was deeply challenged by the Marxist view, according to which society is a hierarchical structure characterized by class conflict. However, the idea of a “body politic” that needs “prevention” and “cure” against social grievances is still in fashion today, not without problematic moralizing connotations.<sup>9</sup> Given the puzzling nature of medical metaphors in moral discourses to present-day readers, their purpose, in Locke’s account of moral depravity, deserves to be addressed.

<sup>2</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, § 41, p. 218.

<sup>3</sup> T2, ch. XV, § 171, p. 382.

<sup>4</sup> Dewhurst, *John Locke (1632-1704), Physician and Philosopher*, pp. 164, 301.

<sup>5</sup> Caffentzis, “Medical Metaphors and Monetary Strategies”; Baltes, *The Empire of Habit*.

<sup>6</sup> Harley, “Medical Metaphors in English Moral Theology, 1560-1660”, pp. 396-435, 405-7.

<sup>7</sup> Caffentzis, “Medical Metaphors and Monetary Strategies”.

<sup>8</sup> Baltes, *The Empire of Habit*.

<sup>9</sup> Rodehau-Noack, “War as Disease: Biomedical Metaphors in Prevention Discourse”.

The focus of this paper differs from the standard topics usually discussed in Locke scholarship. Metaphors are crucial in the frontier between the sciences;<sup>10</sup> and given Locke's watchful use of language in his philosophical writings, this feature deserves attention. In the scholarship, Locke is generally presented from angles that put emphasis subsequently on this or that aspect of his thought – e.g., epistemology, metaphysics, moral theory, natural philosophy, political theory, etc. This charting is useful in that it emphasises Locke's multiple interests and provides a close-up on some of the many subjects addressed by this polyvalent thinker. However, by present-day academic standards, arguably, John Locke may not be labelled a philosopher but an ideologist: His epistemological and scientific project of understanding human nature is escorted by a comparable (if not greater) practical attempt at bringing change into the world as an educator and a political advisor, based on his moral theology. The highlights of Locke's heritage thirty years ago consisted chiefly in his justification of “contractual and constitutional government”, “unlimited acquisition of private property”, and “the merits of his ideas on liberal democracy”<sup>11</sup> and it is still the case today.<sup>12</sup> His account of human nature includes and combines fields of study that used to be undistinguished in his time and would fall today under different titles, such as political theory, social anthropology, psychology, medicine, and theology. While his first scholarly readers were possessed with similar assumptions as his concerning such an integration of disciplines and therefore would not be surprised by his use of metaphors and analogies, today's audience may expect greater clarity and analytic rigor from a writer whose works have made such an impact in the history of philosophy.

Recent emphasis has been put on Locke's non-philosophical writings, often revealing insightful connections to his metaphysics and epistemology.<sup>13</sup> It has been established, for instance, that his beliefs in physics informed some of his most central philosophical doctrines, such as his account of substance, of matter and thought, and of secondary qualities.<sup>14</sup> However, one of the main issues stemming from Locke's wide set of scientific interests is that the relations between the multiple facets of his oeuvre can reveal unsuspected issues and biases. For example, mapping Locke's political views onto his psychology of education

<sup>10</sup> Montuschi, “Metaphor in Science”.

<sup>11</sup> Spellman, *John Locke and the Problem of Depravity*, p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> Gordon-Roth and Weinberg, *The Lockean Mind*, pp. 417-18.

<sup>13</sup> Crignon, *Locke médecin*; Baltés, *The Empire of Habit*; Pritchard, *Religion in Public*; Anstey, *John Locke and Natural Philosophy*.

<sup>14</sup> Jacovides, *Locke's Image of the World*.

and habit, John Baltes put forward a Foucauldian interpretation of Locke's philosophy, where he brought out the controversial disciplinarian implications of Locke's medical gaze on the phenomenon of idleness.<sup>15</sup> Recently, Charles T. Wolfe addressed the import of Locke's Christian commitment and its impact on his theory of the mind, shedding a new light on the hidden agenda of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, and on what has long been misunderstood as Locke's "empiricist" stance.<sup>16</sup> Portrayed as the advocate of natural rights and thus seen as a precursor of Rousseau,<sup>17</sup> Locke's moral philosophy is fuelled by religious beliefs,<sup>18</sup> social assumptions,<sup>19</sup> and utopian travel literature.<sup>20</sup> One may contend, then, that Locke's work as a philosopher suffers from ideological blinders and somewhat lacks analytic rigor. In a similar critical spirit, this paper discusses Locke's use of a medical vocabulary in his moral and political writings.

Specifically, I will argue that Locke's use of medical metaphors in his account of moral depravity corresponds to his want of a consistent social theory. For this purpose, I will lay out the methodological disparities between his approaches to human nature as a physician and as a moral philosopher (Section 1) and present his description, explanation of, and solution to the effects of moral depravity, where moral and medical discourses meet (Section 2). I will proceed to discuss his moral approach on this social phenomenon and suggest to reframe it as a social issue (Section 3). Finally, I will outline and then exclude two possible interpretations of Locke's use of medical metaphors in his account of moral depravity and argue in favor of a third one, according to which it reveals the social nature of the phenomenon of moral depravity and the lack of a consistent social theory in Locke's philosophy of human nature (Section 4).

### 1. *Morality and medicine: methodological disparities*

In the *Essay*<sup>21</sup> Locke considers moral philosophy as a purely speculative science like mathematics, and in a journal entry he compares it with

<sup>15</sup> Baltes, *The Empire of Habit*.

<sup>16</sup> Wolfe, "Rethinking Early Modern Empiricism: The Case of Locke".

<sup>17</sup> Nazar, "Locke and Rousseau on Educating for Freedom".

<sup>18</sup> Schneewind, *Moral Philosophy from Montaigne to Kant*, p. 201; Ashcraft, "Locke's Political Philosophy", p. 226.

<sup>19</sup> Macpherson, "The Social Bearing of Locke's Political Theory".

<sup>20</sup> Talbot, "*The Great Ocean of Knowledge*", pp. 85-87.

<sup>21</sup> Locke, *Essay*, IV.iii.18, pp. 548-49.

geometry – a demonstrative science: “That the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones is infallibly true whether there be any such figure as a triangle existing in the world or no, and it is true that it is everyman’s duty to be just whether there be any such thing as a just man in the world or no.”<sup>22</sup> Since early modern times the mathematics-morality analogy has been wielded by rationalist thinkers against voluntarist and relativist approaches to morality. Based on similarities such as the self-evidence of first axioms and the logical process leading from proofs to deduction, this analogy granted the same necessity to mathematical and moral reasonings.<sup>23</sup> Thus, in the *Second Treatise*, Locke’s moral theory rests on the double assumption – descriptive and normative: (1) that *humans are God’s property* (2) and that *no one may interfere with someone else’s property*.<sup>24</sup> Those maxims derive in their turn from the following claims: (1) *God is the lawmaker and creator of Nature* and (2) *the natural right of self-preservation extends to one’s creation*. Divine law, especially the law of property, is the natural source of moral duty in rational beings, and its efficacy is bolstered by civil laws and social pressure.<sup>25</sup> Despite the authority of Locke’s moral theology, he must acknowledge that most of the time moral action is motivated by people’s mundane concern for their reputation.<sup>26</sup> The observation of nature and history reveals that commendable behaviour is spurred by a desire for social recognition, and thereby, depends on social interactions and culturally established social codes. In this view, moral practice, moral vocabulary, and moral evaluation emerge and settle over time due to contingent yet customary social functioning or what Locke calls the “law of fashion”. The relativistic conclusions of this naturalist perspective challenge Locke’s concept of morality as a speculative and demonstrative science. To bridge the gap from contingency to necessity, Locke declares certain conventions to be common to all human societies throughout history, and thereby infers their universal origin. “Surely, when many men in different times and places affirm one and the same thing as a certain truth, this thing must be

<sup>22</sup> Dewhurst, *John Locke (1632-1704), Physician and Philosopher*, p. 164.

<sup>23</sup> Gill, “Morality Is not like Mathematics”.

<sup>24</sup> T2, ch. II, § 6, p. 271.

<sup>25</sup> Boeker, “Locke’s Moral Psychology”, p. 364.

<sup>26</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xxviii.12, pp. 356-57: “I think, I may say, that he, who imagines Commendation and Disgrace, not to be strong Motives on Men, to accommodate themselves to the Opinions and Rules of those, with whom they converse, seems little skill’d in the Nature, or History of Mankind: the greatest part whereof he shall find to govern themselves chiefly, if not solely, by this Law of Fashion; and so they do that, which keeps them in Reputation with their Company, little regard the Laws of God, or the Magistrate”.

related to a universal cause which can be nothing else but a dictate of reason itself and common nature".<sup>27</sup> His moral theory can involve a priori metaphysical entities (e.g., God, natural laws) presented as necessary conditions for the emergence and establishment of moral conventions in civil society. This way, that which makes actions moral, for Locke, can always be traced back to a set of universal principles that are immune to the contingencies of culture and history. Relegating the law of fashion to the domain of habit and unreflective mental and social processes, Locke argues that it is through study and rational thinking that one acquires knowledge of natural laws. Thus conceived, moral science is abstract and theoretical: it is independent from any social context. It involves unobservable putative entities that cannot be submitted to careful empirical examination.

In comparison, Locke's attitude towards medical science and knowledge is much more cautious and sceptical. He avoids overblowing the predictive value of scientific theories induced from experimental findings and refrains from subscribing to any scientific theory concerning the "unobservables", because they do not satisfy his epistemic standards as a physician. He reckons that theories lead more to a form of theoretical dogmatism than to actual medical progress.<sup>28</sup> Thus, breaking up with the stagnant scholastic tradition, Locke's education in Oxford combines Cartesian rational theorizing and scientific empiricism popularized by Bacon and Boyle.<sup>29</sup> Arguably, his life-long experience as a medical student, scientist, and practising physician contributed to shaping his empiricist stance as a philosopher.<sup>30</sup> Locke is aware of the most important currents in contemporary medical research, especially of the new trend of experimental philosophy. Despite the role of anatomical dissections and laboratory experiments for the progress of medical knowledge, Locke is sceptical about their utility in the development of the art of healing patients and relieving pain.<sup>31</sup> Although Locke does not object to the occasional use of hypotheses, which sometimes can help avoid jumping to wrong conclusions when it comes to assessing the cause of an illness, his medical practice is mainly based on heuristics and the consideration that human lives are not to be experimented on.<sup>32</sup> As a physician, Locke is aware that

<sup>27</sup> Locke, "Essays on the Law of Nature" [1663-4] I, in *Political Essays*, p. 84.

<sup>28</sup> Walmsley, "Locke on Physiology and Medicine".

<sup>29</sup> Dewhurst, *John Locke (1632-1704), Physician and Philosopher*, p. viii.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xi.

<sup>31</sup> Crignon, *Locke médecin*, p. 231.

<sup>32</sup> Lu-Adler, "Locke on Scientific Methodology".

no amount of empirical research will provide infallible results, and that the effect of antidotes is often temporary. No matter the level of refinement of laboratory tools and microscopes, he reckons that the close observation of anatomy, physiology, and bodily diseases – together with the sacrifices that these experiments sometimes require – only has a limited impact on the actual progress of clinical knowledge.<sup>33</sup> Locke's diminishing enthusiasm for the experimental method is replaced by a growing interest in holistic and comprehensive approaches to healing, focusing on cautious treatment and follow-up, and the development of remedies.

Thus, when it comes to Locke's medical gaze on moral matters, we are facing antagonist commitments: scepticism and dogmatism. The very notion of 'moral health', as innocent as it may sound in ordinary language, is a problematic theoretical phrase involving two concepts that belong to distinct registers: Locke's moral theology advocates universalized principles of conduct that should be observed regardless of the social state of affairs, while health is a socially constructed concept simply referring to habitual functioning.<sup>34</sup> Yet, when discussing the moral purpose of human life in his political writings, Locke associates idleness and poverty to vice and disease.<sup>35</sup> In *Some Thoughts concerning Education*, he conspicuously resorts to clinical vocabulary such as "contagion" and "infection" when referring to the consequences of children's exposure to the mores and manners of people belonging to the lower end of the social ladder.<sup>36</sup> In the 1700 edition of this *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, he uses medical terms when referring to the propagation of pathological mental functioning in society, and the need for its "prevention" and "cure".<sup>37</sup>

While it may come across as an insignificant, metaphorical use of theoretical terms to the early modern reader, Locke's choice to resort to medical expressions equally deserves to be taken seriously today because it reveals conflicting philosophical commitments: (1) The medical perspective on a certain epidemic of bad habits suggests that social dynamics are responsible for moral practices – which means that divine law has *de facto* no impact on ethics; (2) The notion of 'disease', used in association to poverty and depravity, implies the existence of a defined concept of 'health', the medical meaning of which cannot

<sup>33</sup> Crignon, *Locke médecin*, pp. 275-77.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 334-35.

<sup>35</sup> Locke, "Labour" [1693], in *Political Essays*, p. 326.

<sup>36</sup> Locke, *Education*, § 66, p. 40.

<sup>37</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xxxiii.4, p. 395.

be compared with or applied to the moral state of affairs as Locke perceives it in his time. In other words, when medical and moral discourses meet, Locke's intention to avoid dogmatism, in his work as a physician, conflicts with his fixed notion of natural law as a moral philosopher. The point here is not to reinterpret or criticize Locke's entire moral-political philosophy in the light of his problematic account of moral depravity, but rather to show that his medical vocabulary in this specific context indicates that moral depravity is not a moral issue, but a structural feature of society, for the analysis of which Locke lacks the appropriate theoretical apparatus.

## 2. *Locke on moral depravity: Moral description, biblical explanation, and fourfold solution*

The tension between Locke's scientific and philosophical commitments indicates that certain facets of his interdisciplinary thought may not be seamlessly connected. Through their association with moral and political ideas, the use of underdetermined notions such as 'disease' and 'health' have implications that open a space for interpretation. This lack of conceptual clarity can be explained by the fact that in Locke's time, the borders between medicine and philosophy was not yet defined, and the use of medical terms in non-medical discourse was common. Medicine, and science in general, was still the basis of metaphysical and epistemological enterprises. Like today, scientific findings triggered philosophical inquiries and reflections, which in turn would question the goals and methods of science.<sup>38</sup> Here, I discuss Locke's description of the effects of moral depravity, especially in three social phenomena – idleness, poverty, and madness – that Locke refers to sometimes in medical terms. We should note that while Locke does not always use medical metaphors to describe these issues, he uses them almost entirely in relation to the question of depravity in society and the ways to counteract it. My specific aim is to emphasize that Locke's use of medical metaphors derives from his view of society as a living entity with a fixed structure, where the corruption of manners amounts to a moral 'disease' embedded in society since primeval times, and that urgently requires prevention and treatment.

<sup>38</sup> Crignon, *Locke médecin*, pp. 18-19.

### 2.1. *Poverty, idleness, and erroneous thinking from Locke's moral perspective*

One of the recurrent targets of Locke's moral disapproval in his political essays is people's lack of socially useful physical activity. In the case of the poor especially, he associates unemployment with immorality. In his view, "beggars" and people living "upon the parish" are not only a burden to England's public economy; they also threaten public morals and social order. Baltes stressed the moral dimension of idleness in Locke's political theory. Baltes's point is that, since industry is a virtue according to Protestant ethics, inculcated early on in child education, and supervised among adult citizens through peer control, idleness receives a moral connotation for being the opposite of the virtue of industry.<sup>39</sup> No matter whether they are young or old, fit or disabled, in Locke's view, the poor should be the object of state policy so as not to disturb public morals; the new law that he proposes does not merely aim at suppressing the poor, but rather at turning them into an economic resource by putting them at "hard labour" for the public interest.<sup>40</sup>

In his political writings, Locke's identities as a scientist and a political philosopher converge, as he frames the economic situation of poverty in England as a moral issue requiring political measures. In "An Essay on the Poor Law", he writes that

The growth of the poor must therefore have some other cause [than scarcity of provisions or want of employment], and it can be nothing else but the relaxation of discipline and corruption of manners; virtue and industry being as constant on the one side as vice and idleness are on the other.<sup>41</sup>

As a remedy to the "evil" of the "multiplying of the poor" caused by moral depravity, he suggests introducing strict disciplinary measures, such as the following:

if any boy or girl, under 14 years of age, shall be found begging out of the parish where they dwell [...] they shall be sent to the next working school, there to be soundly whipped, and kept at work till evening [...].<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Baltes, *The Empire of Habit*, p. 21.

<sup>40</sup> Locke, "An Essay on the Poor Law" [1697], in *Political Essays*, pp. 185-86.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187.

The burden of labour is a central part of the human condition following the fall from grace after the original sin; it is a duty towards God, who enforces upon human beings the natural law of self-preservation. Idleness is an infringement of this law, and as such, a form of moral depravity: “[I]n their idle and loose way of breeding up, [poor children] are utter strangers both to religion and morality as they are to industry”.<sup>43</sup> In framing the critical economic and social situation of idleness and poverty as a moral issue, Locke leverages his political theology to defend a certain social order, where the corruption of manners represents a disease in the body politic.

## 2.2. *Madness and religious enthusiasm: a lack of moral responsibility*

The hypothesis that Locke adopts a medical gaze on moral depravity in society is reinforced by another issue involving the uneducated part of the people, which, in certain cases, needs to be the object of state policies: the ‘madmen’. Locke added only three chapters to the later editions of his *Essay concerning Human Understanding*. Two of them, “Of the Association of Ideas” and “Of Enthusiasm”, concern human errors respectively of understanding and of faith.<sup>44</sup> When discussing madness and religious enthusiasm, in the *Essay*, the *Conduct*, and his essay on “Toleration”, he often resorts to medical metaphors stressing the harmful or contagious characteristics of these phenomena.

Locke presents the association of ideas as an erroneous type of reasoning connecting ideas that don’t belong together. It can happen either by chance, because of habit, or because of an overwhelming passion. Association of ideas is a mental functioning describing pathological thinking and is difficult to understand or cure. It reflects carelessness or laziness in the use of one’s rational capacity and its propensity to contaminate other people is high:

This sort of Unreasonableness is usually imputed to Education and Prejudice, and for the most part truly enough, though that reaches not the bottom of the Disease, nor shews distinctly enough whence it rises, or wherein it lies. [...] | And if this [madness] be a Weakness to which all Men are so liable, if this be a Taint which so universally infects Mankind, the greater care should be taken to lay it open under its due Name, thereby to excite the greater care in its Prevention and Cure.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>44</sup> Boespflug and Pasnau, “Locke on Enthusiasm”, p. 554.

<sup>45</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xxxiii.3-4, p. 395.

Association of Ideas [...] is a Disease of the Mind as hard to be cur'd as any; it being a very hard thing to convince any one that things are not so, and naturally so as they constantly appear to him.<sup>46</sup>

Pathological thinking, or “madness” as Locke calls it, is also discussed in the case of religious enthusiasm. Enthusiasts have a propensity to conflate imagination and divine inspiration. They think that God talks to them directly, which can bring them to hold unreasonable beliefs. When it comes to his religious views, Locke claims that revelation is always proportionate to knowledge; religious truths sent by God should be “comfortable to reason” because reason is a divine faculty and God cannot contradict himself.<sup>47</sup> Religious enthusiasts are unreasonable because giving one’s assent to propositions that go against God’s natural laws is unreasonable. While Locke dwells on the epistemic aspect of enthusiasm in the *Essay*, he discusses the social impact of religious conflicts led by enthusiasts, in a minor essay on “Toleration”. There, he portrays these people as affected of a “delirium”, prone to “distemper”, whose “brains are a little out of order”, and supposedly likely to “infect others”; to this follows a medical analogy with “palsy” and “apoplexy”.<sup>48</sup> The point of this passage is to suggest proper treatment for enthusiasts, which should be given primarily by religious experts or a “minister”, rather than by political power or “magistrates”. Ministers’ liability when it comes to religious excesses is mostly presented in Locke’s *Letter concerning Toleration*, where he recommends ministers to resolve the issue of sectarian conflicts by teaching toleration and kindness to their disciples, rather than by resorting to coerced orthodoxy.<sup>49</sup>

In describing the issue of erroneous thinking in the context of madness and religious enthusiasm, Locke presents those phenomena in a moral frame where he adopts a clinical approach, indicating that society is a “body politic” in need of pedagogical and political care. At the same time, his identification of the issue of madness is based on a metaphysical premise, namely the duty

<sup>46</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, § 41, p. 218.

<sup>47</sup> Locke, “Faith and Reason” [1676], in *Political Essays*, p. 248. “Religion” [1681], in *Political Essays*, p. 278.

<sup>48</sup> Locke, “Toleration B” [1676], in *Political Essays*, p. 247.

<sup>49</sup> Locke, *Second Treatise and Toleration*, p. 137: “He that pretends to be a Successor of the Apostles, and takes upon him the Office of Teaching, is obliged to also to admonish his Hearers of the Duties of Peace and Good-will towards all men; as well towards the Erroneous, as the Orthodox; towards those that differ from them in Faith and Worship, as well as towards those that agree with them therein”. On toleration and the limits of religious authority in political liberalism, as well as on Locke’s critique of Jonas Proast on the question of coerced orthodoxy, see Tate, *Liberty, Toleration and Equality*.

to know the laws of nature, which puts all the responsibility on each individual, regardless of their education or acquired cognitive skills. In his description of religious enthusiasm as a moral issue, however, Locke emphasizes the responsibility on priests and ministers to foster social cohesion by teaching toleration to their disciples, despite the doctrinal disparity between various religious sects.

### 2.3. *A biblical explanation of moral depravity*

According to Locke, corruption of manners is the main cause of poverty, idleness, and erroneous thinking in society. When it comes to the cause of corruption, however, he resorts to a biblical explanation. Spellman draws our attention to a teaching that has persisted for centuries since the time of foundation of the Christian faith, and the influence of which has been significant in the Reformed Christian tradition of seventeenth-century England.<sup>50</sup> In his Epistle to the Romans, St Paul writes about death and the original sin in a famous passage that has since triggered a long-term dispute over its possible interpretations. The prevailing understanding of this passage, among Puritan and Anglican theologians and philosophers, is a paradox according to which Adam's sin has been transmitted hereditarily to humankind; at the same time, the sacrifice of God's Christ saved humankind.<sup>51</sup> The practical consequences are, on the one hand, that humankind's fate is sealed and no voluntary actions on their part will change that, and on the other, that total devotion, obedience, and gratefulness are expected towards God for creating and saving humankind.<sup>52</sup> A related view in Protestant theology was that bodily suffering, natural disasters, and crises in general were the direct result of people's corrupted manners and sinfulness.<sup>53</sup> Locke was familiar with major biblical comments and was keeping up with the scholarly research on theological matters.<sup>54</sup> Besides several of his publications on biblical subjects, he commented on five of Paul's letters,<sup>55</sup> and appears to take on the Pauline view on the human predicament by claiming that Adam and Eve's fall from grace was the beginning of all evil on earth:

<sup>50</sup> Spellman, *John Locke and the Problem of Depravity*, pp. 8-38.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>54</sup> Parker, "Locke on Biblical Method and Theological Interpretation", p. 564.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

Upon their offence they were afraid of God: this gave them frightful ideas and apprehensions of him and that lessened their love, which turned their minds to that nature, for this root of all evil in them made impressions and so infected their children, and when private possessions and labour, which now the curse on the earth made necessary, by degrees made a distinction of conditions, it gave room for covetousness, pride, and ambition, which by fashion and example spread the corruption which has so prevailed over mankind.<sup>56</sup>

The relation between original sin and corrupted manners in Locke's time is not clear, but the former seemingly preceded the establishment of private property as a social institution and of industry as a social value, which in turn fostered corruption among humankind. Spellman identifies in Locke's works a "definite strain of pessimism about human nature in general" that also applies to Locke's own contemporaries.<sup>57</sup> But whether Locke really endorsed the theory of the original sin is debatable and there is no universal consensus in the scholarship.

#### 2.4. *Locke's fourfold solution against moral depravity*

With his medical metaphors, Locke the physician extends his medical gaze onto what seems to be the main issues of his time: economic challenges, political unrest, errors of reasoning, and religious extremism. Like in the case of physical impairment, Locke fails or renounces to grasp the root of the problem. Crignon stresses that his criticism of anatomy is based on the consideration that investigating the cause of diseases through experimental philosophy is (1) epistemologically counterproductive because it creates conflicting hypotheses; (2) religiously reprehensible because it implies that God created humankind imperfect; (3) and morally questionable because it doesn't lead to useful knowledge.<sup>58</sup> Through the analogy that his medical vocabulary suggests, the philosophical investigation into the cause of evil in human society is mistaken because it will not provide any secure basis for the treatment of humankind.

Rather than a systematic account of social functioning explaining the ins and outs of the human predicament, the reader of Locke will thus encounter topical solutions aiming at diminishing the impact of moral corruption. In this perspective, the solution to moral 'disease' is fourfold: religious, cognitive, ped-

<sup>56</sup> Locke, "Homo ante et post Lapsus", in *Political Essays*, p. 321.

<sup>57</sup> Spellman, *John Locke and the Problem of Depravity*, p. 5.

<sup>58</sup> Crignon, *Locke médecin*, pp. 275-76.

agogical, and political. The religious solution is an act of faith in reason – the divine faculty that God provided to human beings to enable their discovery of the laws of nature and, thereby, to guide their conduct.<sup>59</sup> Faith in reason is a prerequisite for religious toleration because reason supports persuasion, which in turn fosters harmony between “market-friendly religions”, thereby contributing to the rise of commercial society.<sup>60</sup> Locke is aware of the philosophical consensus that distinguishes between reason and faith;<sup>61</sup> and while he defends their compatibility, he acknowledges that excesses of faith can lead religious enthusiasts into socially deleterious errors.<sup>62</sup> In this respect, Locke warns against the undesired side-effects of policy making concerning religion and recommends caution:

If you fear [people’s rage] because you treat them ill, and that produces some symptom of it, you ought to change your method, and not punish them for what you fear because you go the way to produce it. If a distemper itself has a tendency to rage, it must be watched and fit remedies applied.<sup>63</sup>

Locke subscribes to the idea that reason alone can lead to safer knowledge, tamed by probabilistic reservations. The preventive cognitive ‘cure’ is thus at the centre of his philosophical enterprise in the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*. In his pedagogical writings, he applies his theory of knowledge to prevent ‘pathologies’ of the understanding; this consists in the education of children and the training one’s mind through language and persuasion. Language and persuasion are also useful within the political solution, which consists mainly in public policies, the implementation of which is designed to address the economic situation in late seventeenth-century England. Political tracts and treatises target an educated readership, especially authorities, and thereby act on social order by shaping each other’s mind.<sup>64</sup> However, unlike the three other ‘cures’, the political one is the most critical, because it can go to questionable lengths to bring order.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Locke, *Essay*, IV.xvii.24, pp. 687-88.

<sup>60</sup> Pritchard, *Religion in Public*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>61</sup> Locke, *Essay*, IV.xviii, pp. 688-96.

<sup>62</sup> Locke, *Essay*, IV.xix, pp. 697-706.

<sup>63</sup> Locke, “Toleration B” [1676], in *Political Essays*, p. 247.

<sup>64</sup> On the intersubjective model of the mind in Locke, see Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, pp. 99-155.

<sup>65</sup> See for instance T2, ch. XV, § 171, p. 382.

### 3. *Reframing moral depravity as a social issue*

Locke frames the phenomenon of corruption in moral terms, based on certain metaphysical assumptions in his political theology. Endorsing the notion of a 'body politic', he approaches this moral issue from a clinical standpoint suggesting that 'moral health' is characteristic of a predetermined and fixed socio-political structure, and that any deviation to this structure is a 'disease' of the 'body politic'. Here I bring out potential tensions in his account of human nature that can be avoided if moral depravity is framed as a social issue rather than as a moral one.

On top of the discrepancies between Locke's medical and moral-political approaches, his analogies between disease, on the one hand, and moral depravity on the other, leverage conflicting claims about human nature and civil society. I will show that his theoretical apparatus, combining moral and theological claims, fails at presenting the social phenomenon of moral depravity in a convincing manner. Tensions in many areas of Locke's philosophy have been addressed already in the scholarship up to recent time,<sup>66</sup> and here I will focus on three relevant statements in the scope of our analysis: (1) *God created humankind free but submitted it to the laws of nature*; (2) *Human beings can improve greatly through proper use of their understanding, but the poor should spend most of their time working with their hands*; (3) *Humans in general are rational beings, but most of them are not*.

#### 3.1. *Property and poverty: a structural feature of society*

It is self-evident for Locke that all human beings are born free and equal, except when "the Lord and Master of them all" expressly grants to one of them the right to sovereignty and dominion.<sup>67</sup> The first tension, between freedom and laws of nature, has been discussed from the point of view of freedom in moral agency. A Lockean free moral agent is, by definition, submitted to certain moral principles extracted from their rational knowledge of the natural law. While freedom pertains to what one *can* do, natural law determines what one *should* do. But since the impact of moral principles on social ethics is counteracted by the law of fashion, what we *should* do is, ultimately, a matter of

<sup>66</sup> For example: LoLordo, "Locke on Moral Agency and Moral Agents"; Mills, "Locke on Slavery"; Gill, "Morality Is not like Mathematics"; Baltes, *The Empire of Habit*; Macpherson, "The Social Bearing of Locke's Political Theory".

<sup>67</sup> T2, ch. II, § 4, p. 269.

moral conventions and political laws, which in turn may or may not be based on natural law. Locke himself admits that his project of a demonstrative moral science cannot be carried out within the limits of human cognitive capacities.<sup>68</sup> In practice, the contradiction between freedom and submission to law (natural or political) is overshadowed by education, whereby children internalize the moral codes established in society by the magistrate. If human beings should be equal in the state of nature, the moral notions and codes of conduct instilled in their minds will vary depending on their education. Consequently, obedience to law will feel habitual or natural to a well-educated moral agent, while it will be forced onto people who did not benefit from such an education.<sup>69</sup>

Locke's views on the 'poor' are relevant in the tension between freedom and submission because they are closely related to his theory of property, which is central to his moral theology. The 'poor' designates a social category including people who have no property, besides property of their own selves.<sup>70</sup> Either they are unemployed and live off charity (e.g., beggars and vagrants), or they work on someone else's property (e.g., labourers, dock workers, servants, etc). Locke's theory of property has been widely discussed in the scholarship and one of its most pressing issues concerns its fundamental role in morality. "Where there is no property there is no injustice' is a proposition as certain as any demonstration in Euclid".<sup>71</sup> The right to preserve oneself, in Locke's account, corresponds to a natural law and extends to one's creations and the land on which one is working. In so far as it is created and enforced by God, this natural law can only be understood and freely followed by rational beings, for whom it is designed. In general, only people possessing a well-functioning mind can grasp moral principles and see them as a requisite for a virtuous and happy life.<sup>72</sup> Arguably, 1660's English writers have a general attitude of hostility towards the poor, no matter whether they are employed or not.<sup>73</sup> In Puritan and Calvinist churches, as well as on a secular level, the poor are considered neither as full members nor as citizens.<sup>74</sup> Their belonging to society makes them more the object of state policy than the possessors of civil rights, even though the economic value

<sup>68</sup> LoLordo, "Locke on Moral Agency and Moral Agents", p. 373.

<sup>69</sup> Baltes, *The Empire of Habit*.

<sup>70</sup> For Locke, property includes property in oneself. T2, ch. V, § 27, p. 287.

<sup>71</sup> Locke, *Essay*, IV.iii.18, p. 549.

<sup>72</sup> Schneewind, *Moral Philosophy from Montaigne to Kant*, pp. 183-84.

<sup>73</sup> Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, p. 241.

<sup>74</sup> Macpherson, "The Social Bearing of Locke's Political Theory", p. 64.

of their work for the nation's wealth is assessed.<sup>75</sup> The natural right to preserve one's property, despite deriving from a natural law which is the foundation of justice and morality in civil society, is designed against the interest of the poor, who remain subjected to it. The social polarity between property owners and the rest of the people, based on Locke's understanding of the natural right to property, amounts to social fragmentation, because the interests of both social strata are in opposition.

By describing the cause of an economic fact such as poverty as being of a moral nature, Locke offers to resolve this social issue primarily by prescribing hard physical labour, which, when devoid of any educational-pedagogical dimension, is basically undistinguishable from a punishment.<sup>76</sup> At the same time, given his theory of education and the central role played therein by parents, teachers, and one's close social environment, it is reasonable to believe that rich people's offspring are bound to receive a better education, including about manners and moral principles. On the one hand, Locke insists on the moral education of upper-class children, and the need to preserve them from

the ill Examples, which they meet with amongst the meaner Servants [...] For the contagion of these ill precedents, both in Civility and Vertue, horribly infects Children, as often as they come within reach of it.<sup>77</sup>

On the other hand, children who were born from poor parents usually do not benefit from the encouragement of 'maids' and 'tutors' in charge of their upbringing, and therefore are not bound to receive a proper (moral) education. One may contend, then, that forcing them to do long and hard physical work because of their involuntary economic and social condition seems unfair. Probably, Locke could not foresee that perceived social injustices can hinder personal development. His pedagogical interest in child education and his political concern about the poor in England arguably aim at promoting the culture of industry and at disciplining the idle, all of which converge towards his goal of maintaining a certain social order.<sup>78</sup> Even if we disagree with this strongly Foucauldian reading of Locke, the fact that Locke

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Locke's notion of punishment includes forced physical labour and inflicted pain. Punishment constitutes a last resort measure to discipline children. He also stresses that any type of task should not be forced upon children, for this stiffens their character and usually prevents them from ever finding pleasure in said task, or honour in duty (Locke, *Education*, §§ 47-48, p. 33; §§ 72-73, p. 51).

<sup>77</sup> Locke, *Education*, § 66, p. 40.

<sup>78</sup> Baltes, *The Empire of Habit*, p. 21.

approaches economic issues with a moralizing lens and political measures, in the case of the poor and idle at least, shows that Locke's pedagogical interest in the cognitive development of people seems to be secondary, while his political goals are put at the forefront. This reinforces the view that Locke's framing of moral depravity as a moral issue is inadequate. Based on his disapproval of punishment in his pedagogical theory, it is obvious that strict political measures are not designed to engender moral development among the poor, but rather to diminish their impact on the economy. Poverty and poor education are thus better understandable as a social issue deriving from structural features in class society.

### 3.2. *The social reality of idleness and labour*

In Locke's view, when all human beings were free and equal in the state of nature, they appropriated unclaimed portions of land through their labour.<sup>79</sup> Once owned, their property rights would be inherited by all their children.<sup>80</sup> Locke's account of the law of property presupposes that natural resources are sufficient to meet the needs of humankind, even though properties are limited in space. So as not to spoil the fruit of labour, he proposed to restrict property to fit the needs of its owner.<sup>81</sup> Of course, with the circulation of money – a good that *can* be conserved –, the owner may sell surplus product, buy new land with the money earned, and hire additional labour to work on the new property, thereby delegating physical work and spending more time managing it.<sup>82</sup> Locke's account may thus be used to justify private capitalism.

The most pressing issue here is to establish who engages in physical labour and who engages in intellectual labour, who must work for a living and who lives to cultivate themselves. Echoing the Protestant ethics of the seventeenth century, labour and industry are recurrent themes in Locke's political writings. Idleness is frowned upon, but not always for the same moral reasons. There is a double standard in Locke's view on idleness. When it comes to the adult poor living on alms and hospitality like "begging drones, who live unnecessarily upon other people's labour", no matter whether they are healthy or injured,<sup>83</sup> Locke

<sup>79</sup> T2, ch. V, §§ 25-36, pp. 286-92.

<sup>80</sup> T1, ch. IX, §§ 87-89, pp. 206-7, § 91, p. 209, § 93, p. 210.

<sup>81</sup> T2, ch. V, § 36, pp. 292-93.

<sup>82</sup> Day, "Locke on Property", pp. 122-23.

<sup>83</sup> Locke, "An Essay on the Poor Law", in *Political Essays*, p. 186: "[A]ll men begging in maritime counties without passes, that are maimed, or above 50 years of age [...] shall be sent to the next house of correction, there to be kept at hard labour for three years".

is favourable to their suppression or to force them to work in a house of correction.<sup>84</sup> But despite being closely related to the unemployed poor, the issue of idleness concerns “the good and the virtuous” as well, who should dedicate a portion of their time to “honest labour” to be “preserved from the ills of idleness or the diseases that attend constant study in a sedentary life”. Thus, as for “the Lazy dames of Citys” who have no occupation, he is concerned about their suffering from the inconvenience of a nervous illness, to which they are inclined, and prescribes them to find some activity that may keep them busy.<sup>85</sup> When it comes to “the rich and the noble” who spend their time “at their books or their pleasure”, Locke is first concerned about their physical decay at a mature age and, only then, about their consequent uselessness in business. Locke himself admits complementing his study and business with hunting and “other innocent diversions” that help him avoid the ills of idleness.<sup>86</sup>

Let the gentleman and scholar employ nine of the twelve [hours] on his mind in thought and reading and the other three in some honest labour. And the man of manual labour nine in work and three in knowledge. [...] And mankind be much more happy than now it is.<sup>87</sup>

While a portion of the population can freely choose to focus on cultivating their mind, supervising their businesses, and governing the country, another portion must spend most of their time away from such self-building activities, even though, theoretically, they have property of their own self.<sup>88</sup> As Tabb points out, exercising one’s mental faculties to form “true ideas and justified beliefs” requires “attention and effort”; it is also a condition for freedom and a duty towards God.<sup>89</sup> This type of rational activity cannot, if it should become a habit, be pursued unsystematically. Locke’s double standard concerning idleness and his ambiguous notion of ‘work’ all seem to point at the assumption that the poor’s mind, despite being fit for study, is destined to careless

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 184.

<sup>85</sup> MS. Locke, Bodleian Library, Oxford, c. 42, 182: “Idle and delicate women who haveing little business to take up their time and thoughts give way to their imaginations and phansys, have more longings & more marked & monstrous children than women either of strong mindes or constant imployment. Therefor the Lazy dames of Citys are more subject to the inconveniencys than the strong country labourers” (quoted in Dewhurst, *John Locke (1632-1704), Physician and Philosopher*, p. 162).

<sup>86</sup> Locke, “Thus I Think” [1686-1688], in *Political Essays*, p. 297.

<sup>87</sup> Locke, “Labour” [1963], in *Political Essays*, p. 328.

<sup>88</sup> See above note 70.

<sup>89</sup> Tabb, “Habituation and the Association of Ideas”, p. 393.

thinking. This, despite the inborn faculties that nature supposedly has given to everyone, and which they should employ to improve themselves like every other citizen aspiring to the knowledge of God's laws. This second tension addressed in Locke's account of human nature reflects his assumption concerning the "class character of society".<sup>90</sup> It weakens altogether his argument that idleness results from corrupted manners, for the following reason. If civil society should, by the law of God, be organized in such a way that a vast portion of the political community is oblivious to that very law, there cannot be any informed consensus or social contract that would naturally stimulate spontaneous cooperation. And under the enforcement of executive justice without the rational consent of the people, idleness is arguably one of the mildest natural side effects of this very kind of social structure.

### 3.3. *The moral high ground of rationality*

Locke's assumption that human beings are rational is a commonplace. It is less clear, however, what the proportion is between innate and acquired rational capacity, and, within acquired rational capacity, how much is education-based and experience-based. These distinctions matter in so far as Locke associates proper thinking with moral responsibility by framing the phenomenon of erroneous thinking as a moral issue.

In the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, Locke writes:

He that believes, without having any Reason for believing, may be in love with his own Fancies; but neither seeks Truth as he ought, nor pays the Obedience due to his Maker, who would have him use those discerning Faculties he has given him, to keep him out of Mistake and Errour. [...] [H]e that makes use of the Light and Faculties GOD has given him, and seeks sincerely to discover Truth, by those Helps and Abilities he has, may have this satisfaction in doing his Duty as a rational Creature.<sup>91</sup>

Madmen and religious enthusiasts suffer from erroneous thinking due to habit, chance, or overwhelming passion. Tabb points out that the moral responsibility attending rational actions of the understanding concerns the intellectual labour exerted by thinking beings.<sup>92</sup> And because accountability depends on free intellectual activity, people acting on their "pathological" thoughts cannot

<sup>90</sup> Macpherson, "The Social Bearing of Locke's Political Theory", p. 60.

<sup>91</sup> Locke, *Essay*, IV.xvii.24, p. 688.

<sup>92</sup> Tabb, "Madness as Method".

be the target of moral criticism. However, because Locke sees every human being as possessing the same inborn faculty of reason, “pathological” and “healthy” thinkers all have the duty to work on their ideas and beliefs. “It is [...] all too easy to form bad habits, both in the sense of unfortunate mental dispositions that lead to lazy and careless thinking and in the sense of habituated judgments that let faulty ideas persist without correction.”<sup>93</sup>

The third tension that needs to be addressed in Locke's account of human nature is his idea that humans in general are rational beings, in so far as they are born so, but most of them are irrational because they do not invest as much effort into their mental faculties. This problem particularly concerns Locke in his later writings, and he concludes that it is essential to educate children early on to avoid crafting wrong associations of ideas that are so difficult to undo.<sup>94</sup> The emphasis on child education shows that the duty of rational thinking is primarily the responsibility of parents, and that adults who were deprived of a proper education during childhood cannot be held entirely accountable for their mental defects.

Not all rational agents can be virtuous or reasonable to the same degree. Locke's notion of state of equality between human beings assumes that they are moral agents, and his concept of moral agency involves various types of cognitive capacities, including abstract thinking and the freedom to act or suspend action. According to LoLordo, the power to suspend action “marks a sort of half-way point between moral agency and agency *simpliciter*.”<sup>95</sup> Children who lack the power to suspend, and other beings deprived of the cognitive tools to understand natural law would then belong to the category of non-moral agents.<sup>96</sup> Arguably, several social groups belong to this category: mad people, who are not in full control of their actions because they are induced by their pathology; religious enthusiasts, whose disordered thinking is induced by excessive passion; and “the labouring class”, who is also “incapable of a fully rational life” given the priorities belonging to their social role.<sup>97</sup> For Locke, natural law “can be known by natural reason alone because it is propagated to us through the proper exercise of our mental powers and senses as rational and free agents.”<sup>98</sup> Therefore, people lacking the time, ability, or dis-

<sup>93</sup> Tabb “Habituation and the Association of Ideas”, p. 393.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 392.

<sup>95</sup> LoLordo, “Locke on Moral Agency and Moral Agents”, p. 375.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Macpherson, “The Social Bearing of Locke's Political Theory”, p. 72.

<sup>98</sup> Garrett, “Locke's Metaethics”, p. 343.

position to engage in sustained intellectual activity cannot develop a rational understanding of the laws of nature and thereby fail at observing their moral duty towards God. As in the case of poverty and idleness, erroneous thinking is better framed as a social issue than as a moral one.

#### 4. *Meaning and purpose of Locke's medical metaphors*

Locke's use of metaphors in his philosophy of mind has been characterized as being illustrative, symptomatic, or constitutive.<sup>99</sup> This taxonomy is useful to our analysis. First, the class of illustrative metaphors is clear in that it aims at giving examples. Symptomatic metaphors, however, depend more on one's interpretation and broadly include stylistic choices made by an author to formulate a theoretical claim. Finally, constitutive metaphors have explanatory intentions and provide a specific approach to a problem.<sup>100</sup> Following this classification, I argue that Locke's use of medical metaphors is constitutive, in that it offers a clinical approach to the phenomenon of moral depravity based on the notion of a 'body politic', thereby formulating hypotheses as to the causes of moral depravity and justifying pedagogical measures and public policies to address its effects.

Another distinction has been made between the realist and instrumentalist uses of descriptive and explanatory metaphors in science.<sup>101</sup> A realist metaphor is anchored in theoretical language to the point that metaphorical terms become identical to the object they describe or explain. An instrumentalist metaphor acts as an instrument to describe or explain an object without implying a relation of identity to it. This classification was not designed to be applied to early modern theorists because it stems from the debate on empiricism and realism at the turn of the 20th century. Therefore, it is not inconsistent to claim that Locke's metaphors are both realist and instrumentalist, as I will explain hereafter.

Based on his moral and biblical explanations of moral depravity, there are several ways in which Locke's constitutive use of medical vocabulary may be interpreted. Here I will present and exclude two possible readings before defending the third and most probable one.

<sup>99</sup> Demeter, "Locke and Metaphors", pp. 75-88.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 78-82.

<sup>101</sup> Gigerenzer and Sturm, "Tools=Theories=Data?".

(1) First, medical metaphors may be aiming at diminishing moral agency and emphasizing, instead, the embeddedness of evil in human nature due to the heredity of original sin according to Paul's teaching. This would amount to a deterministic reading of Locke's medical metaphors. In this view, the medical metaphors exclude moral agency, stressing on the congenital aspect of evil. But this reading is inadequate for two main reasons. On the one hand, Locke's belief in the doctrine of the original sin is not a universal consensus among the experts. On the other hand, moral agency is a crucial aspect of Locke's moral theory. Moral agents are rational beings who exert their reason appropriately to grasp the laws of nature. In this view, reason as a faculty is not to blame for its unproper functioning. Moral agents are also free beings, and with this freedom comes the responsibility for making a proper use of their faculties. "Who does Violence to his own Faculties, Tyrannizes over his own Mind and usurps the Prerogative that belongs to Truth alone, which is to command Assent by only its own Authority, *i.e.* by and in proportion to that Evidence which it carries with it".<sup>102</sup> Therefore, one can hardly adopt the deterministic reading.

(2) Second, following the Foucauldian interpretation adopted by Baltes, medical metaphors may be intended to bypass the moral dimension altogether and create a distance between the moral physician and the undisciplined patient, thereby dehumanizing vicious people as a burdensome disease that should be 'cut off' for the good of society. This reading is supported by certain passages, like the following:

[*Political*] Power can have no other *end or measure*, when in the hands of the Magistrate, but to preserve the Members of that Society in their Lives, Liberties, and Possessions; [...] [The] *Power to make Laws* [can] annex such *Penalties* to them, as many tend to the preservation of the whole, by cutting off those Parts, and those only, which are so corrupt, that they threaten the sound and healthy, without which no severity is lawful. And this *Power has its Original only from Compact and Agreement*, and the mutual Consent of those who make up the Community.<sup>103</sup>

While a strong formulation like this one would support a Foucauldian reading of Locke's medical vocabulary, it does not constitute sufficient evidence, because medical metaphors also appear in non-political, pedagogical discourses related to the corruption of manners, where they do not aim at bypassing the

<sup>102</sup> Locke, *Essay*, IV.xix.2, p. 698.

<sup>103</sup> T2, ch. XV, § 171, p. 382.

moral dimension of the phenomenon and the corresponding shared responsibility.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, Baltes's reading may be qualified as ideologically biased, since it recasts Locke's entire philosophy of habit, in his moral, pedagogical, and political aspects, through the lens of Foucault.

(3) The third and most probable interpretation, I argue, is that by emphasizing on the notion of infection, Locke's use of medical metaphors intends to represent evil as an abnormal phenomenon spreading from dispersed sources, as opposed to being part of the default settings of human condition after the fall from grace. Unlike the 'good', which springs from the laws of nature, Locke sees 'evil' as something exogenous that spreads and contaminates throughout the social fabric. Without committing to the claim that Locke believed in the doctrine of the original sin, we can mention that in his biblical cosmology, the 'good' was always there, and then 'evil' *happened*. Despite being originally exogenous to nature when God created it, evil became endogenous to human nature by infecting Adam and his offspring. With time, it has become so rooted in human nature, that the cause can no longer be removed, and only its symptoms can be tackled with topical remedies. This suggests two purposes in Locke's use of medical metaphors: an instrumentalist, probably conscious purpose, and a realist purpose that the author is in no position to acknowledge. (1) First, Locke's medical vocabulary is designed to convey a sense of urgency and trigger prompt action against the contagiousness of evil. This corroborates Locke's deviating the attention from the ontology of evil and focusing on treating the moral issue as if it were a health-related one. In this view, the medical metaphors are used instrumentally and aim at prompting Locke's readership to take moral matters as seriously as their own health. (2) Second and more importantly, in the light of part 3 of this article on the tensions within Locke's moral account of moral depravity, this third reading suggests that medical metaphors are used in a realistic manner due to Locke's endorsement of the idea that society *is* a living entity. And because the medical metaphors jeopardize Locke's moralizing approach, they indicate that moral depravity cannot be framed as a moral issue. If the sources of evil are multiple, contagious, afflict society at large, and essentially consist in corrupted individuals mostly within the lower class of society, this means that Locke is facing a structural social issue and is short of conceptual means to address it.

<sup>104</sup> See Locke's emphasis on the responsibility of fathers, mothers, tutors, and maids in the education of children in Locke, *Education*, § 10, pp. 14-15, §§ 123-27, pp. 95-98.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper I proposed to interpret Locke's use of medical metaphors in the context of his moral account of corruption in society. I argue that the medical metaphors derive from his conception of society as a living entity or 'body politic', comparable to the human body. Tensions between his methodological commitments as a physician and a moral philosopher were emphasized. On one hand medical anatomy and experimental philosophy lead to hypotheses about the mechanisms of the human body. In Locke's view, hypotheses do not provide any secure basis for clinical treatment and can at best prevent drawing wrong conclusions about cause-effect relations. The physician's mission is thus to develop useful remedies based on their observation of the patient, rather than developing theories based on experiments in a laboratory for the sake of knowledge. On the other hand, Locke sees moral science as a form of deductive reasoning based on universal principles rationally abstracted from the laws of nature. At the same time, he reckons that human cognitive capacities represent an obstacle to any successful project of demonstrative moral science. And since moral conventions depend *de facto* on cultural contingencies that vary greatly in space and time, the laws of nature have little to no impact on ethics, unlike the law of fashion. Given the uncertainty of medical hypotheses and the contingency of moral practices, it is irrelevant to even distinguish between physical health and 'moral health', because they cannot be strictly defined by either medical or moral scientific standards. So, Locke is better off distancing himself from a theoretical approach to health and morality. Analogously to his loss of enthusiasm for anatomy and the experimental method in medicine, Locke resorts to a clinical approach and offers topical 'remedies' as well as a preventive long-term treatment consisting in pedagogical measures and political tracts. At the same time, the political part of Locke's solution concerning the poor is the most critical and creates a dissonance with respect to his deontology as a physician, according to which human lives are not to be experimented on.

The effects of the corruption of manners identified by Locke all bear a moral connotation in so far as they are described in relation to the duty of rational beings towards God. Based on our analysis of Locke's moral account of corruption, we saw that this phenomenon cannot be framed as a moral issue, mainly because the analogy between society and a living body subjected to 'contamination' and 'infection' removes the emphasis from the moral respon-

sibility of each person. The phenomenon of moral depravity boils down to a more fundamental issue of social fragmentation that hinders the establishment of an encompassing system of ethics. In other words, one can adopt, like Macpherson, an anachronistic perspective and argue that Locke's theory of human nature is biased by his social assumptions. Is poverty the sign that the political economy is flawed? Is idleness a side-effect of a malfunctioning social structure? Are madness and religious enthusiasm reactions to rationalistic Enlightenment ideals, and to the social challenges of political liberalism? Locke is in no position to ask these questions and thus, to grasp the social nature of the phenomenon of moral depravity.<sup>105</sup>

### *Acknowledgements*

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### *Abbreviations*

- T1                    Locke, John, *First Treatise* [1690], in Id., *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett, University Press, Cambridge 1988, pp. 141-263.
- T2                    Locke, John, *Second Treatise* [1690] in Id., *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett, University Press, Cambridge 1988, pp. 265-428.

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# Locke, Sydenham and the “Tyrrell Memoir”

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*Abstract:* This paper examines the contents of the sixth paragraph of the “Tyrrell Memoir”. This paragraph makes some strong, critical claims about both Locke’s “obsession” with the London physician Thomas Sydenham, and his purported dismissive attitude towards another physician, Richard Lower. In the paragraph, Tyrrell sides with the First Earl of Shaftesbury’s mocking attitude towards the triumvirate Locke, his close friend David Thomas, and Sydenham, and relates some extraordinary and hitherto unknown anecdotes. Tyrrell’s claims are assessed in relation to what we know about the relations between these four men and in relation to the current state of Sydenham historiography.

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

## *Introduction*

The “Tyrrell Memoir” recently identified by Felix Waldmann proves to be a fascinating document, one that surprisingly was overlooked by scholars for nearly 240 years.<sup>1</sup> While its most startling claims are those that it makes about Locke’s reading of and promotion of Hobbes’ *Leviathan*, other material within the memoir is also worthy of comment. This paper concerns one paragraph near the mid-point of the memoir wherein James Tyrrell comments on Locke’s obsession (*enflé*) with the London physician Thomas Sydenham. Given that the historiography of Thomas Sydenham, the so-called English Hippocrates, is contested, and given that Tyrrell makes a number of derogatory claims about Locke, Sydenham, and the Salisbury physician David Thomas, it is worth

<sup>1</sup> See Waldmann, “John Locke as a reader of Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan*: a new manuscript”. Waldmann’s case for James Tyrrell as the memorialist is compelling.

unpacking this paragraph of the memoir and assessing its likely veracity and bearing on recent developments in Sydenham historiography.

First, however, some general comments on the memoir itself. As Waldmann explains, the context of Des Maizeaux's interview with Tyrrell is his (Des Maizeaux's) preparation of materials relating to Locke that were soon to be published in the very "pro-Locke" *A Collection of Several Pieces of Mr. John Locke*, 1720.<sup>2</sup> This collection was to include an English translation of Pierre Coste's *éloge* of Mr Locke which had first appeared in French in February 1705, just four months after Locke's death.<sup>3</sup> Des Maizeaux's reason for including Coste's adulatory *éloge* was to counter recent criticisms of Locke by Coste himself.<sup>4</sup> Under the cover of an anonymous letter dated 4 February 1720 that prefaces the *éloge*, most likely composed by Anthony Collins,<sup>5</sup> we read:

Mr. Locke's Friends judge its publication necessary, not only, as they think it contains a just Character of Mr. Locke, as far as it goes; but, as it is a proper Vindication of him against the said Mr. Coste, who in several Writings, and in his common Conversation throughout France, Holland, and England has aspers'd and blacken'd the Memory of Mr. Locke; in those very respects wherein he was his Panegyrist before.

For, they conceive, the Elogium contain'd in the following Letter, must stand good, till Mr. Coste thinks fit, either to deny his own Experience; or to confess, that the same things, which he then thought praise-worthy, have since changed their Nature.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, given the scathing attack on Locke that we find in Des Maizeaux's notes from his interview with James Tyrrell, it is hardly surprising that none of Tyrrell's comments were mentioned in *A Collection of Several Pieces* and that Des Maizeaux went to some length to anonymise his hand-written notes themselves by referring to the memorialist as 'Mr ...' or 'Mr T'; they reflect very badly on Tyrrell's character and Des Maizeaux was perhaps more likely to have been protecting Tyrrell's reputation than Locke's through the suppression of Tyrrell's name.

<sup>2</sup> Waldmann, "Locke as reader", pp. 247-53.

<sup>3</sup> Coste, "Lettre de Mr. Coste à l'auteur de ces Nouvelles, à l'occasion de la mort de Monsieur Locke".

<sup>4</sup> For the origins of Coste's critique of Locke, see Dybikowski, "Aspers'd and blacken'd": Pierre Coste's critique of Locke's moral theory".

<sup>5</sup> For the authorship of the letter, see the references given in Waldmann, "John Locke as reader", p. 251 n30, and Collins, *Correspondence of Anthony Collins*, Collins to Mr. \*\*\*, 4 February 1720, pp. 312-13.

<sup>6</sup> *A Collection of Several Pieces of Mr John Locke*, pp. ii-iii.

Indeed, on reading the memoir one can only be struck by the vitriol of a bitter and vengeful old man. For those with a knowledge of Locke's life and works, including his weaknesses and failings, the reader must question both Tyrrell's memory and his motives. Factual errors are present, and it is difficult to sort the wheat from the chaff. On the one hand, as Waldmann rightly judges, Tyrrell's claim that while at Oxford "[t]he English translation of Voiture's *Lettres* was all his delight" has a ring of authenticity to it, even if the trigger for this claim was the reference to Voiture (deriving from Damaris Masham)<sup>7</sup> in Le Clerc's memoir of Locke.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, the assertions either side of the comment on Voiture are, on the most charitable reading, confused: "When he was at Oxford, he did not study at all; he was lazy and nonchalant, and he amused himself with trifling works of wit ... He despised science and erudition."<sup>9</sup> What should we make of this?

It is possible that Tyrrell is referring to Locke's student days pre-1658 and yet Tyrrell, by his own admission, only met Locke in 1658 around the time Locke graduated MA. Tyrrell appears to be exaggerating Damaris Masham's claim in her 1705 letter to Le Clerc, which, again, was reproduced, in part, in Le Clerc's *Life and Character of Mr. Locke*, that "he had so small satisfaction There from his Studys ... that he became discontented with his manner of Life ... This discouragement (he said) kept him from being any very hard Student; and put him upon Seeking the Company of Pleasant, and Witty men."<sup>10</sup> However, in her 1705 letter Damaris Masham also recorded, "Mr Tyrrell ... tells me that he became acquainted with Mr Locke in Oxford in the yeare 1658 and that Mr Locke was then look'd upon as one of the most Learned and Ingenious young men in the Colledge he was of."<sup>11</sup> If this is true, then how could Locke

<sup>7</sup> See Woolhouse, "Lady Masham's account of Locke", p. 173, and Le Clerc, *Life and Character of Mr Locke*, p. 2. It is perhaps worth noting that Masham's sentiment there, "I doubt whither Voiture excell'd him in that kind of writeing", is almost certainly an allusion to her first letter to Locke in 1682 when she said indirectly referring to Locke's letters: "I have beene told Lately by a Person for whom I have a greater Esteeme then for Voiture ..."; Damaris Masham to Locke, 6 January 1682, in Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 2, p. 472.

<sup>8</sup> As Waldmann notes, Tyrrell would have known that Locke could not read French in his Oxford years. The English translation of Voiture's *Lettres* was licensed on 30 July 1656 (*A Transcript of the Registers of the Worshipful Company of Stationers*, vol. 2, p. 76) and a copy was in Locke's Library (LL 3102<sup>a</sup>). Locke recommends the reading of Voiture's *Letters* in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, § 189, p. 243.

<sup>9</sup> Waldmann, "Locke as reader", p. 273.

<sup>10</sup> Woolhouse, "Lady Masham's account of Locke", pp. 172-73. See Le Clerc, *Life and Character of Mr Locke*, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Woolhouse, "Lady Masham's account of Locke", p. 172.

have despised science and erudition before 1658? Furthermore, Jeffrey Collins establishes a strong case that Locke was reading widely in the later 1650s with a focus on his fellow Oxonians' responses to Hobbes' ecclesiology and views on conscience and that it is "unlikely that he [Locke] was himself unacquainted with the famous target of these works [Hobbes]".<sup>12</sup> On the back of this, Collins goes on to claim that Tyrrell's comments on Locke's reading of and promotion of *Leviathan* reinforce his conclusion about Locke's familiarity with Hobbes' writings. Yet if this is true, then Locke could hardly have been "lazy and nonchalant", amusing "himself with trifling works of wit" while a student. In short, Tyrrell's claim about Locke and Hobbes corroborates evidence that, in turn, falsifies Tyrrell's other claim about Locke's attitude to erudition.<sup>13</sup> It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Tyrrell's memories about Locke's Oxford years over half a century before the interview with Des Maizeaux skate lightly on the truth and are more concerned with criticism of Locke than regard for the facts.

### 1. Paragraph six on Locke and Sydenham

Our concern, however, is with Tyrrell's claims about Locke's relations with Thomas Sydenham and this brings us to paragraph six:

He had become obsessed with Dr Sydenham, next to whom Dr Lower was esteemed a dunce and was not even credited with common sense. Dr Thomas, the physician from Salisbury, did not admire Dr Sydenham any less, and they wished that he had been made the physician to the Queen, claiming that he would enable her to have children. This obsession made his Lordship [Lord Shaftesbury] often compare them to three fanatics who travelled to Rome; two of them saying that the third was the Holy Spirit [*comme il le disoit lui meme*], upon which an Inquisitor, touched with pity, declared that these two men would suffer in order to maintain their belief, and it would be better to make the third confess his knavery in order to disabuse them: which succeeded. In this way, the best means of disabusing these two men was to expose Sydenham.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Collins, *In the Shadow of Leviathan*, p. 30.

<sup>13</sup> It may be that the use of "neanmoins" ("Tyrell Memoir", line 6, Waldman, "Locke as reader", p. 271) that bridges Tyrrell's comment on Locke's attitude to erudition and his claim about *Leviathan* being 'almost always on his table' – assuming it derives from Tyrrell – is a tacit admission of an inconsistency in his account. I thank the anonymous referee who pointed this out.

<sup>14</sup> Waldmann, "Locke as reader", p. 275.

We can break this paragraph up into five claims:

- (T1) Locke became obsessed (*enflé*) with Sydenham
- (T2) In contrast to the esteem in which Locke held Sydenham, the physician Richard Lower was considered by Locke to be a dunce
- (T3) David Thomas was equally obsessed with Sydenham
- (T4) Locke and Thomas had wished Sydenham had been made physician-in-ordinary to Queen Catherine as he would have cured her of her infertility
- (T5) The Earl of Shaftesbury often compared Locke, Thomas, and Sydenham to three fanatics who travelled to Rome with the former two saying that the third [Sydenham] was the Holy Spirit, as the third one himself attested. An Inquisitor there who felt pity for them, declared that the best way to put these two gentleman out of their misery would be for the third to confess his knavery. Shaftesbury concluded that exposing Sydenham was the 'best means of disabusing' Locke and Thomas.

Let us take the polemical stance of the whole passage first. It is well documented that Sydenham had very few friends and supporters in the latter half of the seventeenth century and that he faced much opposition from within the medical fraternity. He was never a fellow of the College of Physicians and he struggled to find wealthy patients to support his London medical practice.<sup>15</sup> To take just two well-known examples: one pertaining to character and another pertaining to medical competence. In December 1667, Henry Oldenburg, secretary to the Royal Society, spent some time in the Tower of London during which he was apparently attacked by Sydenham. For he reports to Boyle:

I must beg your excuse for not seeing Dr Sidenham, who hath been the only man that I hear off, who, when I was shut up, thought fit (God knows without cause) to raile against me, and that was such a coward, as afterwards to disowne it, though undeniable. I confesse, that with so mean and un-moral a Spirit I can not well associate.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> See Anstey, "The creation of the English Hippocrates", pp. 460-62; Burrows and Anstey, "John Locke, Thomas Sydenham, and the 'Smallpox Manuscripts'", pp. 201-2.

<sup>16</sup> Oldenburg to Boyle, 29 December 1667, in *Correspondence of Robert Boyle*, vol. 3, p. 386. For Sydenham's falling out with Lady Ranelagh, Boyle's older sister, see *Correspondence of Robert Boyle*, vol. 3, p. 239, and for an assessment, see Burrows and Anstey, "John Locke, Thomas Sydenham, and the 'smallpox manuscripts'", p. 205.

Again, ten years later, in December 1677, when Locke was attending to Lady Northumberland in Paris who was suffering from the severe condition now known as trigeminal neuralgia, Locke sought urgent medical advice via the physician John Mapletoft in London. Mapletoft, one of Sydenham's few physician-friends, sent advice from three prominent fellows of the College of Physicians: Charles Scarburgh (First physician to the King), John Micklethwaite (Physician-in-Ordinary to the King), and Edmund Dickinson (Physician-in-Ordinary to the King). He had also procured advice from Sydenham, but in a postscript to Locke wrote: "I thought it not best to mention these our Friend's [Sydenham's] directions for reasons you may know" and suggested instead that Locke himself might use Sydenham's directions concerning her case "as you find cause".<sup>17</sup> That Sydenham's name had to be suppressed is strongly suggestive of the problems he faced with regard to his professional reputation in London medical circles. So, the general stance of Tyrrell's anecdote vis-à-vis Sydenham's character and professional standing fits the historical record. Let us proceed then, to the itemised claims.

First, (T1), Tyrrell claims that Locke became obsessed with Sydenham. To be sure, this is strong language, however, the lengths to which Locke went to promote Sydenham's writings and medical method, particularly after his death in 1689, while perhaps not obsessive, are remarkable. Here is a summary. Locke included Sydenham as one of the 'great Master-Builders' along with Boyle, Newton and Huygens in the 'Epistle to the Reader' of the *Essay*.<sup>18</sup> In 1690 Locke and another Sydenham promotor, Charles Goodall, distributed a questionnaire to some foreign physicians that included a question aimed at gauging "the Esteeme which Physitians have had of Doctor Sydenham and his works".<sup>19</sup> Again in 1690, Locke sent Dr Pieter Guenellon of Amsterdam copies of two medical writings that "tried to follow the plan of Dr Sydenham".<sup>20</sup> In a series of letters, Locke wrote approvingly of Sydenham's method to Thomas Molyneux in Dublin in late 1692;<sup>21</sup> in April 1695, Locke sought out information about

<sup>17</sup> Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, p. 537. For Mapletoft's letter and the enclosures, see Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, pp. 529-37.

<sup>18</sup> Locke, *Essay*, p. 9.

<sup>19</sup> Transcribed in Dewhurst, *John Locke (1632-1704), Physician and Philosopher*, p. 301.

<sup>20</sup> See Pieter Guenellon to Locke, 11/21 March 1690, *Correspondence*, vol. 4, p. 26.

<sup>21</sup> For example, Locke writes: "That which I always thought of Dr. Sydenham living, I find the world allows him now he is dead, and that he deserved all that you say of him. 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. Something of this kind permit me to promise my self one

another follower of Sydenham's method, Andrew Brown in Scotland through correspondence with Dr John Hutton, Physician-in-General. At the time, Brown was under attack from the Edinburgh medical fraternity over the death of his patient Lord Crichton who was thought to have died as a result of the application of Sydenham's method for the cure of continual fevers. The report Hutton sent was not at all complimentary.<sup>22</sup>

Second, (T2), Tyrrell claims that Locke considered Richard Lower to be a dunce and "was not even credited with common sense". This assertion is, *prima facie*, difficult to maintain in the light of what little extant evidence we have of Locke and Lower's relations. The general drift of this evidence from their undergraduate days until Lower's death in 1691 is one of friendship, albeit one that was not particularly close. In many respects Locke followed in Lower's footsteps: Lower was a few years ahead of him at Westminster, then as a Student at Christ Church; Lower was more central to the group of Oxford physiologists than Locke in the 1660s, though both of them worked very closely with Boyle during this period. There are a fair number of notebook entries that evidence Locke's and Lower's collaborating together on anatomical and physiological investigations dating from their time at Oxford<sup>23</sup> and corroborating evidence of their friendship at that time. For example, on 20 August 1660, George Percivall wrote to Locke of "all our friends at Oxford"

day from your judicious pen. I know nothing that has so great an encouragement from the good of mankind as this", Locke to Thomas Molyneux, 1 November 1692, *Correspondence*, vol. 4, p. 563. See also, Locke to Molyneux, 20 January 1693, *ibid.*, pp. 628-29.

<sup>22</sup> Browne "was never out of this Country except once at London, wher he had occasion to converse with Dr Sydnham, of whose opinions he is very fond, especialy of the method of purging in feavers, which he carries a greater length then it seems it was designed by that Author, for he uses it universaly in all feavers. ... His reputation for knowledg and learning is but very smal, he has never been well founded, and tho some of his thoughts taken singly are good, yet when he endeavours to put them together in a system they do not frame and look like a disjoynted peece of work. as for his success in the cure of feavers, he having seldom the occasion to consult with other Physitians, it must depend upon his own testimony both as to the certainty of the thing and as to the circumstances the sick were in, but it is certain that no body talks so much of it as he does himself", Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 5, p. 383, enclosure with Hutton to Locke, 25 May 1695. For further discussion, see Cunningham, "Sydenham versus Newton".

<sup>23</sup> For Locke's relations with Lower at Oxford, see Frank, *Harvey and the Oxford Physiologists*, pp. 186-88 and Walmsley, "Locke on respiration", though I cannot agree with the claims Walmsley makes about the influence of Sydenham on Locke's method, *ibid.*, pp. 474-76. Locke's medical notebooks that mention Lower include (dates of use in brackets): Bodleian Library (BL) MS Locke e. 4 (1657-1658), BL MS Locke f. 19 (1662-1669), BL MS Locke f. 27 (1663-1666), BL MS Locke f. 25 (1663-1667), British Library Add. MS 32554 (1660-1667), Biblioteca Marciana MS Lat. VII, 22 (c. 1658-c. 1684).

and included Lower in his list.<sup>24</sup> Again, Boyle wrote to Locke on 2 June 1666 and signed off with the words: “my humble service to ... Dr Lower, mr Thomas and the rest of my Freinds at Oxford”.<sup>25</sup> Then, in February 1667, Boyle had Lower deliver to Locke at Christ Church some sheets of his [Boyle’s] queries on mines.<sup>26</sup> Nearly thirty years later, Benjamin Furly probably has Lower in mind when he writes to Locke of “our Oxford friend”.<sup>27</sup> It is also worth noting that Lower was Damaris Cudworth’s physician in 1682<sup>28</sup> at the time of her and Locke’s first acquaintance.

It was not until the late 1660s that both Lower and Locke left off their studies and medical research and took different courses for professional advancement: Lower setting up a medical practice in London and Locke moving into the Ashley household. Lower was elected Fellow of the Royal Society on 17 October 1667 but ceased to attend meetings and to experiment in March 1668 to manage his large practice and to work on his ground-breaking book *Tractatus de corde* which appeared in March 1669.<sup>29</sup> Locke was elected Fellow on 26 November 1668, immediately after assisting with the life-saving operation on Lord Ashley’s hydatid cyst and his long convalescence from June to early November 1668.<sup>30</sup> According to Le Clerc, it was Lord Ashley who “advise’d him to turn his thoughts another way, and would not suffer him to practice Physick out of the house to any but his particular Friends”.<sup>31</sup> So, by the early 1670s Lower’s and Locke’s lives were on quite different trajectories. Nevertheless, all indications from Locke’s correspondence are that relations remained amicable. Locke differed from Lower in so far as Locke aligned himself with the chymical physicians early and had an ongoing commitment to mercurialist transmutational alchemy and a Helmontian approach to therapeutic medicine.<sup>32</sup> Lower was not known to have strong chymical interests and

<sup>24</sup> George Percivall to Locke, 29 August 1660, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, p. 153.

<sup>25</sup> Boyle to Locke, 2 June 1666, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, p. 280.

<sup>26</sup> See Locke to Boyle, 24 February 1667, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, p. 309 and Boyle to Locke, 2 June 1666, *ibid.*, p. 279. The queries on mines were published in the *Philosophical Transactions* on 19 November 1666; see Boyle, “Articles of inquiries touching mines”.

<sup>27</sup> Furly to Locke, 10 June 1689, *Correspondence*, vol. 3, p. 638. This identification is de Beer’s based on Furly’s letter to Locke of 24 May; see Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 3, p. 624.

<sup>28</sup> Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 2, p. 497.

<sup>29</sup> This work established that the animal heart is a muscle. For discussion, see Frank, *Harvey and the Oxford Physiologists*, pp. 208-13. Locke owned a copy of the first, 1669 edition, LL 1815.

<sup>30</sup> See Anstey and Principe, “John Locke and the Case of Anthony Ashley Cooper”.

<sup>31</sup> Le Clerc, *Life and Character of Mr Locke*, p. 6.

<sup>32</sup> The copious evidence for these claims is set out in Anstey, “John Locke and Helmontian medicine”.

is better classified as what Harold Cook has called a virtuoso-physician,<sup>33</sup> that is, a physician who managed to straddle both the College of Physicians and the Royal Society, though he did not become a fellow of the College until 1675.

As for Lower's relations with Sydenham, the only known connection is some investigative work that Lower carried out in Oxford in 1663 at the behest of Boyle. Sydenham claimed to have an MA from Oxford and for some reason Boyle seems to have become suspicious of this. He requested Lower to check the relevant authorities and records in Oxford. In spite of a very thorough investigation, no evidence was found.<sup>34</sup> More importantly, however, in 1675 the year Lower was elected Fellow of the College of Physicians, on the death of Thomas Willis he became a court physician and ministered to the King himself. Anthony Wood claimed that Lower was considered "the most noted physician in Westminster and London, and no man's name was more cried up at court than his".<sup>35</sup> Indeed, he is among the group of physicians who were with Charles II on his deathbed.

This brings us to Tyrrell's anecdote (T4) concerning Queen Catherine, namely, that "[Locke and Thomas] wished that he [Sydenham] had been made the physician to the Queen, claiming that he would enable her to have children". There is no known corroborating evidence for this claim.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, there is an event in which Lower was confronted by Charles II, that was probably well known and discussed at the time, and it is worth speculating that it was this sort of event that may have led to a conversation between Locke and Thomas about Sydenham's prospects at Court.

It is perhaps best to set out the background before describing Lower's confrontation with his monarch. In 1672, the little known apothecary from Cambridge, Robert Tabor (or Talbor), found himself in a position to prescribe Peruvian Bark (containing quinine) to Charles II who was suffering a fever. Happily for all concerned Charles was cured and Tabor was richly rewarded by being brought into the circle of medical advisors at Court. No doubt seeing his opportunity, Tabor immediately published a work on the Peruvian Bark entitled *Pyretologia: A Rational Account of the Cause and Cure of Agues*.<sup>37</sup> Then,

<sup>33</sup> See Cook, "Physicians and the new philosophy".

<sup>34</sup> See Lower to Boyle, 27 April 1663, *Correspondence of Robert Boyle*, vol. 2, pp. 76-77; Meynell, *Materials for a Biography of Dr Thomas Sydenham*, p. 18.

<sup>35</sup> Munk, *Roll of the College of Physicians*, p. 381.

<sup>36</sup> Though see *Correspondence*, vol. 9, pp. 155-56.

<sup>37</sup> Tabor, *Pyretologia*, London 1672, LL 2828<sup>a</sup>. Locke purchased and took notes from the book in 1679; see BL MS Locke d. 1, pp. 21, 25, 29, 33 and 37.

in 1678 he was created court physician and subsequently knighted. Sydenham was scandalised. In his first book, *Methodus curandi febres* (1666, 2nd edition 1668), Sydenham considered the bark as an example of a remedy that needed to be used with caution,<sup>38</sup> but in his revised and updated version, the *Observationes medicae* (1676), he advocated the drug and seems to have developed a proprietorial attitude towards it.<sup>39</sup> On hearing the news of Tabor's elevation, he wrote to Locke who was in Paris:

understanding how much Tabor, now knighted here, hath bin admired for his skill in curing Agues, I thought fitt to lett you know a way if you have not allready observed it in my book, page 99 ... I never gott 10l. by it, he [Tabor] hath gott 5000. He was an Apothecary in Cambridg wher my booke of practise never much obteyned. ... I am I thank god perfectly well of my pissing bloud, gout etc. and understand my trade somewhat better then when I saw you last, but am yet but a Dunse.<sup>40</sup>

Harold Cook regards this as an expression of “jealousy and possibly suspected plagiarism” on Sydenham’s part.<sup>41</sup> Sydenham, of course, had missed the boat on the bark, not fully endorsing it as a specific medicine in print until four years after the appearance of Tabor’s book.

In 1679, Tabor was sent to visit a number of European courts and while away Charles became “dangerously ill at Windsor with an intermittent fever”.<sup>42</sup> The court physicians, according to the diarist John Evelyn, refused to give the King the bark “out of envy” of Tabor, so Charles sought the advice of Dr Thomas Short who recommended he ought to take it. During his recovery Charles confronted Lower as to why the physicians would not prescribe it, and Lower’s reply must have created some stir at court, for we have versions from two independent sources. On John Evelyn’s account: “Dr Lower said, it would spoile their practise or some such expression: & at last confessed it was a Remedy fit onely for Kings”.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Sydenham, *Methodus curandi febres*, 1666, pp. 107-8.

<sup>39</sup> Sydenham, *Works of Thomas Sydenham*, vol. 1, pp. 84-87.

<sup>40</sup> Sydenham to Locke, 3 August 1678, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, pp. 601-2, modified after Dewhurst, *Dr. Thomas Sydenham*, p. 171.

<sup>41</sup> Cook, “Markets and cultures”, p. 134.

<sup>42</sup> See the translation of the anonymous account in French in Siegel and Poynter, “Robert Talbor, Charles II, and cinchona”, p. 85.

<sup>43</sup> Quoted in Siegel and Poynter, “Robert Talbor, Charles II, and cinchona”, p. 83. For the anonymous report, see *ibid.*, pp. 84-85.

Might not Locke, Thomas, Tyrrell, and perhaps even Sydenham, have discussed this event?<sup>44</sup> They knew Lower well; they advocated the use of the bark and probably viewed Lower's refusal to prescribe it to the King as a bad error of judgment, one that Sydenham would not have made. Indeed, perhaps Sydenham himself might do a better job at Court than Lower ... he might even turn his curative powers to the Queen. Perhaps it is Lower, not Sydenham, who is the dunce, or at least lacks common sense? One can easily speculate as to how, forty years later, Tyrrell, in anti-Lockean mode, might embellish the anecdote as an example of Locke's own errors in judgment. Of course, this is pure speculation, but it does provide enough historical context to render Tyrrell's claims (T2) and (T4) plausible.

Tyrrell's claim (T3) that the Salisbury physician David Thomas was also obsessed with Sydenham also goes well beyond any extant evidence. Thomas, like Locke, had trained as a chymical physician and, unlike Sydenham, was a Helmontian. The first reference to Sydenham in Locke's correspondence is in a letter from Thomas to Locke of 19 October 1669, in which he asks Locke to inquire of Sydenham whether he has a cure for the acute "grypeing of the gutts" that had broken out in London. The same letter also refers to Thomas' "tinctures of antimony", marking Thomas and Locke's ongoing interest in mercurialist transmutational chymistry.<sup>45</sup> And yet, Thomas and Sydenham were friends. Sydenham describes him as such in *Observationes medicae*: "Last year I was called to Salisbury to consult with my learned and dear friend Dr. Thomas."<sup>46</sup> Later, Tyrrell himself was part of this friendship group. He wrote to Locke in 1686: "as for Friends Dr: S[ydenham] and Dr: T[homas] are both well I hope for they were so lately."<sup>47</sup>

This brings us finally to (T5) and Shaftesbury's likening of Locke, Thomas, and Sydenham to pilgrims in Rome hoping to declare their revelation that Sydenham was in fact the third person of the Trinity. Waldmann leaves off translating the clause 'comme il le disoit lui meme' (as he himself [i.e., Sydenham] said), yet this is important in so far as it implies that Shaftesbury thought Sydenham had far too high an opinion of himself.<sup>48</sup> With or

<sup>44</sup> Locke was back in London on 30 April 1679.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas to Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, pp. 324-25. For Locke and Thomas and antimony, see also Thomas to Locke, 6 July 1666 and 18 November 1666, *ibid.*, pp. 285-86 and 296 and for further references and analysis, Anstey, "John Locke and Helmontian medicine".

<sup>46</sup> Sydenham, *Works of Thomas Sydenham*, vol. 1, p. 94.

<sup>47</sup> Tyrrell to Locke, 20 January 1686, *Correspondence*, vol. 2, p. 768.

<sup>48</sup> An anonymous referee alerted me to the untranslated clause.

without this clause, this is the most significant of all Tyrrell's claims and the most cutting. It is significant because, if true, it provides an explanation of Sydenham's abandoning of a projected work on smallpox to be dedicated to Lord Ashley and his failure to ingratiate himself in the household of Lord Ashley. It is the most cutting, not simply because of its blasphemous connotation, but because it presents a caricature of Locke as an enthusiast: the very sort of person against whom Locke wrote in the chapter "Of Enthusiasm" which he added to the fourth edition of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*.<sup>49</sup> Here is Locke's patron and friend, if what Tyrrell says is true, mocking Locke and Thomas as 'fanatiques' and accusing Sydenham of knavery. It is worth noting too that 'Fanatique' is the very word Pierre Coste uses in his translation of Locke's *Essay* for the 'enthusiast' who believes they have "immediate communication" with the Holy Spirit.<sup>50</sup> How credible is this scathing anecdote?

In 1670, Locke composed a dedicatory epistle and preface for a projected work on smallpox for Thomas Sydenham.<sup>51</sup> Manuscripts of these writings in Locke's hand are found among the Shaftesbury papers.<sup>52</sup> The book was to be dedicated to Anthony Ashley Cooper. In our detailed study of these manuscripts, (the late) John Burrows and I canvassed a variety of reasons for Sydenham's choice of Lord Ashley as the dedicatee. In the dedicatory epistle, Sydenham intimates that he had successfully cured someone in the Ashley household from smallpox using his cooling regime, thus providing a natural connection;<sup>53</sup> Sydenham presents the work as a natural history of smallpox and as such it promised to be a work that conformed to the methodological

<sup>49</sup> Locke, *Essay*, IV.xix.

<sup>50</sup> Compare Locke, *Essay*, IV.xx.10, p. 713 with Locke, *Essai philosophique concernant l'entendement humain*, IV.xx.10, p. 925: "Qu'un Fanatique prene pour Principe que luy ou son Docteur est inspiré & conduit par une direction immediate du Saint Esprit". For further discussion, see Anstey, "Locke, the Quakers and enthusiasm".

<sup>51</sup> For Locke's authorship of these MSS, see Burrows and Anstey, "Locke, Sydenham and the 'smallpox manuscripts'"; Anstey, "Further reflections", pp. 220-21.

<sup>52</sup> National Archives, PRO 30/24/47/2, fols 60-3 and 64-9. For transcriptions, see Dewhurst, *Dr. Thomas Sydenham*, pp. 101-9.

<sup>53</sup> National Archives, PRO 30/24/47/2, fol. 62r: "At least my Lord I thought it reasonable to let your Lordship see that I have practised noething in your family but what I durst owne & publish to the world, & let my country men see that I tell them noe thing here but what I have already tried with noe ill successe on severall in the family of one of the greatest & most eminent personages amongst them". For an assessment of the evidence for Sydenham's working as a physician in the Ashley household, which probably numbered about thirty, see Burrows and Anstey, "Locke, Sydenham and the 'smallpox manuscripts'", pp. 203-4 and 210. Sydenham also provided advice on the retention of the silver tap in Lord Ashley's side in 1668, though this might have been solicited by Locke. See Anstey and Principe, "John Locke and the case of Anthony Ashley Cooper", pp. 398-99.

orientation of the Royal Society and its commitment to Baconian natural history, including the histories of disease; then there may have been more mercenary reasons, namely, Sydenham hoped to secure more wealthy patients by having an association with Lord Ashley. Sydenham had earlier dedicated his *Methodus curandi febres* to Boyle, even though there is little evidence of cordial relations between them.<sup>54</sup> He later dedicated his tract on gout to the Catholic Dr Thomas Short when he was in favour in Court after Lower's fall from grace – a reversal of fortune brought about, not by the incident with the Peruvian bark, but by Lower's political views.<sup>55</sup> Yet again, there seems to be no evidence of a pre-existing relationship between Short and Sydenham. Was Sydenham trying to ingratiate himself with Short as he had tried with Boyle in 1666?

Whatever the motivation for the tract on smallpox, it was soon abandoned, and Tyrrell's nasty anecdote may well explain why. For even if it is stripped of much of the detail and allowance made for Tyrrell's memory, it does seem probable that the kernel of the matter – that Shaftesbury disliked Sydenham and distrusted his medical expertise – is true. Once this fact dawned on Locke and Sydenham, the project would have seemed hopeless. Though Sydenham did not leave off writing about this disease, he merely included his new, extensive discussion of smallpox in his *Observationes medicae*.<sup>56</sup>

## 2. The "Tyrrell Memoir" and Sydenham historiography

This brings us, finally, to the question of the bearing of paragraph six on recent Sydenham historiography. A cursory survey of references to Sydenham in recent medical publications, reveals that the hagiographic tradition in the history of medicine, namely, that Sydenham was, as G.A.J. Rogers put it, "probably the greatest physician of the age", is alive and well.<sup>57</sup> By contrast,

<sup>54</sup> For a review of the evidence of Boyle's relations with Sydenham before 1670, see Burrows and Anstey, "Locke, Sydenham and the 'smallpox manuscripts'", pp. 204-6.

<sup>55</sup> See Munk, *Roll of the College of Physicians*, pp. 377-78, 456. For Sydenham's dedication to Short, see *Tractatus de podagra*, London 1683, sigs. A2r-A5r; an English translation of the dedication is in *A Treatise on Gout and Dropsy*, in Sydenham, *Works of Thomas Sydenham*, vol. 2, pp. 121-22.

<sup>56</sup> See Sydenham, *Thomas Sydenham's Observationes medicae and Medical Observations*, pp. 8-9 for a collation of the various smallpox MSS and the *Observationes medicae*.

<sup>57</sup> Rogers, "The intellectual setting and aims of the *Essay*", p. 9. For contemporary Sydenham hagiography, see, for example, Nilsson, "Early vascular aging", Johnson and Currow, "Chronic refractory breathlessness", Robinson, "Why the poppy remains all the rage", and Greydanus, "Adverse effects of psychopharmacologic products in pediatrics: Primum non nocere!".

I have argued that the hagiographic tradition arose, not in virtue of Sydenham's accomplishments as a physician, but from his promotion by the likes of John Locke. As for Locke-Sydenham relations, the key question today concerns direction of influence. J.C. Walmsley claimed in 2010, "If Anthony Ashley Cooper ... had the greatest impact on Locke's life and politics, Thomas Sydenham had the greatest impact on his philosophy".<sup>58</sup> Taking issue with this interpretation, I have argued for the view that, 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.<sup>59</sup>

However, there is little point in rehearsing the evidence for these claims and counter claims to the hagiographic Sydenham historiography here, for superficially the claims of the "Tyrrell Memoir" are consistent with all sides of the debate. If, for example, one follows Maurice Cranston in claiming that Sydenham was "the greatest English physician",<sup>60</sup> this provides a good explanation of Tyrrell's claim (T1) about Locke's obsession (though it does raise the question as to why Tyrrell frames it as a criticism). Again, Tyrrell's claim about Locke's obsession (T1), together with the "greatest English physician" premise, provides a strong evidential premise for the view that Sydenham had a strong influence on Locke's philosophical thought. Yet, if Tyrrell is right about Sydenham's "knavery", then we have more evidence for my own revisionist historiography that in his own day Sydenham was widely regarded as an unsound physician. Moreover, if we accept that Locke helped shape Sydenham's methodology as I do, then Tyrrell's claim about Locke's obsession with Sydenham helps to explain why Locke would go to such great lengths to promote him. Ostensibly, the "Tyrrell Memoir" provides a little grist for everyone's mill.

We are not, however, at an impasse. The new evidence from Tyrrell via Des Maizeaux on the Locke-Sydenham relationship, when carefully examined does, I believe, enable us to finesse the case against the hagiographic tradition in so far as it adds two more strong critics of Sydenham, critics who were intimate with Locke, namely Tyrrell and Shaftesbury. It does, though, raise the further question as to when Tyrrell came to see through Sydenham? Did this coincide with the shift in his opinion of his former friend Locke? Perhaps a pre-existing disregard for Sydenham, in part, fuelled the turn against Locke?

<sup>58</sup> Walmsley, "Thomas Sydenham (1624-89)", p. 84. See also, Walmsley, "Sydenham and the development of Locke's natural philosophy" and Henriquez Garrido, "The ontological concept of disease".

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, Anstey, "The creation of the English Hippocrates", pp. 463-64.

<sup>60</sup> Cranston, *John Locke: A Biography*, p. 91.

The “Tyrrell Memoir” also sheds new light on Shaftesbury’s relations with Sydenham, providing a new explanation as to why Sydenham abandoned his planned tract on smallpox that was to be dedicated to (the then) Lord Ashley. Finally, the memoir also forces a re-examination of Locke’s relations with the physician Richard Lower. Did Locke turn against Lower in the way Tyrrell betrayed his late friend? Did Locke really regard the author of *Tractatus de corde* to be a dunce? There is no doubt that in the final analysis, the “Tyrrell Memoir” raises more questions than it answers.

### *Abbreviations*

LL: *The Library of John Locke*, 2nd ed., by John Harrison and Peter Laslett, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1971.

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# 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, Anstey holds,

<sup>1</sup> In the Bibliography the publications in which Anstey advances this interpretation are indicated by an asterisk \*.

<sup>2</sup> Anstey, "Locke, Sydenham and the 'Tyrrell Memoir'", p. 124.

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.<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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, sulphur 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 imagin'd to be noething but motion" and advanced Locke's new theory:

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

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

<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup>

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.<sup>7</sup>

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.<sup>8</sup>

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-

<sup>6</sup> Draft B, § 138, p. 256.

<sup>7</sup> Draft B, § 150, p. 262.

<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> 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 Shoemaking as practising physick.<sup>10</sup>

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?<sup>11</sup> 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

<sup>9</sup> Meynell, *Materials for a Biography of Thomas Sydenham*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>10</sup> Folger Shakespeare Library, MS V.a. 295, f. 143v. 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".

<sup>11</sup> 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".<sup>12</sup> Sydenham believed that "aetiology [was] a difficult, and, perhaps, an inexplicable affair; and I choose to keep my hands clear of it".<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup>

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.

<sup>12</sup> Sydenham, *Methodus*, pp. 231, 232 and 59.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>14</sup> *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.<sup>15</sup>

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.<sup>16</sup>

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,

<sup>15</sup> Locke to Thomas Molyneux, 1 November 1692, Letter 1556, *Correspondence*, vol. 4, p. 563.

<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup> 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),<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup> 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.

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

<sup>18</sup> Sydenham, *The Works of Thomas Sydenham*, vol. 2, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> 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,<sup>20</sup> later acting as Sydenham's amanuensis in the composition of his more expansive "Medical Observations" over the course of the next several years.<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup> 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.<sup>25</sup> Following in Lower's footsteps, Locke came up in 1652, was made a Lecturer in Greek in

<sup>20</sup> See note 43 below for more details.

<sup>21</sup> See note 45 below for more details.

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

<sup>23</sup> 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".

<sup>24</sup> 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*.

<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, Lower is the likely source of at least one of the sets of notes that Locke made.<sup>28</sup>

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.<sup>29</sup>

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.<sup>30</sup> 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".<sup>31</sup> 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

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

<sup>27</sup> The lectures have been published from Locke and Lowers notes in Dewhurst, *Thomas Willis's Oxford Lectures*.

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

<sup>29</sup> A full account of Locke's work is provided in Walmsley, "John Locke on Respiration".

<sup>30</sup> See Walmsley and Meyer, "John Locke's 'Respirationis usus': Text and Translation".

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*.<sup>32</sup> 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.<sup>33</sup>

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.<sup>34</sup> 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 decree the usefulness of natural philosophy and the necessitie of knowledge in Anatomie in subordination to physick".<sup>35</sup> Locke's manuscripts "Anatomia" and "De Arte Medica" date from 1668 and 1669 respectively.<sup>36</sup> 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.<sup>37</sup> To illus-

<sup>32</sup> Fracassati, "An Experiment of Signior Fracassati upon Bloud grown cold".

<sup>33</sup> Bodleian Library, MS Locke f. 19, p. 303.

<sup>34</sup> Bodleian Library, MS Locke d.11, ff. 79v and 268r-267v rev.

<sup>35</sup> Folger Shakespeare Library, MS V.a. 295, f. 143v.

<sup>36</sup> See note 11 above.

<sup>37</sup> National Archives, PRO 30/24/47/2, f. 31r.

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 endlessse disputations.<sup>38</sup>

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.<sup>39</sup>

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:

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., f. 33v.

<sup>39</sup> 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.<sup>40</sup>

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”.<sup>41</sup> 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 than 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):

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 275.

<sup>41</sup> 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.<sup>42</sup>

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,<sup>43</sup> why was Sydenham consulted about the treatment of Ashley's hydatid cyst of the liver, and why was Sydenham's advice followed?<sup>44</sup> 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?<sup>45</sup> Locke was, after all, a member of Ashley's household,

<sup>42</sup> Folger Shakespeare Library, MS V.a. 294, f. 47r.

<sup>43</sup> 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".

<sup>44</sup> As documented in Anstey and Principe, "John Locke and the case of Anthony Ashley Cooper".

<sup>45</sup> 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 separable 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";<sup>46</sup> 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 Observations medicae and his Medical Observations*.

<sup>46</sup> 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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# Estranged Minds and Their Corpuscles: Bacon, Helmont and Locke on Dysfunctional Thinking

Guido Giglioni

Only connect!

E.M. Forster, *Howards End*

What a phantasmagoria the mind is and  
meeting-place of dissemblables!

Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*

If both the past and the external world  
exist only in the mind, and if the mind  
itself is controllable – what then?

George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

*Abstract:* Between the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, a momentous redefinition of the philosophical notion of *intellectus* led several thinkers to devise new solutions to remedy what was increasingly perceived as the human mind's alleged inability to know and control reality. In this article, I concentrate on three cases which, I argue, can be profitably studied as interrelated, for Bacon, Helmont and Locke shared similar concerns about the scope and limits of the human mind. They moved, however, from different premises, suggested that human minds inhabited different universes of particulate matter and, above all, envisioned different solutions regarding the question of mental estrangement.

*Keywords:* Francis Bacon, Jan Baptista van Helmont, John Locke, thinking, mental illness

## *Introduction*

Between the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, a momentous redefinition of the philosophical notion of *intellectus* led several thinkers to devise new solutions to remedy what was increasingly perceived as the human mind's alleged

inability to know and control reality. The crisis of the Aristotelian *intellectus*, especially in its Averroist version (are human beings the subjects of their thinking or does thinking transcend what a human mind can grasp in universal terms?), helped a sense of cognitive dissonance spread across different areas of philosophical knowledge during the early modern period. In this article, I concentrate on three cases which, I argue, can be profitably studied as interrelated, for Bacon, Helmont and Locke shared similar concerns about the scope and limits of the human mind. They moved, however, from different premises and, above all, they envisioned different solutions. Francis Bacon (1561-1626) developed a methodology for gathering knowledge that he believed would lead to a new technology of thinking. This new *organ* for harvesting, ordering and transforming the fruits of mental life, designed to be a reliable echo of the material life of things, hinged on the original self-identity of matter, once freed from the distorting mirror of the imagination (the idols projected by the human mind onto reality) and from the adaptable and compliant interface of the intellect. Jan Baptista van Helmont (1580-1644), a follower of Nicholas of Cusa and medieval German mysticism, and one of the most distinguished among the seventeenth-century Paracelsians, regarded the intellect as an unperishable bearer of intelligible clarity which the human mind could capture or intuit only by rejecting the seductions of conscious reason and discursive logic. Locke, finally, appealed to an idea of consciousness and personality that, despite its Cartesian debts, gestured beyond the very limits of human identity. In this view, the role of memory was crucial, for 'recollection' was seen as the supreme function of consciousness. It was precisely by recalling the past and anticipating the future that memory could shape the story of one's personal life. Here it is worth noting that Locke's account of memory was different from the views held by Helmont and Bacon. While for Helmont memory remained the Platonic mark of intelligible self-identity embedded in the process of cognitive and moral ascent, Bacon looked at memory as a trace of knowledge imprinted in the things themselves (human memory being inevitably exposed to the same shortcomings as the intellect). Memory for Bacon was first of all a record and a testimony of the original formative motions of the universe, sedimented in the most ancient myths of the living cosmos. He called this memory *sapientia veterum*, which I suggest would be correct to call the *vetus organum* (i.e., mythology) and to be paired with the *novum organum* of emended thinking, both being part of Bacon's general programme of logic.

It is now rather common for philosophers and historians of philosophy to look at the *cogito* – the Cartesian originator of the modern notion of conscious self – in terms of *bona mens*, that is, as a paragon of right thinking, intellec-

tual clarity and mental health. Descartes considered the *entendement pur* (to Elisabeth, 28 June 1643) as that condition of self-evidence that solely could free human cognition from the spectres of self-doubt and uncertainty.<sup>1</sup> As confirmed by Kant at the end of the eighteenth century, the reason investigated by philosophers is ‘pure’. Today, too, philosophers – especially those who work on establishing and assessing standards of logical and moral probity – are inclined to study the mind as a faculty that is not supposed to malfunction or fall short of its own criteria of normative judgment. In principle, at least, it shouldn’t. The principal aim of this article, designed as an exercise in comparative history of ideas, is to help elucidate the early modern notion of mental illness by focusing on the philosophy of the dysfunctional mind rather than on medicine or psychiatry.<sup>2</sup> The three positions on the intellect that were articulated by Bacon, Helmont and Locke during the seventeenth century are here scrutinized to shed light on the pathologies of the mind, and not to assess the canons of its ideal functioning. Bacon will show us how the intellect can act as the great illusionist; Helmont will introduce us to the possibility of using the intellect as an ecstatic gateway to God; Locke, finally, presents the intellect as a most supple identity maker. These are three views in which the intellect is borderline. As a result, the possibility of self-estrangement looms large in the form of delusion, self-loss and dissociation. My decision to concentrate on this particular triptych, besides the very importance of the three authors’ work, depends on the presumption that our knowledge of Locke’s philosophy can be refined if we take into account possible hints that he may have gained from reading Bacon and Helmont.

### 1. *I Think, therefore I May Be Mad*

For a variety of reasons (including the geographical and astronomical expansion of the known world, the eruption of religious conflicts and demonological conspiracies, unprecedented surges in social and political violence), during the sixteenth century a thinking attitude emerged which increasingly questioned

<sup>1</sup> Descartes to Elisabeth (28 June 1643), in Descartes, *Oeuvres*, III, p. 691; Descartes, *Philosophical Writings*, III, p. 226.

<sup>2</sup> I have dealt with the early modern history of the psychiatric aspects of intellectual knowledge in Giglioli, “Medical Approaches to the Mind in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance”. I also provided an account of the early modern medicine of the mind in “Medicine of the Mind in Early Modern Philosophy”.

the human mind's ability to know and control reality. From Girolamo Cardano (1501-1576) to Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), the list of the authors who cast doubt on the powers of the mind in its dealings with reality is long.<sup>3</sup> One of these questioners was Jan Baptista van Helmont (1580-1644), whose work Locke happened to know, even though it remains difficult to assess the extent to which it influenced the evolution of Locke's thought.<sup>4</sup> In a short treatise included in Helmont's philosophical omnium gatherum, the *Ortus medicinae*, and entitled *Venatio scientiarum*, 'the hunt for knowledge', which is crucial for understanding its author's theory of the mind and knowledge, a verse from the Gospel of Matthew, 10:36 ('*et inimici hominis domestici eius*: And a man's foes shall be they of his own household') explains how the soul can sometimes detach itself from reason, perceiving the latter as a foreign presence, no longer a vital part of it. Helmont characterized reason as a guest and a stranger (*hospes peregrinus*) which, as a result of the Fall (*naturae corruptio*), had triggered a particular process of alienation leading to all sorts of representational discomforts and finally to illness.<sup>5</sup>

Like Helmont, Bacon aptly reflects this crisis of the intellect issuing from a time that was "out of joint" and whose spirit is well captured by the polyphonic intricacies of Renaissance thought. Bacon never tired of alerting his contemporaries to the danger of delusion to which the human intellect was constantly being exposed. For him, the mind could act as a potential source of self-deception rather than enlightenment. Only through an elaborate and demanding exercise of self-scrutiny could the intellect be turned into a reliable part of the cognitive and political venture underlying the project of the Great Instauration. In the *Novum organum* (1620), he argued how the mind, in its natural state, was neither qualified nor legitimized to represent nature or the

<sup>3</sup> The classic book detailing the responses of the early modern philosophers to an age of uncertainty remains Popkin, *The History of Scepticism*. On the generalized state of conflict and tension during the Renaissance, see Davies (ed.), *Aspects of Violence in Renaissance Europe*.

<sup>4</sup> On Helmont's philosophy, see Giglioni, *Immaginazione e malattia*; Hedesan, *An Alchemical Quest for Universal Knowledge*. On Locke's knowledge of Helmont's work, see Anstey, "John Locke and Helmontian Medicine".

<sup>5</sup> Helmont, *Venatio scientiarum*, in *Opera omnia*, p. 21: "Recordataque mens verbi divini, quod *domestici eius* sint *inimici eius*, nauseam super Ratione concepit. ... Inde ergo, initio coepit anima rationem non amplius ut partem aut potestatem sui contemplari, sed velut peregrinam hospitem, ab esse mentis plane decisam atque neutram. Idque postquam anima per fidem sciret se a corpore semel separatam non amplius rationis indigam, hanc proinde esse caducam mortalemque, imo et cum morte nobis advenisse, in naturae corruptione" (All translations from Bacon's and Helmont's Latin are mine). On the early modern view of the human mind disfigured by the original sin, see Harrison, *The Fall of Man*.

good. As with Helmont, one reason for being suspicious of the mind depended on theological apprehensions: the human intellect had been profoundly disfigured by the Fall. To this desolate landscape, Bacon added a further reason, of a metaphysical order, detailing the troublesome condition of the human mind. Bacon maintained that the ultimate foundation of reality was to be found in the appetite for self-preservation, believed to be universally diffused in nature. In this account, the intellect was viewed as the most sophisticated mechanism devised by nature to allow the human animal to adapt itself to a constantly changing reality. The mind was therefore not an ideal platform that could secure the knowledge of the true nature of things. As clearly argued in Book 4, Chapter 3 of *De augmentis scientiarum* (“The Growth of Knowledge”), the primordial force shaping the world of nature was desire, which Bacon described as an unconscious activity (*perceptio sine sensu* and *sine anima*) rather than as a form of substantial self. If the rationale behind the universal tendency of natural appetite was to follow everything that could grant the self-preservation of the system, the intellect, far from being a device that reflected the true nature of things, was in fact dangerously prone to indulge itself and easily become prey to the seductive power of vital illusions. When not carefully calibrated to adjust desire to reality, consciousness was therefore a perilous source of misapprehensions and misbeliefs.<sup>6</sup>

For this reason, in the *Novum organum* Bacon undertook a most severe critique of the intellect considered in its natural condition as *sibi permissus*, that is, as a cognitive power left to itself and to its representational devices. Significantly, it was only at the end of the *Novum organum* that Bacon hinted at the possibility for the intellect to become *emancipatus*,<sup>7</sup> that is, to overcome its state of minority and turn into a free and responsible agent. Only at that point, after mastering a considered exercise of the senses, following a reliable plan of action, using experimental tests and technological implementations, the intellect could regain a direct and unadulterated contact with nature

<sup>6</sup> Bacon, *De augmentis scientiarum*, in *Works*, I, pp. 605-11. Sophie Weeks has explored the nexus of mind and madness in Bacon in her “Francis Bacon’s Doctrine of Idols”. Significantly, a section of this article is devoted to “John Locke on Universal Madness” (pp. 36-39).

<sup>7</sup> I agree with the kind and generous anonymous reader of this essay who noted that my reading of Locke’s medicine of the mind is “a very ‘*Essay*’-centric vision”. In my partial defence, I can say that the primary aim of this article was to concentrate on Locke’s view of thinking as a movement of ideas that is both cohesive and expansive and that therefore positively allows for the Woolfian “meeting-place of dissemblables”. A further investigation detailing the extent to which habit and application can (and perhaps should) shape the activity of thinking in one’s social behaviour will certainly involve a close reading of Locke’s *Conduct of the Understanding*.

and reality. The method outlined by Bacon in the *Novum organum* was the path that the mind was supposed to undertake to pass from the *intellectus sibi permissus* to the *intellectus emancipatus*, i.e., from what we may call intellectual license (constantly rekindled by the seductions and distractions of *phantasia* and *ingenium*) to an idea of cognitive responsibility based on a critical assessment of reality, a strategy which Bacon encapsulated in the practice of *historia*. For Bacon, *historia* meant both an experimental scrutiny of nature (*historia naturalis*) and a dispassionate account of human action (*historia civilis*).<sup>8</sup>

The situation is different when we approach Locke's theory of knowledge and the mind. Here the intellect is presented as the power that guarantees human beings the certainty of being reliable thinking subjects. It is a vigorous affirmation of personal identity pivoted on consciousness. This ensures human nature to overcome precisely the pitfalls of self-deception that are always lurking in the making of one's identity (the madness of reason addressed by Locke in the *Essay*).<sup>9</sup> Locke is an original interpreter of the Cartesian solution, and like Descartes he defends the autonomy of the intellect, which therefore cannot be characterized as colluding with an *hospes peregrinus*, that is, an extraneous force in the Helmontian sense (an internal enemy which represents the principle of otherness), nor as a power that is *sibi permissus*, i.e., as an activity that is usually left at the mercy of its own representations in the Baconian sense. Locke agrees with Descartes when he looks at the mind as a source of self-evident consciousness. There is, however, a fundamental difference with Descartes, and this marks the originality of Locke's position: for the latter, consciousness is not a substance but a stream of representations, where stream is to be intended as a metaphor that captures the temporal flowing of our thinking and the coalescing of representations. Locke's concept of mental life, in rejecting all forms of innate and pre-existing realities, assumes that thinking is a succession of ideas accruing to one other. Here is the crucial – but also the most fascinating – point in the Lockean theory of personal identity: How can we defend a view of personal identity based on a relentless flow of ideas? As this type of identity does not rest on substances (be they material or immaterial), it then becomes necessary – I would say imperative – for Locke to look at self-sentience as an activity of self-recognition. Only this can prevent the

<sup>8</sup> On Bacon's idea of *historia* as a way of doing philosophy, see Giglioni, "Historia and Materia"; Giglioni, "Philosophy According to Tacitus".

<sup>9</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xxxiii.4, p. 395.

whole world from sinking into a representational mayhem. The human self is therefore that ballast that saves the Lockean world from going really mad.<sup>10</sup>

The disconnect of self and nature is not a problem for Bacon, for whom selfhood – the state of being present to oneself – begins with nature itself, at the very level of the primal motions and propensities of matter (its appetites, in fact). In this case, the ability to discern and recognize differences is of decisive importance. According to Bacon, the existence of *discrimina* – differences – in nature demonstrates that natural entities themselves have the capacity for *discretio*, otherwise the *discrimina* that are objectively observed in nature would be either not real or imposed on nature by an external force. Real differences in nature are therefore the result of natural forces working from within matter and these forces have the power and ability to discriminate and differentiate objects. In *De augmentis scientiarum*, Bacon calls this tendency *perceptio absque sensu* and *absque anima*, a perceptual state of matter that does not require a unifying sentient self. Past philosophers, he argues, thought that “the soul is indiscriminately instilled in all bodies”. These philosophers failed to see how there could be a movement capable of distinguishing different realities without assuming the existence of sentience (*sensus*) or how there could be sentience without assuming a soul (*anima*).<sup>11</sup> They maintained that, firstly, motion by itself was not sufficient to explain the operations of the soul; therefore, some ability to recognize differences – sentience – had to be added; secondly, they argued that the soul was to be understood in terms of an incorporeal substance. On the contrary, in Bacon’s theory of the soul motions are appetitive tendencies and no substantial self is needed. These postulates lead to a metaphysics of life characterized by states of perception that are not accompanied by conscious experience and are present everywhere in nature. This *perceptio absque sensu* – as Bacon defines this state – can be called natural (i.e., unconscious) perception. According to Bacon, this solution had the advantage of avoiding two opposite but related drawbacks: that everything in nature is endowed with consciousness and that there can be no consciousness without a soul *qua substantia*.

<sup>10</sup> The topic of the mind in Locke’s philosophy is too vast a subject to be contained in a footnote. Here I only mention a few distinguished studies among many: Weinberg, “Locke on Consciousness and Reflection”; Thiel, *The Early Modern Subject*; Strawson, *Locke on Personal Identity*; Tabb, “Madness as Method”.

<sup>11</sup> Bacon, *De augmentis scientiarum*, p. 611: “omnibus sine discrimine corporibus animam infundi putaverint: neque enim videbant, quomodo motus cum discretione fieri potuerit absque sensu; aut sensus adesse absque anima”.

Interestingly, in this discussion Bacon and Locke share the same objective: there should be a way of conceptualizing the activity of thinking without attributing this process to a soul, that is, without presupposing a substantial immaterial spirit as the subject of thinking. The difference, however, is that Bacon explains thinking as a most refined state of cognitive balance whose beginnings are to be found in the original state of perceptual reactivity that is ubiquitously diffused in nature in the form of primordial tendencies towards self-preservation, while for Locke, precisely because thinking cannot be the property of a substantial soul, it consists in the very exercise of conscious thought. In Bacon as well as Locke, function prevails over substance. Both perspectives, though, are confronted with the risk of cognitive dispersion.

In Locke's *Essay* we can find at least five models of identity, which are all different ways to explain why in nature coalescence seemingly prevails over disintegration. The first four converge towards the notion of human being: identity of substance (the "mass of matter"); identity of life (plant as a "living body"); identity of sentience (which the human animal shares with non-human animals and which corresponds to Bacon's sensitive soul); human identity. Here one might wonder why humans have the privilege of enjoying an extra layer of identity when compared to non-human animals. Human identity seems to point to a unique type of sameness in nature, i.e., the human species as being defined by the union of an anatomical body with an incorporeal spirit (Bacon called this type of spirit *spiraculum vitae*). To these four layers, Locke adds the identity of the person, which a certain type of human being, the human being who is capable of being present to himself through time, shares with other intellects, for example the angels and, above all, God. It remains rather difficult to understand how these identities can be united without them ending up in a tangle of multiple essences.<sup>12</sup>

We can describe the stages of this developmental model of identity as a process of increasing unification. The keywords are cohesion, disposition, continuity, communication, accountability and ownership. We start from the cohesion of the parts forming a body, already evident at the level of the "mass of matter". We then move to the vital disposition which is linked to living beings ("Common Life to all the Parts so united"). This second level presupposes a life circle that keeps the parts of a whole together. The third stage of unification requires organization. A fourth criterion of identity derives from the notion of continuity ("the same continued life"), for identity is lost every time interruptions and breakages occur.

<sup>12</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xxvii, pp. 328-48.

The most tenacious type of continuity, despite apparently being more fragile than the bond characterizing a stone, is the presence to itself that the remembering mind is capable of establishing every day when it wakes up. Communication is needed to extend and transfer the same life to the ever changing parts of a body, thus distributing self-awareness (thoughts, memories and aspirations) to the ever-changing agglomerations of ideas: “the same self, as far as the same consciousness can extend to actions past or to come... can be transferr’d from one thinking Substance to another”.<sup>13</sup> Finally, at the end of Locke’s demonstration, accountability – that is, one’s ability to account for his or her actions – becomes the characteristic that defines personal identity, together with ownership, i.e., the ability to appropriate and possess thoughts.

We can therefore say that for Locke consciousness is transferable and annexable. This is certainly the most intriguing aspect of Locke’s theory of personal identity. The crucial question for Locke’s ontology then becomes where to look for the glue, the ‘cement’, to use Locke’s specific term.<sup>14</sup> Just as extended life unites a multiplicity of substances (which is the type of identity created by the continuity of life and made evident by plants), so one’s consciousness unites a multiplicity of lives and substances. In theory, says Locke, we can have a self (person) who embraces several human beings (the “remote existences” of which he speaks in *Essay*, II.xxvii.23), or a human being who contains several selves: one person by day and one by night. Perhaps, that particular individual mentioned by Locke, who holds a position of responsibility in society while being convinced that he is Socrates, is an example of the temporal and spatial stretchability of Lockean consciousness, at least in principle.<sup>15</sup> A consciousness of this kind is not so much the punctual and instantaneous act of intuitive immediacy described by Descartes, but a condition of inner consciousness that, precisely because it is able to stretch from one end to the other of the recollecting power of the mind, watches over the continuous interruptions of the self. This memory is in fact a kind of imagination that is both retentive and anticipating, capable of leaps because it is able to build bridges over a reality of the senses which is not always present to the mind of an individual. The kind of conscious thinking that forms one’s personal identity can thus present and re-present itself and, above all, appropriate different segments of one’s own life.

<sup>13</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xxvii.10, pp. 335-36; II.xxvii.12, pp. 338.

<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, Locke, *Essay*, II.xi.13, pp. 160-61: “incoherent *Ideas* have been cemented together so powerfully, as to remain united”.

<sup>15</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xxvii.14, p. 339.

Seen in this light, consciousness can therefore be described as the “cement” that unifies the mental life of human beings. Indeed, on a deeper level, based as it is on the actions and reactions of ideas, consciousness is the universal glue that holds the cosmos together – a cosmos generated by the human mind through ideas, and not, as is the case with Bacon, by movements of attraction and repulsion (*perceptiones*) embedded in the very fabric of matter, or by the network of imaginations that all vital principles (the *archei*) establish in nature, as in Helmont’s *Ortus medicinae*.<sup>16</sup> If, ultimately, the force that unifies reality is consciousness, the view, if not strictly anthropocentric, can be said to be ‘post-human’, since consciousness represents a degree of awareness that adds a higher level of identity (as self-presentation) to the characteristic identity of human nature – what Locke calls personal identity. Locke, who in doing so dissociates human reason from consciousness, defines the latter as that which “unites remote existences into one person”. Here are Locke’s words:

Nothing but consciousness can unite remote existences into the same person: the identity of substance will not do it; for whatever substance there is, however framed, without consciousness there is no person: and a carcass may be a person, as well as any sort of substance be so, without consciousness.<sup>17</sup>

The cosmic glue in the Lockean universe is then a process of appropriation through conscious thought. Through memory understood as recollection, the mind makes objects of consciousness out of raw experience, be that external or internal. Remembering is the ability to own “remote existences”. Lockean identity has the power to receive and colonize these “existences”. Conversely, if I do not perceive an experience as mine, that is, if I do not remember it, that experience falls out of the scope of my being me:

For, whatsoever any substance has thought or done, which I cannot recollect, and by my consciousness make my own thought and action, it will no more belong to me, whether a part of me thought or did it, than if it had been thought or done by any other immaterial being anywhere existing.<sup>18</sup>

This is the back-and-forth movement of conscious thought which we may describe as conscious appropriation. The fact is that appropriations of con-

<sup>16</sup> Bacon, *Sylva Sylvarum*, in *Works*, II, p. 602.

<sup>17</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xxvii.23, p. 344.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, II.xxvii.24, p. 345.

sciousness can be legitimate or illegitimate, healthy or pathological. Illegitimate appropriations may be called pathological when they verge on insanity, a possibility which, as has been said, is continually open in the Lockean universe of mental expansion, a world that hints at a variety of mental misappropriations and embezzlements. This striking emphasis on the power of consciousness as a recollecting assimilation of experience can be described as a Cartesian heresy, gesturing towards a form of panpsychism that has finally got rid of the view of *cogitare* as a *res*. It is a result that is much more radical than the ‘nullibism’ blamed on Descartes by Henry More.<sup>19</sup> Having freed itself from the ontological constraints of material or immaterial substances – the two *res* of Descartes’s metaphysics – Locke’s consciousness holds to the Cartesian understanding of *cogitare* (consciousness) while changing it into an expansive and connective activity which could be defined as expanding fungible thinkability. In Locke’s explanation, the conscious mind as a self appropriates and possesses ideas in order not to be possessed by them; through them the mind expands the range of its action and colonize the ever expanding bounds of what can be thought. This is a sharply different position from both Bacon’s and Helmont’s views. Baconian ideas are laws of material transformation (*formae*) that coordinate the appetitive motions shaping the bodies of nature (including the human body). Helmontian ideas are representational devices that possess the imaginations of the countless vital principles while these are busy shaping bodies.

It is precisely at this juncture that references to Bacon and Helmont, far from being odd and out of place, may shed much needed light on the discussion. Like Locke, Helmont had worked out a metaphysics of ideas in which representations are seen as combining and recombining themselves in innumerable different ways. Like Locke, again, Helmont had turned the Platonic meaning of ideas into functions of representational activity. The difference, though, – and in this respect Helmont’s view is closer to Bacon’s – lay in the assumption that the faculty of representation belongs to every vital principle, starting with the ones that control the smallest parts of matter, the *minima*. As we are going to see in the next section, Helmont’s cosmology of *minima vitalia* and Bacon’s cosmology of *minima perceptiva* lay the foundations of a unified view of the universe which Locke’s corpuscles fail to accomplish but, much more importantly, are not intended to accomplish.

<sup>19</sup> On More’s nullibism, see Henry, “A Cambridge Platonist’s Materialism”; Reid, *The Metaphysics of Henry More*, pp. 185-236.

The accuracy with which Locke surveys all the instances in which human beings seem to abandon the correct use of their reason may look like a rather reckless flight of the philosophical imagination. As readers, while being thrown into the jumble of reincarnated, resurrected, split, forgetful and pre-existing characters, we share Locke's curiosity and doubts in his attempt to find out where to draw the limits of a human self. In the end, though, common sense prevails, as perhaps it should be the case. Consciousness, says Locke, "unites substances, material or spiritual, with the same personality". He agrees that "the more probable opinion is, that this consciousness is annexed to, and the affection of, one individual immaterial substance".<sup>20</sup> This "probability" dissolves all the spectres of monopsychism, panpsychism, metempsychosis and psychopannychism that up to that point had been flitting about before our eyes during Locke's demonstration of personal identity in Book 2, Chapter 27 of the *Essay*. Above all, it removes the spectre of Helmontian selves containing multitudes of selves (as many as the vital principles – the *archei* – that make up a body).

On this specific subject, Locke's distance from Bacon is of a different order, but as significant and illuminating. Common sense for Bacon means the possibility that an *organ* external to human consciousness (be this a method, an experiment, the practice of *historia* or technological innovation) may restore (*instauratio*) the proper relationship (*commercium*) between mind and nature, for consciousness left to itself cannot be trusted, in addition to being a frivolous and unproductive exercise. We speak today of the extended mind (after the renowned article by Andy Clark and David Chalmers published in 1998).<sup>21</sup> Bacon and Locke propose different solutions to the problem of how the mind can and should be extended: Locke does so by appealing to an idea of consciousness and personality that goes beyond the limits of human identity; consciousness is precisely that power of the mind that allows thinking subjects to become steady functions of representational energy independently of their substance (regardless of whether this substance is corporeal or incorporeal). By contrast, Bacon claimed that the power of humankind to extend its cognitive grasp of reality depends on a new technology of thinking, which he understood as mirroring and echoing the material life of things. Here the model is the original identity of matter, free from the distorting mirror of the imagination (the idols) and from the adaptable and compliant interface of the intellect. Unlike Bacon, Locke appealed to an idea of consciousness and personality that pointed beyond

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., II.xxvii.25, p. 345.

<sup>21</sup> See Clark and Chalmers, "The Extended Mind"; Clark, *Supersizing the Mind*.

the limits of human identity. In this view, the role of memory was crucial, for 'recollection' was the supreme function of consciousness. Precisely by recalling the past and anticipating the future, memory could shape one's personal story.

## 2. *Chemistry of Mental Estrangement*

If there are times when the human mind turns into an unreliable source of misrepresentations, this is not only because of its internal malfunctioning. There can also be circumstances in which the very link that the mind entertains with reality becomes tenuous. The circumstances I am referring to in this case are of a material nature. We therefore need to briefly investigate the properties and reactions that characterize the motions in matter and how these motions affect one's perceptual acquaintance with reality. This is especially important in Bacon's and Helmont's case, for human perception of things results from an overarching view of nature in which each single thing, inanimate or animate, is endowed with perception. Of course, the nature of material reality also matters to Locke, for whom the need to demonstrate how the mind is suitable to reality is even more urgent. Do associations of ideas reflect how corpuscles associate in nature? In other words, we need to explore the chemistry of mental activity. It should be noted that speaking of chemistry in this specific context is all the more appropriate because Bacon, Helmont and Locke can all be said to be corpuscularian thinkers who, in different ways, were conversant with the latest progress of chemical philosophy and who looked at changes in reality in terms of combination and recombination of material parts.<sup>22</sup>

Helmont is the author of an extremely influential summa of natural philosophy and theology in which, following the example of Paracelsian medicine, he advanced a chemically based explanation of all cognitive processes. Thinking, for Helmont, is heavily implicated in the activity of the imagination, and imagination, in turn, is a vital and cosmic function that underpins all aspects of nature. More specifically, imagination acts as a ferment that promotes change

<sup>22</sup> The early modern period is a time of mechanical, chemical and vital lines of enquiry. Sometimes these lines overlap, intersect and hybridize. In this article, when I speak of chemistry, I use the word in its more general and ordinary meaning and I deliberately shy away from antiquarian and taxonomic accuracy. By chemistry I mean a theory of natural bonding which explains how the particulate features of reality connect with each other: Bacon through natural perceptions, Helmont through active images, Locke through ideas.

in matter.<sup>23</sup> Every single natural being results from the activation of biochemical reactions originally set up by God when he made the universe. Helmont argues that the main constituents of these reactions are ultimately two: matter and energy. Matter (that is, water) is a universal undifferentiated substratum (*succus genericus*); energy (that is, perception) is knowledge as a teleological principle of action imparted by God at the moment of creation (*scientia*). Helmont adopts the Paracelsian notion of *scientia* and he considers it to be an intrinsic property of material bodies. In other words, *scientia* can be found everywhere in nature before turning into a property of the human mind:

God naturally infused His knowledge (*scientia*) of ends and forms into nature's efficient cause as every single thing in nature needs some generic sap as their matter and an internal principle of generation that is seminal, efficient, organizing and directive. Accordingly, every single corporeal thing needs these two principles, nothing more.<sup>24</sup>

As in Helmont's case, Bacon's chemistry rests on the adoption and adaptation of Paracelsian ideas. In particular, Bacon's Paracelsianism is indebted to the exegetic attempts that the Danish philosopher and physician Peder Sørensen (1542-1602), Latinized as Severinus, made to clarify the intricacies of Paracelsus's philosophy.<sup>25</sup> Traces of Severinus's *Idea medicinae philosophiae* ("A Model of Philosophical Medicine"), a fascinating compendium of Paracelsian ideas published in 1571, are scattered in Bacon's accounts of physics. Like Helmont's *succus* and *scientia*, Bacon's ultimate constituents of natural life are matter and energy, more specifically, the mud of the earth (*limus terrae*) and the divine breath of God's spirit (*spiraculum*).<sup>26</sup>

*Limus* and *spiraculum* are also involved in the explanation of the origin and functioning of the soul in nature. And yet, when discussing issues concerning thinking, knowledge and methodology, Bacon never appears to be particularly interested in grappling the ontological specifics of the human soul. In this, Bacon acts very similarly to Bernardino Telesio (1509-1588), whose doctrine

<sup>23</sup> Giglioni, *Immaginazione e malattia*, pp. 43-96.

<sup>24</sup> Helmont, *Causae et initia naturalium*, in *Opera omnia*, p. 33: "causae efficienti naturali sua a Deo naturaliter sit infusa finium et habitudinum scientia. Res nimirum singulae in natura succum aliquem genericum desiderant pro materia ac denique seminale, efficiens, dispositivum, dirigens principium internum generationis". On the corpuscular framework of Helmont's chemistry, see Newman, "The Corpuscular Theory of J. B. Van Helmont"; Newman and Principe, *Alchemy Tried in the Fire*.

<sup>25</sup> On Severinus, see Shackelford, *A Philosophical Path for Paracelsian Medicine*.

<sup>26</sup> Bacon, *De augmentis scientiarum*, p. 604.

of *spiritus* keeps away from discussions concerning the soul as the principle of immaterial identity. The clearest and most systematic account of the soul in Bacon can be found in *De augmentis scientiarum*, in the place mentioned above (Book 4, Chapter 3). Here the human *anima* is said to be the source of a most elaborate universe of mental constructions, for all fields of learning have been drawn out from the “repositories” (*thesauri*) of this soul. Bacon’s account of the human soul is divided into two sections: one deals with the rational part, “which is divine”, and the other with the irrational part, which human animals share with non-human animals (“*communis est cum brutis*”). Philosophically speaking, the two types of soul correspond to two different templates (*formae*) and processes (*emanationes*) established by God at the moment of creation (*in prima utriusque creatione*): human souls originated directly from God’s breath of life (*spiraculum Dei*); non-human souls evolved from the “wombs” of matter, that is, from the natural elements (*matrices elementorum*).<sup>27</sup> These wombs are a clear borrowing from Paracelsus’s cosmology.<sup>28</sup> In nature, the two kinds of souls only coexist within the human being, which, from this point of view, represents a unique instance in the created world. Bacon explains that, when adapted to humans (*qualis est in homine*), the irrational soul becomes “an organ of the rational soul” and can simply be called *spiritus*.<sup>29</sup> And yet the irrational soul in human beings share with non-human animals the characteristic of being derived from the mud of the earth (*limus terrae*). Bacon, however, is keen on making unequivocally clear that the union of divine breath and material life (the two souls) makes the human being an undivided and unified substance because *spiritus* in man works as a pneumatic tool that is under the control of the conscious self.<sup>30</sup>

Bacon’s chemistry of the soul is therefore predicated on *spiritus*, which is the pneumatic counterpart of life in every tangible body. In this way, Bacon grafted Telesio’s neurophysiology of pneumatic matter onto the trunk of Paracelsian cosmology:

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. Bacon adds that the two origins have distinct exegetic foundations in the biblical text: “Nam de Animae Rationalis generatione primitiva ita ait Scriptura, *Formavit hominem in limo terrae, et spiravit in faciem ejus spiraculum vitae*. At generatio Animae Irrationalis, sive Brutorum, facta est per verba illa, *Producat aqua; Producat terra*”. See Genesis 2:7: “Formavit igitur Dominus Deus hominem de limo terrae et inspiravit in faciem ejus spiraculum vitae et factus est homo in animam viventem”; Genesis 1: 20: “Dixit etiam Deus producant aquae reptile animae viventis”; 1:24: “Dixit quoque Deus: Producat terra animam viventem in genere suo”.

<sup>28</sup> On Paracelsus’s idea of natural wombs, see Dane, “Invisible Wombs”.

<sup>29</sup> Bacon, *De augmentis scientiarum*, pp. 605, 607.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 605.

The sensible soul – that is, the soul of non-human animals – should be regarded as corporeal, rarefied by heat and made invisible. I call it vital air (*aura*), produced by the union of a fiery and aerial nature, so as to be able to receive impressions through the suppleness of the air and to launch actions through the force of fire. This soul is fed in part by oily, in part by moist elements. It is enveloped by a body; in higher animals it is mostly located in the head, running through the nerves, restored and repaired by the spirituous blood inside the arteries.<sup>31</sup>

The intersection of the material with the immaterial soul is a particularly delicate business and it takes place in the exercise of sensorimotor functions (*de motu voluntario* and *de sensu et sensibili*). According to Bacon, no real progress has been done in these fields because the material non-human soul has been investigated as a function rather than as a physical component.<sup>32</sup> On the contrary, Bacon insists that only a close study of the matter of the soul (*substantia corporea et materiata*) can help us detect the tendencies (*nixus*) that make bodies move and react. Interestingly enough, this is a reversal of Aristotle's approach to the study of the soul: from objects and faculties to substance.

The chemistry of the soul, that is, the study of the bonds that account for the association of vital and cognitive functions, reveals that underneath sentient awareness a deeper tendency to making or breaking ties between the parts of matter shapes bodies by arranging and rearranging corpuscles. Bacon encapsulates his chemistry of the soul in the model of *perceptio reciproca*: all things in nature are endowed with the power of perception (*vis percipiendi*), which Bacon describes as “a certain ability to select (*electio quaedam*) between favourable things to be embraced and unfavourable and hostile things to be avoided”. He corroborates his hypothesis by enumerating a series of natural phenomena that betray the presence of finer perceptions (*perceptiones subtiliores*) in matter:

as when the loadstone attracts iron, a flame leaps upon naphtha, one bubble joins another when they are close to each other; a white body radiates light; the

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 606: “Anima siquidem sensibilis sive brutorum plane substantia corporea censenda est, a calore attenuata et facta invisibilis; aura (inquam) ex natura flammae et aërea conflata, aëris molitiae ad impressionem recipiendam, ignis vigore ad actionem vibrandam, dotata; partim ex oleosis, partim ex aqueis nutrita; corpore obducta, atque in animalibus perfectis in capite praecipue locata, in nervis percurrens, et sanguine spiritioso arteriarum refecta et reparata”. On Bacon's Paracelsianism, the historiographic starting point remains Rees, “Francis Bacon's Semi-Paracelsian Cosmology”.

<sup>32</sup> Bacon, *De augmentis scientiarum*, p. 610: “Neque mirum, cum Anima ipsa Sensibilis hactenus potius pro entelechia et functione quadam habita sit, quam pro substantia”.

body of an animal assimilates beneficial substances and discharge superfluities; a part of a sponge (even when it is lifted up above water) draws water and expels air, and so on.<sup>33</sup>

And yet there is no need to invoke any subtlety in nature, for, Bacon continues, fine perceptions work on the fine particles of matter:

No body placed close to another body changes this body or is changed by it unless an exchange of perceptions (*perceptio reciproca*) precedes the activity of these bodies. A body perceives the passages through which it penetrates, it perceives the force of another body to which it yields; it perceives the removal of another body by which it was detained when it withdraws into itself; it perceives the tearing apart of its continuity to which it timely resists. In sum, perception is everywhere.<sup>34</sup>

Indeed, Bacon argues that the perception of nature is way subtler than any corresponding power in the domain of animal, sentient perception. The air, for instance, “perceives heat and cold so sharply that its perception is far subtler than the one resulting from human touch, which, nevertheless, is held as the criterion to judge hot and cold”.<sup>35</sup>

Bacon criticizes previous philosophers for failing to understand that the difference between vital perception and conscious sensation is one of the most important matters in philosophy (*res maxime fundamentalis; res nobilissima; res magni prorsus momenti*). They either ignored it or were carried away by it, to the point of attributing sentience to all bodies and making sentient beings of trees, as is epitomized by the myth of Polydorus. On the contrary, they should have carefully examined the difference between perception and sentience while investigating the process of digestion and assimilation, the circulation of the blood and the sensations of pain and pleasure. Excessively concerned with the risk of anthropomorphizing reality, philosophers missed the opportu-

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.: “Neque nos de subtilioribus perceptionibus tantum loquimur, veluti cum magnes ferrum allicit; flamma ad naphtham assilit; bulla bullae approximata coit; radiatio ab objecto albo dissilit; corpus animalis utilia assimilat, inutilia excernit; spongiae pars (etiam super aquam elevata) aquam attrahit, aërem expellit; et hujusmodi”.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., pp. 610-11: “Nullum siquidem corpus ad aliud admotum illud immutat, aut ab illo immutatur, nisi operationem praecedat perceptio reciproca. Percipit corpus meatus, quibus se insinuat; percipit impetum alterius corporis, cui cedit; percipit amotionem alterius corporis, a quo detinebatur, cum se recipit; percipit divulsionem sui continui, cui ad tempus resistit: ubique denique est perceptio”.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.: “Aër vero calidum et frigidum tam acute percipit, ut ejus perceptio sit longe subtilior quam tactus humani; qui tamen pro calidi et frigidi norma habetur”.

nity to detect and describe the vital force (*perceptio simplex*) animating nature as a whole through a network of mutual responses (*perceptio reciproca*). For Bacon, *perceptio reciproca* in matter means that a primordial state of mutual recognition involves all parts of matter. Matter understood as one continuous and pliant substratum performs its vital functions and shapes itself into forms through the smallest concentrations of corporeal substance, the *minima*: “every natural action takes place through *minima*”.<sup>36</sup> Before the Cartesian division of labour between the mind and nature, Bacon’s reactive *minima* of matter and perception call us to mind Francis Glisson’s *minima* of natural perception and Leibniz’s *petit perceptions*.<sup>37</sup>

Unlike Helmont and Bacon, Locke is fully acquainted with Descartes’s epoch-making changes in cosmology and metaphysics, and he responds to it. Within the universe of the *res extensa*, matter has a structure that, for Descartes, too, is supposed to be particulate. Thinking though is one and continuous, and it does not reflect in any way the nature of material and quantitative extension. It is therefore all the more interesting to see whether Locke’s endorsement of physical corpuscularianism impacted on the way in which he looked at mental associationism. Can there be a link between the clustering of corpuscles in the external world of matter and the patterns of associations and dissociations within the stream of one’s mental life? The level of Locke’s commitment in his involvement with chemical medicine has been detailed in the past years by scholars interested in showing how Locke was indeed influenced by Helmont’s physics and how original his position was with respect to Boyle’s natural philosophy.<sup>38</sup> Here my aim is to see whether the models of corpuscular physics that were available at the time affected Locke’s understanding of mental identity.

As discussed in the previous section, in his seminal enquiry into the philosophical category of identity, Locke distinguishes between material mass, vegetable nature, animal nature, human nature and individual self. The progression from one level of identity to the other signals a shift from physical

<sup>36</sup> Bacon, *Novum organum*, p. 210: “Cum enim omnis actio naturalis per minima transigatur, aut saltem per illa quae sunt minora quam ut sensum feriant, nemo se naturam regere aut vertere posse speret nisi illa debito modo comprehenderit et notaverit”.

<sup>37</sup> On the complicated but fascinating historiographic case detailing possible knowledge exchanges between Glisson and Leibniz, I refer to Giglioni, “Glisson-Leibniz-Reid-Maine de Biran”.

<sup>38</sup> On Locke’s involvement with medicine, see Dewhurst, *John Locke (1632-1704)*; Romanell, *John Locke and Medicine*; Milton, “John Locke’s Medical Notebooks”; Walmsley, “*Morbus* – Locke’s Early Essay on Disease”; Milton, “Locke, Medicine and the Mechanical Philosophy”; Crignon, *Locke médecin*.

agglomeration to incorporeal coalescence, for the “cohesion of particles of matter” is different from the kind of unity that characterizes the life of plants, animals (human and non-human) and, above all, selves.<sup>39</sup> It is precisely the kind of expansion and annexation of conscious activity which, according to Locke, underpins the growth of a self that seems to question the possibility of connecting physical corpuscularianism and mental associationism.<sup>40</sup>

Ideas are the counterpart of corpuscles in the mental universe. Locke’s view of thinking as a most intimate relationship between consciousness and ideas is spelled out at the very beginning of Book 2 of the *Essay*:

Every man being conscious to himself that he thinks and that which his mind is employ’d about whilst thinking being the *ideas* that are there, ’tis past doubt that men have in their minds several *ideas*.<sup>41</sup>

Minds have ideas and their presence is revealed by the mental activity of consciousness. This point, though, is no mere circle or tautology. The opening statement of Book 2 is loaded with meaning, so much so that the rest of the book can be read as the unfolding of the many implications involved in this seemingly anodyne statement. Locke appeals to “every one’s own observation and experience” to shed light on the nature of human thinking. Thinking is viewed as a stream of consciousness issuing from a seamless flow of ideas.

If everyone who undergoes the experience of thinking perceives that they have ideas, what is then the nature of this particular kind of ownership? Ideas for Locke cannot be there from the beginning; they have been acquired. As he rules out any possibility that ideas are innate, to better understand the way in which the mind acquires and therefore *has* ideas, he resorts to the physiology of perception, that is, to the functioning of the senses. Ideas depend on how the senses react to external or internal objects. Locke’s account of ideas, thinking and consciousness presupposes a view of sentience as reactivity. In this respect, this view is similar to both Bacon’s and Helmont’s descriptions of natural cognition as a process of vital responsiveness. Ideas coalesce because sentient beings are organisms capable of reacting to and recording external and

<sup>39</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xvii.4, pp. 330-1.

<sup>40</sup> On Locke’s corpuscularianism, see Alexander, “Boyle and Locke on Primary and Secondary Qualities”; Downing, “The Status of Mechanism in Locke’s *Essay*”; Anstey, *John Locke and Natural Philosophy*. On his associationism, see Dromelet, Tabb and Wolfe, “Doctrines of the Association of Ideas in Early Modern Thought”.

<sup>41</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.i.1, p. 104.

internal impressions (which, Locke says, are “all the materials of thinking”).<sup>42</sup> Any similarity, though, ends here as Locke’s ideas are acts of self-knowledge rather than depictions of things. Bacon’s and Helmont’s ideas are perceptions of things which, while perceiving things, also transform them. By contrast, Locke’s ideas are perceptions of perceptions and do not alter the reality they represent. In line with Descartes’s redefinition of the principles of physics and optics, there is no natural resemblance between mental representations and the natures of things.

For Locke, having ideas depends on having sensations. Things have a “real but unknown constitution” resulting from a specific arrangement of particles.<sup>43</sup> Ideas are the ways in which the sensible qualities (secondary qualities) are translated into states of mental activity. More specifically, sensible qualities are “the powers of several combinations” of the primary qualities (such as mass, size, shape and motion).<sup>44</sup> Ideas allow the mind to replicate in the form of representations the reality of corpuscular matter. These replicas are causally determined by the corpuscles and represent these corpuscles and their innumerable combinations; they do not, however, resemble the way these corpuscles are in themselves. There is therefore an ineliminable divergence between ideas and corpuscles and this divergence distances the mind from the reality of matter.

In addition to be reliable but ultimately inaccurate replicas of corpuscular reality, ideas are instantaneous acts of self-recollection. As perceptions of perceptions, ideas are the building blocks of memory, “it being impossible for any one to perceive, without perceiving, that he does perceive”.<sup>45</sup> Ideas as perceptions of perceptions are mental objects, that is, “whatsoever is the object of the understanding when a man thinks”.<sup>46</sup> Locke describes ideas as “bare appearances”.<sup>47</sup> As such, they are indications of mental states and manifestations of cognitive energy. The stream of consciousness which the mind is made

<sup>42</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.i.1, p. 104. Through sensations, the senses translate the sensible qualities of the sensed things into perceptions. See *ibid.*, II.i.3, p. 105: “First, *Our Senses*, conversant about particular sensible Objects, do convey into the Mind, several distinct *Perceptions* of things, according to those various ways, wherein those Objects do affect them: and thus we come by those *Ideas*, we have of *Yellow, White, Heat, Cold, Soft, Hard, Bitter, Sweet*, and all those which we call sensible qualities, which when I say the senses convey into the mind, I mean, they from external Objects convey into the mind what produces there those *Perceptions*. This great Source, of most of the *Ideas* we have, depending wholly upon our Senses, and derived by them to the Understanding, I call *SENSATION*”.

<sup>43</sup> Locke, *Essay*, III.iii.17, pp. 417-18.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, II.viii.22, p. 140

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, II.xxvii.9.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, I.i.8, p. 47.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, II.xxvii.7, p. 386.

of develops therefore from the coming together of numberless mental objects, each of them carrying a sense of the self.

The relationship between corpuscles and ideas in Locke is therefore different from the relationship of *minima* and ideas in Helmont and Bacon. Helmont calls ideas *obiecta* but they are representations that can activate processes of bodily transformation, including pathological degenerations.<sup>48</sup> For Bacon ideas are natural (not mental) objects. Bacon looks at ideas as *formae*, that is, as patterns of activity determined by self-organizing motions in matter, some more persisting and lasting than others. Bacon's natural *schematismi* and *texturae* are made by the perceptions *simplices* and *reciprocae* in matter. The smallest portions of matter that are fashioned by these acts of minute perception may be called *minima perceptiva*. On the contrary, ideas for Locke are mental (not natural) objects. The physical constitutions of material objects are translated into the ideas in one's mind, but no exchange of cognitive energy takes place between the two participants in the transaction: the corpuscles and the ideas.

Locke likens consciousness to ownerships of ideas in one's mind. This ownership, however, originates from the coming together of innumerable ideas (each of them being an act of conscious thinking) merging into one stream of conscious experience. Ideas are no preexisting entities in reality. As already said, Locke is no proponent of innatism like Helmont with his *imagines seminales*, nor does he recognize the existence in nature of active templates of material reactions, like Bacon with his *perceptiones simplices*. And yet the mind emerges only after ideas have begun accumulating and assembling. Therefore, the question whether ideas come before the mind represents itself again. Indeed, one may even ask whether in some circumstances ideas hold minds hostage. Bacon and Helmont, as we have seen in the first part of this article, think that this is possible because ideas are self-active catalysts of change in matter and they can initiate processes that the mind fails to control. For Locke, any satisfactory answer to these questions needs to explain how these ideas as acts of conscious thinking hold together. What is the 'cement' that connects ideas together and transforms perceptions and then knowledge into an ontologically coherent and cohesive universe? For Bacon this cement is natural perception diffused at every level in nature, understood as an unconscious force that connects all things together through tendencies of attraction and repulsion.

<sup>48</sup> Helmont explains the nature of *obiecta* as representational pathogens especially in the tract entitled *Divisio morborum*, premised by the diagram depicting the *Morborum phalanx secundum causas occasionales*. See Helmont, *Opera omnia*, pp. 536-38.

For Helmont, the cement is the imagination of the countless vital principles ceaselessly structuring and restructuring the universe. Unlike Bacon and Helmont, Locke thinks that this issue is especially urgent because both corpuscles in matter and ideas in minds do not have attractive or repulsive forces of their own. Habit, custom and retention are mechanisms that can help explain the coming together of ideas into one's stream of consciousness. Do they occur through mechanical repetition or are they cemented together by chance? If this is the case, why isn't folly the norm, as ideas agglutinate together following the fortuitous juxtaposition of external and internal perceptions?

The line separating personal from composite identity in the Lockean model seems extremely tenuous to me. As a result, differently from what happens in Descartes's *Meditationes metaphysicae*, madness hovers from one end to the other in the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*. The range of case studies is rich. There is the person who thought he was Socrates (even when he continued to perform important professional functions).<sup>49</sup> There is a discussion concerning the possibility that individuals suffering from post-traumatic stress completely lose the use of their memory and therefore find themselves in the condition of Pythagoreans and Platonists, who say they do not remember the pre-existing life before their souls descended into their respective bodies.<sup>50</sup> I would not exclude the Brazilian parrot from this variegated sample of clinical cases, were it not for the fact that the identity of the non-human animal could alter the boundaries that Locke sets between animal identity, human identity and personal identity.<sup>51</sup> If the grand master of sceptical ceremonies in Descartes's text is the *Malin Génie*, in Locke this function is performed by madness, that is, by the many madmen and madwomen who we then discover are the vast majority of the human animals who fail to reach the level of healthy self-awareness, or to be personally identical to themselves and therefore legally capable of understanding and willing. This is lucid madness precisely because it is based on the associative mechanism of ideas. Ideas have a natural tendency to associate and create strange bodies of knowledge, which can be complexes of reasonable beliefs, but they also can produce actual teratological combinations. Since we start from the flow of ideas, the personal identity that results from these flows is constitutively flexible and changeable, exposed to short or long-term memory loss, as memory is interrupted every day in sleep or distorted in dreams.

<sup>49</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xxvii.14, p. 339.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., II.xxvii.8, p. 333.

### *Conclusion*

In this article, I argued three main points focusing on Bacon's, Helmont's and Locke's theories of the mind and their link with cosmology. First, Bacon, Helmont and Locke advanced philosophically pliable notions of the mind in which the possibility of cognitive self-obfuscation is deemed to be part of the very work of knowledge production. Locke included the discussion of mental illness and dissociative disorders as integral to a correct understanding of the experience of thinking, unlike Descartes, who, too, described thinking as inner experience, but did not see any philosophical or psychological point in observing altered states of consciousness. Above all, Bacon, Helmont and Locke alerted us to the danger that our mind may turn into the great gaslighter every time the fictive powers of mental representations are not harnessed by a reliable method of self-scrutiny. The second point I made is that Bacon, Helmont and Locke shifted the emphasis in their investigations from the subject of thinking as a substance to the activity and the power of the represented object. In different ways, they all moved the discussion towards a new understanding of the mind as a functional device. Finally, their special attention to the phenomenon of mental fallibility betrays quite distinct ontological views of reality. For Bacon reality is the result of the converging together of myriad appetitive tendencies in matter, which Bacon often simply calls material *motus* shaping expansive and pliable matter through combinations of material *minima* and elementary perceptions. For Helmont reality is the intelligible perfection of divine nature which, after the Fall, has been irredeemably obfuscated by distorting images and imaginations. For Locke, finally, reality is what the mind makes of things, and since the mind is a changeable agglomeration of ideas that keep merging into larger clusters of representations or contracting into smaller collections, its identity is as mutable and fluid as these galaxies of ideas.

In the end, for Bacon, Helmont and Locke, the main point boils down to the question: Why and how do things coalesce and do not fall apart? This question is of decisive importance with respect to the status of the human mind because for the three authors perception of reality bears on fluctuating identities and cognitive dissonance. For Locke, within the universal cosmos of associative possibilities, the self represents the highest level of coalescence that can be experienced in nature. The fact is that this kind of amalgam is not of a physical kind but it is the expression of a unique ability to appropriate and re-appropriate mental representations. The human understanding is a representational tool, not a biological and chemical process. Baconian and

Helmontian models of chemistry, relying in different ways on the immanentist premises of Paracelsian philosophy of matter (*scientia* is in matter divinely created), look at perception as the unfolding activity of seminal ideas (be that *spiritus* or *archeus*) and as a natural catalyst of chemical reactions. By contrast, Locke does not mix the plane of corpuscular physics with that of associative thinking. In addition, while Locke's model of representational identity remains Cartesian, unlike Descartes Locke theorizes the view of a mental coalescence that functions without assuming the presence of an underlying subject. This means that the agglutinating impulse in nature comes from the ideas themselves, not from the self. This is precisely the reason why minds are unstable entities. But this is also a very delicate compromise, exposed to materialist uses or transcendental apriorism *à la* Kant.<sup>52</sup>

Like Locke, Bacon interprets thinking as a function, not a substance. The act of thinking is premised on *anima*, which is a force of reactivity that is capable to respond and adjust itself to a totality of other forces that in like manner respond and adjust themselves to a constantly changing surrounding. In line with the Galenic theory of natural faculty, Bacon identifies *anima* with an unconscious and involuntary function consisting in recognition, selection, assimilation and avoidance. Here it should be noted that the epistemological and neuroscientific framework underlying Bacon's mirroring organization of mental faculties and disciplines as is set out in the *Advancement of Learning* and *De augmentis scientiarum* is modelled on Galen's anatomical division of memory, reason and imagination as they are located in the ventricles of the brain. If the Baconian mind inhabits the Galenic brain, the life that fuels and fashions the mental operations is the Galenic natural faculty, that is, the unconscious drive of nature.<sup>53</sup>

Comparative analyses help us resituate authors and ideas in different contexts and discover unexpected vistas. In this research, this is particularly evident when we include an author such as Helmont within the debate about seventeenth-century views of the mind. A survey of Helmont's Paracelsian medical philosophy is legitimate when assessing the contribution of Bacon's

<sup>52</sup> On the history of Locke's fortuna in the traditions of eighteenth-century materialism, medicine and empiricism, see the recent studies by Charles Wolfe: "From Locke to Materialism"; "Locke and Projects for Naturalizing the Mind in the Eighteenth Century"; "Rethinking Early Modern Empiricism: The Case of Locke".

<sup>53</sup> I have discussed the importance of the Galenic notion of natural power during the early modern period in "Reading Galen's *De Naturalibus Facultatibus*". On Bacon and Galen, see Tonelli Olivieri, "Galen and Francis Bacon".

and Locke's philosophy to the early modern understanding of ideas and representations. Indeed, we might say that, in this respect, two magnificent books focusing on the ways in which humans process ideas and how they construct reality through ideas were written during the seventeenth century: the *Ortus medicinae* by Helmont (1648) and the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* by Locke (1689). One may point out that such a juxtaposition, despite Locke's Helmontian sympathies, look infelicitous, for the two works couldn't be more different from one another. In fact, the contrasting of the *Ortus* with the *Essay* makes us reflect on a characteristic trait of the seventeenth century, that is, the urge that was widely shared to requalify the definition and the role of ideas in human life at a time when the link between representation and reality was being perceived as becoming increasingly tenuous. Bacon's own new *Organum* had been written as an attempt to realign the mind with reality. By pursuing the interweaving paths of Platonic ontology and Paracelsian theory of the imagination, Helmont reached the conclusion that all things in nature were endowed with the ability to represent other things. According to the Helmontian framework, ideas indicated the ways in which nature in every single part of its vast body could record a vital response to the constantly changing circumstances of reality. He called this mutual perception 'magnetism'. A later convert to the cause of Helmontianism, the English anatomist Francis Glisson (1597-1677), a follower of Bacon and a contemporary of Locke, would characterize this attribute of reality as *idea suiipsius* (self-idea), i.e., the ability to self-representation that is inherent in matter.<sup>54</sup>

Positioning himself on a very different wavelength within the ontological spectrum of seventeenth-century philosophy, Locke restricted the use of ideas to the sphere of the human mind. Locke knew Helmont's work and, although he was mainly interested in his clinical approach and chemical remedies, he was certainly aware that Helmont's doctrine of illness and chemical therapy presupposed a universe in which every *res* had *ideae*. Indeed, *res* for Helmont were possessed by *ideae*, sometimes being overwhelmed by external or internal influences carrying upsetting representations of reality. I suspect that Locke must have been at least intrigued by a view in which all accounts – natural and preternatural, healthy and diseased, physical and spiritual – depended on the way in which vital processes regulated by ideas constantly reacted to other processes regulated by other ideas (understood as *obiecta*, that is, as objects of

<sup>54</sup> Glisson, *De natura substantiae energetica*, p. 90. On Glisson and Locke, see Anstey and Principe, "John Locke and the Case of Anthony Ashley Cooper".

representation).<sup>55</sup> To brutally sum up: for Helmont, being was tantamount to being moved by ideas; being for Locke was the same as to have ideas. The former is a universal condition of nature, the latter is a state of the human mind.

Here a few remarks concerning Bacon's and Helmont's medicines of the mind are in order. While both authors mistrusted the power and scope of the human mind, the diagnoses and the cures they proposed to remedy the situation were different. They shared the opinion that the mind had been structurally deformed by the poison of the original sin, and they both suggested that a palliative could be found in nature: Bacon believed that nature would be interpreted and put to good use, Helmont regarded nature as *maga* in Plotinian tones, that is, pervaded by forces designed to draw bodies towards each other and towards the greater good of the universe. The differences between the two authors, however, are also evident. While Bacon relied on the senses and man-made tools to escape the self-referential pull of the human intellect, for Helmont the way out could only lie in an ecstatic identification with the divine. After all, within the seventeenth-century general debate concerning dependable sources of cognitive and moral certainty, adjustment to nature and direct intuition were often seen as the most reliable means of procuring sanity. When contrasted with Bacon's and Helmont's therapies, Locke's medicine of the mind reveals its Cartesian underpinnings. The inner and direct vision of the mind is the force that makes conscious understanding the core of a healthy personality. Also, "industry and applications", as Locke insists in his *Conduct of the Understanding*, help enlarging the mental capabilities of human beings, including "men of low and mean education who have never elevated their thoughts above the spade and the plough nor lookd beyond the ordinary drudgery of a day-labourer".<sup>56</sup> In any case, though, human reason for Locke never turn into a *hospes peregrinus* in the way described by Helmont (that is, as the internal enemy or the principle of unreconcilable otherness), nor can reason be *sibi permissa* in Bacon's sense (that is, left to the unreliable devices of its representational power).

Perhaps because of my interests in the history of medicine, I have been drawn to investigate how human thinking can be shaped by both mental order and mental disorder. In other words, I would not rule out the prospect that the state of mental confusion may shed light on the way we think. As a result, I am becoming increasingly concerned with early modern accounts of that

<sup>55</sup> I have examined the ways in which, according to Helmont, ideas and *obiecta* may affect the human mind in a pathological manner and shape natural bodies in "The Vorstellungskraft der Gebärmutter"; "Fienus, Bacon, Helmont"; "Contagio e immaginazione".

<sup>56</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, §§ 18-19, pp. 165-69.

condition known today as clouding of consciousness. Of the discussions that physicians and philosophers were having at the beginning of the modern era concerning the nature of the mind, I like to focus on the impact that medical and chemical views of matter had on the early modern notion of the mind. Bacon, Helmont and Locke are suitable starting points in this investigation. And yet my intent is not psychiatric nor medicalizing. Mental illness is mental activity all the same. The reduplication and compounding of identities is a complication that Locke's theory envisaged from the beginning. One may see this complication as a drawback. I like to see it as a theoretical resource.

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# John Locke's Account of Madness: Its Skeptical Origins and Outcomes\*

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*Abstract:* John Locke offers an unusual account of madness which, unlike the dominant medical theories of his time, explains it as a pathology of ideas rather than of mental faculties or of physiology. In madness, according to Locke, ideas become associated through a variety of mechanisms that occur outside the ambit of the understanding. Locke contrasts associated ideas with healthy ones, which are connected through the activity of mental operations like discernment, composition, and abstraction. After presenting Locke's account of madness as the association of ideas, this paper shows how its justification drew on his commitments to the tenets of ancient medical skepticism, which discouraged speculation and theorization in favor of observation and experience. It then discusses how Locke mobilized this account to further his philosophical projects – namely his case against nativism – using traditional Pyrrhonian strategies. Locke argued that associated ideas, when used to construct maxims, can lead to false beliefs that seem to have all the certainty and indubitability of inspiration. He used madness to explain the irreconcilable religious and political rifts that engulfed him, and to argue that skepticism about our beliefs, and about the origins of our ideas, is the best prophylactic against dogmatism and zealotry.

*Keywords:* John Locke, Association of Ideas, History of Psychiatry, Innatism, History of Medicine, Skepticism

## 1. *A physician of the mind*

John Locke was interested in medicine from the time he was a young man studying at Christ Church, Oxford in the 1660s. Medicine was experiencing a sea change during this period, part of a broader mechanistic turn in natural

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philosophy. Out of dissatisfaction with Scholastic explanations came a desire to explain pathology in terms of underlying structures, rather than in formal terms, such as the *virtus dormitiva* Molière famously parodied in *Le Malade Imaginaire* in 1673. The rise of iatrochemical explanations – that is, those integrating chemical theories into medicine – challenged Galenist accounts of the humoral body that had been dominant for a millennium and a half. Disputes between the different camps were aggressive, public, and highly politicized.<sup>1</sup> The fundamental methods of chemistry such as distillation, fermentation, and fusion, as well as the quantitative methods developed by advocates of the new mechanism, also found their footholds in psychopathology, where they generated a complex array of novel approaches to mental illness. As a student Locke imbibed the theories of Thomas Willis, whose groundbreaking work of neuropathology, *Pathologia Cerebri*, was published in 1667. Willis described mental illness as a problem with the animal spirits, “Substances highly subtil, and Aethereal Particles of a more Divine Breathing, which our Parent Nature hath hid in this Sublunary World, as it were the Instruments of Life and Soul, of Motion and Sense, of every thing.”<sup>2</sup> Willis’s iatrochemical approach to psychopathology was at the cutting edge of the new science with which Locke was enamored.

It is surprising, then, that Locke developed an account of madness that did not rely on either chemical or mechanical accounts of the brain and nerves; an account not physiological, but intellectual. Theories like Willis’s turned on the indirect compromise of reason by damage to other mental faculties, typically the imagination. Those who believed in the rational soul, like Willis and, most famously, Descartes, argued that the soul itself remained untouched by madness, not diseased but merely disempowered. Suzuki quotes the late sixteenth-century physician André du Laurens’ arresting formulation that the soul cannot lose its power of reasoning just as “the sunne doth never feele any diminishment in brightness” during an eclipse. What eclipses reason are the lower faculties, which, unlike reason and judgment, are vulnerable to harm due to being embodied in the brain, the animal spirits, the nerves, or the humors, depending on the particular approach. The damage causes the “darkening” of mental content, leading to delusions and “melancholic and fixed ideas.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Anstey, “John Locke and Helmontian Medicine”, p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> Willis, *A Medical-Philosophical Discourse of Fermentation*, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Suzuki, “Dualism and the transformation of psychiatric language in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries”, p. 420.

The account of madness that Locke ultimately developed does not turn on the disorder of the brain or body. It is ideational; Locke believes that the contents of thought, rather than the mental powers that produce them, become diseased. While in his early formulations Locke's discussions of madness reflect more of the dominant facultative view – such as in the first drafts of the *Essay*, when he attributes madmen's symptoms to the “violence of their imaginations” – he ultimately seems to lose faith in the explanatory power of the faculties when it comes to madness, though he applies it to other forms of mental disability.<sup>4</sup> The result is a novel account of madness as the *association of ideas*, which, I will argue in what follows, both grew out of and contributed to skeptical projects: it draws justificatory strength from the philosophy of medicine developed by the ancient school of Sextus Empiricus (discussed in Sections 2-3), and ultimately works to bolster Locke's own skeptical epistemology (Section 4).

## 2. *Locke's account of madness*

Locke's first known speculations about madness are found in a series of notebook entries written during his travels in France in the mid 1670s. There, Locke interrogates the notion that “Madnesse seemes to be noething but a disorder in the imagination & not in the discursive faculty”, speculating about where exactly normal becomes pathological in our everyday mental processes.<sup>5</sup> He concludes that madness sets in not at the level of the syllogism (that is, of reasoning) nor at the level of the simple idea (that is, during sensation or reflection), but rather at the level of the proposition.<sup>6</sup> The trouble begins when pathological ideas are given existential import. Locke sometimes refers to these ideas as “mad”, sometimes as “wrong”: in the terms of his mature taxonomy of ideas in the *Essay*, he seems to consider them “false” insofar as they make “a tacit Supposition of their Conformity” to “any thing extraneous to them”.<sup>7</sup> Locke contrasts madness with idiocy, a pathology of the faculty of reason itself, noting that while madmen put together “wrong” ideas, they can reason rightly using them. He includes an example he will return to later in the *Essay*, that of

<sup>4</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xi.13, p. 161. By the later drafts of the *Essay*, Locke was using the word “imagination” almost exclusively to refer to the products of fancy, rather than a mental faculty.

<sup>5</sup> Bodleian Library, MS. Locke f. 2, p. 317 (November 5, 1677), in Dewhurst, *John Locke (1632-1704), Physician and Philosopher*, p. 89.

<sup>6</sup> Bodleian Library, MS. Locke f. 1, pp. 358-59 (July 22, 1676).

<sup>7</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xxxii.4, p. 385.

a madman who has the delusion that he is royalty, and reasons correctly on that basis about the obeisance owed to him.<sup>8</sup>

This account of madness is carried forward more or less consistently through the first three editions of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, where Locke writes, “In short, herein seems to lie the difference between Idiots and mad Men, That mad Men put wrong *Ideas* together, and so make wrong Propositions, but argue and reason right from them: But Idiots make very few or no Propositions, and reason scarce at all.”<sup>9</sup> In the 1690s, however, Locke returned to the project of explaining the mechanism undergirding madness, which he first refers to as a pathology of the connection of ideas, but later coins a new term for: the *association* of ideas. He lays out the account in full in a chapter added to the fourth edition of the *Essay* (1700) entitled “Of the Association of Ideas”. There he begins his discussion of madness by writing, “There is scarce any one that does not observe something that seems odd to him, and is in it self really Extravagant in the Opinions, Reasonings, and Actions of other Men.”<sup>10</sup> This unreasonableness is caused, Locke argues, by connections between ideas generated not by the active faculties of judgment but instead by chance, habit, or a strong passion.

Because they are not the product of the active powers of discerning, compounding, and judging, associated ideas are uniquely hard to rectify.<sup>11</sup> To reason with someone afflicted by a mad idea is as misguided as to “preach Ease to one on the Rack, and hope to allay, by rational Discourses, the Pain of his Joints tearing asunder” – a dig, perhaps, at the Stoic’s optimism about reason’s capacity to overcome all suffering. The only cure Locke mentions is time: “Time cures certain Affections, which Reason, though in the right, and allow’d to be so, has not power over, nor is able against them to prevail with those who are apt to harken to it in other cases.”<sup>12</sup> In *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, originally intended as an addition to the *Essay* but published posthumously in 1706, Locke expands on his discussion of association using material that was intended for Chapter 33. There he makes clear that the best remedy for mad ideas is prophylactics, such as the teaching of proper mental hygiene to children and the careful control of their environment to avoid things like untoward passions, unnecessary frights, and exposure to suggestive fairy stories.

<sup>8</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xi.13, p. 161.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xxxiii.1, p. 394.

<sup>11</sup> Tabb, “Locke on Enthusiasm and the Association of Ideas”.

<sup>12</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xxxiii.13, p. 398.

While Locke holds that it may be helpful to imagine the animal spirits moving on set tracks in the brain in order to understand how ideas become associated, he emphasizes that such speculation fall short of explanation:

Whether the natural cause of these Ideas [...] be the Motion of [one's] Animal Spirits, I will not determine, how probable soever by this Instance it appears to be so: But this may help us a little to conceive of the Intellectual Habits, and the tying together of Ideas.<sup>13</sup>

This is typical of Locke's suspension of belief about the physical underpinnings of the mind, discussed in Section 3 below, in which he resists metaphysical assertions even while employing anatomical language to illustrate his points.

Locke instead defines associations as they seem from the inside. They appear to us conjoining ideas that "come to be so united in Mens Minds, that 'tis very hard to separate them"; associated ideas appear to the afflicted person "as if they were but one *Idea*".<sup>14</sup> Locke uses the first-person plural to remind his readers that we can perform the "experiment" – in that early modern sense of "experiencing" – ourselves.<sup>15</sup> Our shared experience is the foundation of his argument: "That there are such Associations made by Custom in the Minds of most Men, I think no Body will question who has well consider'd himself or others".<sup>16</sup> And yet this phenomenological approach to mental illness also brings into view its profoundly personal nature, and Locke's causal claims about the case studies he considers are idiographic rather than nomological. A phobia, for example, may be due to a strong passion or to the accidental annexation of ideas – each case, when considered separately, will be found to result from a different experience in the life of the afflicted person, not coverable under a general law.<sup>17</sup> What we find when we examine our mental life, instead of speculating about its underlying physical substrate, are contingent chains of ideas that together generate our beliefs, memories, and maxims. This aspect of Locke's account is highly original; while contemporaneous accounts allowed for idiographic causes of mental illness, the categories of disease themselves were typically viewed as being united by a shared symptomology and underlying

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, II.xxxiii.6, p. 396.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, II.xxxiii.5, pp. 395-96.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, II.xxxiii.13, p. 398.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, II.xxxiii.7, p. 397.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, II.xxxiii.15, p. 399.

ing physiology. Locke, on the other hand, believed every madman to be mad in his own way, to be mad “about” his own ideas.

A lack of appreciation for the way in which ideas, when associated, can strike the understanding as not only natural but indubitable can allow mad ideas to unwittingly be adopted as truths. It is the association of ideas, Locke argues, to which “might justly be attributed most of the Sympathies and Antipathies observable in Men, which work as strongly, and produce as regular Effects as if they were Natural, and therefore called so, though they at first had no other Original but the accidental Connexion of two *Ideas*”.<sup>18</sup> These pathological ideas can be taken for inborn, and may lead to the attribution of phenomena to human nature that are in fact the product of habit and custom. Locke gives the example of a man who eats too much honey, making himself sick. Afterwards he can trace his aversion to the substance to his gluttony, but “[h]ad this happ’d to him, by an over dose of Honey, when a Child, all the same Effects would have followed, but the Cause would have been mistaken, and the Antipathy counted Natural”.<sup>19</sup>

Not only phobias and philiias but also beliefs can be generated by way of association, and then strike the understanding as inborn; and the repercussions are grave. The feeling of certainty that accompanies these ideas leads those afflicted with them to champion them, and “they applaud themselves as zealous Champions for Truth, when indeed they are contending for Error”.<sup>20</sup> For Locke, the infiltration of the intellectual life by mad ideas is a profound danger, not just for the individual, but for the commonwealth: “This gives Sence to *Jargon*, and Demonstration to Absurdities, and Consistency to Nonsense, and is the foundation of the greatest, I had almost said, all of the Errors in the World”, Locke writes; “or if it does not reach so far, it is at least the most dangerous one, since so far as it obtains, it hinders Men from seeing and examining”.<sup>21</sup>

Locke’s narrow definition of the phenomenon of association, even coupled with his deep concerns about its repercussions, suggests that historians of psychology who have read association as a widespread mechanism of cognition in Locke’s thought – similar to the role it plays for Hume – have gotten him wrong.<sup>22</sup> Ultimately, Locke discusses the association of ideas only twice in his published works, in the fourth edition of the *Essay* and in the *Conduct*. In contrast, association is

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, II.xxxiii.7, p. 396.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, II.xxxiii.7, p. 397.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, II.xxxiii.18, p. 401.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Warren, *A History of the Association Psychology*, Young, “Association of Ideas”, and Rapaport, *The History of the Concept of Association of Ideas*.

ubiquitous in Hume; its principles are invoked to explain such central functions of the understanding as belief, the indirect passions, and sympathy. Hume writes that if anything can entitle him to “so glorious a name as that of an *inventor*, ‘tis the use he makes of the principle of association of ideas.”<sup>23</sup> Despite Locke’s coinage of the term, this assessment seems warranted. While Hume’s theory of associated ideas is clearly drawn from Locke’s, the “use he makes of” it is very different. The difference is due less to conflicting definitions of the term than to opposing views on the place that actively generated, law-governed connections between ideas should hold in a theory of human understanding.

Another common misreading has to do with the role of physiology in Locke’s account of association. Wolfe has noted the frequent treatment of Locke as an empiricist set on re-founding the philosophy of mind on an anatomical basis – from Kant, who calls Locke’s project a “physiology of the understanding”, to contemporary scholars who see him as anticipating the mechanistic turn in neurology.<sup>24</sup> I agree with Wolfe that “such readings [...] are [...] *not a matter of interpretation* but are simply mistaken.”<sup>25</sup> A comparison of Locke’s *Essay* with the likes of Willis’s *Pathologia Cerebri* shows that, for his time, Locke spared relatively little ink for pathological anatomy when discussing madness. This reflects a more general orientation in Locke’s discussions of the mind. In line with Willis, Locke seems to concur that ideas are caused by “different degrees and modes of Motion in our animal Spirits, variously agitated by external Objects.”<sup>26</sup> But where Willis devotes volumes to etiological accounts of cognition and psychopathology in these terms, Locke instead turns his gaze to “All those sublime Thoughts, which towre above the Clouds, and reach as high as Heaven it self.”<sup>27</sup> In the opening paragraphs of the *Essay* he famously declines to “meddle with the Physical Consideration of the Mind”, on the grounds that the “Motions of our Spirits, or Alterations of our Bodies” are “Speculations, which, however curious and entertaining, I shall decline, as lying out of my Way, in the Design I am now upon.”<sup>28</sup> In the next section I argue that this is due to Locke’s abiding loyalty to the position of medical skepticism.

<sup>23</sup> Hume, *An Abstract of a Treatise of Human Nature*, p. 32.

<sup>24</sup> Wolfe, “The ‘Physiology of the Understanding’ and the ‘Mechanics of the Soul’”.

<sup>25</sup> Wolfe, “From Locke to Materialism”.

<sup>26</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.viii.4, p. 133.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, II.i.24, p. 118.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, I.i.2, p. 43. Critics have noted the multiple places where Locke seems to violate his own precept (see, e.g., Sutton, “Carelessness and Inattention”). As I describe further in Section 3, my feeling is that Locke’s irregular mentions of the animal spirits, humors, and other bits of anatomy are generally illustrative, rather than explanatory.

### 3. *Skeptical Origins*

Preoccupied as he was with the sectarian crises that were unfolding around him, Locke seems exemplary of what has been called “constructive” or “mitigated” skepticism, an early modern response to the widespread destabilization of traditional sources of authority in the 17th century.<sup>29</sup> Like the hallowed Francis Bacon, he insists on the importance of suspending assent before judgment, and he subscribes to the Royal Society’s methodology of observation over speculation and experience over theory. Like his contemporaries Robert Boyle and Joseph Glanvill, he champions probabilistic belief as the only appropriate goal for investigations of the natural world, in contrast with the higher degree of knowledge obtainable in the mathematical and moral sciences. The resonance of these commonplace early modern methodological commitments with those of ancient skepticism is frequently commented on in the literature.<sup>30</sup>

In making such comparisons, historians are indulging an early modern penchant for self-styling in these terms, such as in Boyle’s *The Sceptical Chymist* (1661) or Glanvill’s *Scep̄sis Scientifica* (1665). Evocative language notwithstanding, there was not all that much deep scholarly engagement by members of the Royal Society with ancient skeptical sources, and their dedication to the pursuit of Christian projects assured that their epistemic practices were fundamentally different from classical ones. It seems all the more appropriate to proceed with caution here in light of Maclean’s dry observation that some of the most convincingly Pyrrhonian passages in Renaissance and early modern scholarship were written before recovery and translation would have made the relevant ancient sources available.<sup>31</sup> In the case of Locke, scholars who locate

<sup>29</sup> Popkin, *The History of Scepticism*; Leeuwen, *The Problem of Certainty*; Ferreira, “Locke’s ‘Constructive Skepticism’. A Reappraisal”; Gaukroger, “The Autonomy of Natural Philosophy”.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, multiple contributions in Paganini, *The Return of Scepticism*.

<sup>31</sup> Maclean, “The ‘Sceptical Crisis’ Reconsidered”, p. 248. Maclean has argued that critics generally move too hastily to conflate the anti-authoritarian anti-Scholasticism of the early modern period with ancient skepticism, ignoring more contemporaneous terms that might describe the stance such as “libertas philosophandi”, “libere philosophare”, and “philosophice loqui”. Similarly, Corneanu has adopted the actor’s category of “cultura animi” to describe the embrace of epistemic humility and temperance of judgment that, as she notes, bore a resemblance to ancient skepticism – but which Glanvill nonetheless bluntly contrasts with the “pretended Philosophy” of the Pyrrhonist (Corneanu, *Regimens of the Mind*, p. 103). Anstey (*John Locke and Natural Philosophy*) has invoked the Royal Society’s language of “experimental philosophy” and “speculative philosophy” to contrast the privileging of observation and experiment over speculation and hypothesis.

him in the tradition of mitigated skepticism have admitted that “there is little evidence that Locke saw himself as having a special relationship to skepticism as a philosophical position”;<sup>32</sup> and indeed his belief in a demonstrative science of morality has reasonably led a “committed *anti-skepticism*” to be attributed to him.<sup>33</sup>

But there is a particular strand of Pyrrhonism to which Locke was more directly indebted: the ancient empiricist school of medicine.<sup>34</sup> Given the preponderance of influential Pyrrhonian physicians – besides Sextus himself, we know of Menodotus, Theodas, and Saturninus – ancient empiricist medicine should be seen less as a context in which Pyrrhonism was applied than as a central site for its development and propagation.<sup>35</sup> As Pomata has demonstrated, this close integration of empiricist medical methodology with skeptical epistemology saw a resurgence in the early modern period.<sup>36</sup> Early modern physicians situated themselves within the ancient divisions Galen treats in his *On the Medical Sects for Beginners*, and Locke can be read as allying himself with the empiricists against the rationalists.<sup>37</sup>

Ancient medical empiricists defined themselves in opposition to the rationalist insistence on identifying the underlying causes of disease. This often manifested as a dismissal of anatomy as a worthwhile method.<sup>38</sup> Instead they championed the importance of experience, especially observation, in establishing rules according to which the likelihood of a given outcome could be

<sup>32</sup> Rogers, “Locke Among the Sceptics”, p. 38.

<sup>33</sup> Nidditch, Introduction to Locke, *Essay*, p. xxi (italics mine).

<sup>34</sup> Romanell also discusses this connection at some length in his *John Locke and Medicine*, writing that “medical empiricism at the end of the ancient world and British empiricism at the beginning of the modern meet eventually in the intellectual career of John Locke” (Romanell, *John Locke and Medicine*, p. 16). Other claims have been convincingly defended regarding more circumscribed relationships between Locke and ancient skeptical methods. For example, scholars have demonstrated that Locke adopts classical modes of argument in order to defend his view of qualities (Bolton, “Locke and Pyrrhonism”); to argue for toleration (Black, “Locke and the Skeptical Argument for Toleration”); to explore the limits of reason in the political setting (Wootton, Introduction to Locke, *Political Writings*) and to critique innatism (Carey, “Locke as Moral Sceptic”; Carey, *Locke, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson*). I engage with this last argument below in Section IV. These critics have noted that Locke tended to get his knowledge of skepticism from scholars influenced more immediately by Sextus Empiricus and other ancient writers, such as Pierre Gassendi, Pierre Charron, and Michel de Montaigne. Galen and other natural-philosophical sources likely play an analogous bridging role in Locke’s exposure to medical skepticism.

<sup>35</sup> Allen, “Pyrrhonism and Medicine”.

<sup>36</sup> Pomata, “A Word of the Empirics”.

<sup>37</sup> Romanell, *John Locke and Medicine*; Walmsley, “John Locke’s Natural Philosophy (1632-1671)”.

<sup>38</sup> Hankinson, “Causes and Empiricism”, p. 336.

predicted. This experience could either be the physician's own (*autopsia*) or that of other, respected physicians (*historia*). As opposed to rationalists, who speculated about underlying mechanisms to discover the best treatments, and methodists, who treated patients on the basis of a simple system of taxonomy, empiricists relied only on observed correlations between symptoms and interventions. These observed correlations were not experimental because, as Galen put it, "one happens upon these things not on purpose". Nonetheless, useful observations were committed to memory and repeated observations were taken more seriously, resulting in the slow assemblage of a set of "theorems", or best practices. "[W]hen many such theorems had been accumulated by them", Galen writes of the empiricist physicians, "the whole accumulation amounted to the art of medicine, and the person who had accumulated the theorems, a doctor".<sup>39</sup> As Pomata has emphasized, empiricists heightened the concept of *tērēsis* not only into a method but also into a normative program, a "rule of conduct (specifically, for them, a way of healing) drawn from the phenomena observed".<sup>40</sup>

As argued above, Locke defends an originally idiographic and ideational account of madness that emerges from similar commitments. It is idiographic insofar as each case of mental illness must be explained in terms of the unique experiences of the individual, not subsumed under general laws; and it is ideational insofar as explanations are to be made in terms of ideas, rather than underlying causal mechanisms such as faculties or animal spirits. These aspects of Locke's theory of psychopathology are representative of his psychologized epistemology more broadly, in which the ideas out of which propositional beliefs are built result from the particular fabric of an individual's experience.

Locke falls short of advocating for an embrace of *epochē*, even as he adopts Pyrrhonian methods of argument against dogmatism and sympathizes with the Pyrrhonist's pragmatic approach to living – and practicing medicine – under uncertainty. He is ultimately committed to the reality of moral knowledge, and believes that there are some maxims known intuitively or through revelation that we cannot, and should not, question. Another central pillar of his epistemology is that where knowledge is not possible, probable belief is; and some beliefs are more justified than others. While for Sextus Empiricus and other ancient thinkers delusions represent nothing but a form of intellectual

<sup>39</sup> Galen, *Three Treatises on the Nature of Science*, p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> Pomata, "A Word of the Empirics", p. 11.

diversity, for Locke they are a class of false ideas, and as such deeply threatening to our theological and political projects.<sup>41</sup> Like the skeptic, Locke holds that delusions cannot be countered by reasoning – one cannot, for example, ease a madman's grip on his mad idea by convincing him of the plausibility of another, contradictory idea. But what is disturbing to Locke about madness is not only that it stops us from being skeptical; it also stops us from being right. In the face of this danger, Locke prescribes not sanguinity but aggressive prophylactics and therapeutics. Where Locke is a skeptic is not with relationship to his epistemic goals, but to his methods.

Sources are mixed about whether the empiricist sect denied that underlying entities could ever be known, or just refused to commit to the possibility one way or the other.<sup>42</sup> The latter position is the Pyrrhonian one, and indeed Sextus chides empiricists who make dogmatically negative claims about the existence of unobservables:

Some say that the Skeptical philosophy is the same as the Empiric school in medicine. But you must realize that if this form of Empiricism makes affirmations about the inapprehensibility of unclear matters, then it is not the same as Skepticism, nor would it be appropriate for Sceptics to take up with this school. They might rather adopt, it seems to me, what is called the Method; for this alone of the medical schools seems to practice no rashness in clear matters and does not presume to say whether they are apprehensible or inapprehensible, but it follows what is apparent, taking thence, in line with Skeptical practice, what seems to be expedient.<sup>43</sup>

Locke's theory of madness, in this respect, would have met with Sextus's approval, insofar as it does not deny mechanical hypotheses about the mind, and even engages with them when it is useful. But Locke reminds his readers regularly that these hypotheses should be understood as no more than heuristics. He employs causal explanations about what can be observed (in this case, the connections between ideas, via reflection) in order to practice medicine, broadly understood as encompassing the management of the understanding.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xxxii, p. 384.

<sup>42</sup> Hankinson, "Causes and Empiricism", pp. 336-37.

<sup>43</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Skepticism*, 62-63. Allen ("Pyrrhonism and Medicine", p. 246) has argued that Sextus's favoring of methodism over empiricism here should not be read as a statement of his allegiance to the former school over the latter, but as offering a corrective for other empiricists who reject medical reasoning altogether and are dogmatically opposed to speculation.

<sup>44</sup> Corneanu, *Regimens of the Mind*.

Two fragments on medical methodology that Locke wrote in the 1660s, while working in close collaboration with the physician Thomas Sydenham, show the origins of these commitments.<sup>45</sup> “Anatomia” (1668) argues against the pedagogical value of dissection for the physician: “All that anatomic can doe”, Locke writes, “is only to shew us the grosse & sensible parts of the body, or the vapid & dead juices. all wch after the most diligent search will be noe more able to direct a physitian how to cure a disease then how to make a man”.<sup>46</sup> The argument is that anatomical study cannot actually reveal the operations of the body, “soe minute. & insensible”. The vital processes will always remain unobservable, which means that explanations given in anatomical terms will always, ultimately, be speculative. In medicine, progress will only come from what *can* be observed of the disease process; its symptoms, course, and response to interventions. The doctor needs experience, not speculative knowledge, much in the way the gardener need not have any knowledge of botany but “may by his art & observation be able to ripen meliorate & preserve his fruit without examining, what kindes of juices fibres pores &c are to be found in the roots barke or body of the tree”.<sup>47</sup> All that speculation about the anatomical causes of disease can do is “offer new conjectures & fresh matter for endlesse disputations”.<sup>48</sup> The causes worth consideration are those which can be observed in action.

“De arte medica” broadens this insight beyond just anatomy, arguing that physicians have wasted their time by not resting content “to observe the operacon of nature & the event of things” but, rather being “very inquisitive after their cause”, developing “useless speculations, & diverted their enquirys from the true & advantageous knowledg of things”.<sup>49</sup> If physicians, starting with the ancients, had focused on observation and experience rather than theorization, Locke laments, medicine would be far more developed. But “proud man not content with that knowledg he was capable of & was useful to him, would needs *penetrate* into the hidden causes of things and lay downe princi-

<sup>45</sup> While there is now consensus that Locke wrote the fragments himself, there remains debate over Sydenham’s influence on Locke at the time they were written; for an overview and deflationary take on the relationship see Anstey and Burrows, “John Locke, Thomas Sydenham, and the Authorship of Two Medical Essays”, and for a defense of the importance of Sydenham’s influence on Locke see Walmsley, “John Locke’s ‘Anatomia’ and ‘De Arte Medica’”, and Walmsley, “Peter Anstey on Locke’s Natural Philosophy”.

<sup>46</sup> Walmsley, “John Locke’s ‘Anatomia’ and ‘De Arte Medica’”, p. 30.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

ples".<sup>50</sup> Locke chastises the physician for ignoring the weakness of his faculties, and for his fashioning of "principles & causes & methods of natures workmanship [...] *out of his owne thought*" that compromise the growth of what Locke calls "practicall knowledg" and the improvement of "useful arts". For in its reliance on experience, the practice of medicine is best conceived of as like other crafts such as gardening, tanning, smithing, and baking.<sup>51</sup>

These medical fragments reflect three of the themes that also constituted Sydenham's radical medical methodology: 1) skepticism about our capacity to know the workings of nature, 2) pessimism about the value, therefore, of theorizing about disease etiology, and 3) an emphasis instead on observation and experience.<sup>52</sup> Locke shared these epistemological commitments and took their practical repercussions very seriously. These commitments can be characterized as "empiricist", but not in the sense that term is loosely applied to the "atomistic, sense-data-oriented doctrine" of the Royal Society, what Wolfe has identified as "experimentalist empiricism".<sup>53</sup> When it came to medicine, Locke and Sydenham believed that medical progress would come not through the manipulation of nature but the observation of it. Their flavor of "medical" empiricism shares the commitments of the ancient school that gave Sextus Empiricus his name, and which was familiar to early modern physicians primarily through the works of Galen, who explicitly linked Pyrrhonism and empiricism in *On the Sects*.<sup>54</sup> Galen's works on empiricism and skepticism were tied by early modern readers to those of Sextus – in the 1560s the two authors were even printed side by side in the same volumes.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>51</sup> Locke is in step with Sextus, who claims that the practical arts are one of the sorts of "everyday observances" with which the skeptic must live in accordance (Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Skepticism*, p. 9). He cites the methodist physician approvingly as being "conducted by feelings to what corresponds to them" (ibid., p. 63). Barnes writes, "A Pyrrhonian doctor's professional activities can thus be explained by reference to his professional training, without supposing that the explanation involves belief" (Barnes, "The Beliefs of a Pyrrhonist", p. 14).

<sup>52</sup> Walmsley, "John Locke's 'Anatomia' and 'De Arte Medica'", p. 11.

<sup>53</sup> Wolfe, "Empiricist Heresies in Early Modern Medical Thought", p. 335.

<sup>54</sup> "The empiricist will not be a man of many words or of long speeches but will talk little and rarely, just like Pyrrho the Sceptic. Pyrrho had looked for the truth and, not finding it, was in doubt about all the things nonevident, but in his daily activities he followed what is evident whereas concerning everything else he remained in doubt. The empiricist's attitude toward medical matters is like the sceptic's attitude toward the whole of life" (Galen, *Three Treatises on the Nature of Science*, p. 42).

<sup>55</sup> Pomata, "A Word of the Empirics", p. 21.

By Locke's day the moniker "empiric" had become fraught, equated with the uneducated peddler of folk medicine, so it was not a term that he would have applied casually to himself.<sup>56</sup> Nonetheless, evidence for his allegiance to the tradition can be found throughout his life. Reflecting on the grounds for assent in *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* in the mid-1690s he writes,

For example were it my Businesse to understand physick would not the safer and readier way be to consult nature her self, and informe my self in the history of diseases and their cures [, rather] than espousing the principles of The Dogmatists, Methodists or Chymists engage in all the disputes concerning either of those systems and suppose it true till I have tried what they can say to beat me out of it.<sup>57</sup>

In an exchange with Thomas Molyneux in 1693 regarding medicine, Locke reiterates his view "concerning general theories, that they are for the most part but a sort of waking dreams, with which when men have warm'd their own heads, they pass into unquestionable truths, and then the ignorant world must be set right by them".<sup>58</sup> Locke laments that physicians ignore the "better way" set out by Sydenham, and, in notably Pyrrhonian terms, advocates for conceiving of medical theory as merely "an art of memory to direct the physician in particular cases" since "there is nothing left for a physician to do, but to observe well, and so by analogy argue to like cases, and thence to make himself rules of practice". Writing to Thomas's brother, William, a few years later in 1697, Locke reiterating his point, contrasting the European physicians "stored with their hypotheses, borrowed from natural philosophy", to the ignorant but more effective healers native to America.<sup>59</sup> He singles out scholars "tied up to the four humours; or sal, sulphur and mercury; or to acid and alkali, which has of late prevailed". The first of these is a dig at Galenists; the second at Helmontians; and the third at the work of his old friend Boyle, who had authored a medical essay entitled "Reflections upon the hypothesis of Alcali and Acidum" (1675). These are all frameworks that Locke, at various points in his career, employed; what he is opposing here is blind loyalty to any in particular. As

<sup>56</sup> Locke's scornful employment of the term in the *Essay* is typical of his time: "Men are forced, at a venture, to be of the Religion of the Country; and must therefore swallow down Opinions, as silly People do Empiricks Pills, without knowing what they are made of, or how they will work, and have nothing to do, but believe that they will do the Cure" (Locke, *Essay*, IV.xx.5, p. 709).

<sup>57</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, p. 222.

<sup>58</sup> Locke, *Correspondence*, Vol. 4, p. 628.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 6, pp. 144-45.

Wolfe has wryly put it, "The Skeptical Physitian was far more skeptical than the Skeptical Chemist".<sup>60</sup>

#### 4. *Skeptical outcomes*

So much for the skeptical influences that led to Locke's account of madness as the association of ideas – an account resulting from introspection, rather than speculation. What of its skeptical employments? As Carey has demonstrated, Locke's deep interest in travel literature and anthropology provided the material with which he argues, like Montaigne and other skeptics he admired, from examples of cultural relativity to the denial of universal maxims:<sup>61</sup>

He that will carefully peruse the History of Mankind, and look abroad into the several Tribes of Men, and with indifferency survey their Actions, will be able to satisfy himself, That there is scarce that Principle of Morality to be named, or *Rule of Vertue* to be thought on [...] which is not, somewhere or other, *slighted* and condemned by the general Fashion of *whole Societies* of Men, governed by practical Opinions, and rules of living quite opposite to others.<sup>62</sup>

This is the practice encouraged in Sextus's tenth mode of Aenesidemus, which "is the one depending on persuasions and customs and laws and beliefs in myth and dogmatic suppositions".<sup>63</sup> Sextus argues that we can achieve *epochē* by reflecting on cultures in which equal and opposite views on all these themes are held – as Locke would later, he lists examples of cultures whose practices would horrify the members of his own. Also as Locke would, he concludes, "Since so much anomaly has been shown in objects by this mode too, we shall not be able to say what each existing object is like in its nature, but only how it appears relative to a given persuasion or custom and so

<sup>60</sup> Wolfe, "Sydenham and Locke", p. 208. Anstey ("Further Reflections on Locke's Medical Remains") and Walmsley ("Review of Peter Anstey, *John Locke and Natural Philosophy*") have debated to what extent Locke maintains his interest in chemistry after his medical writings of the late 1660s. Bringing his medical-skeptical sympathies into view can further buttress the case for what Anstey has referred to as Locke's "cognitive dissonance", that is, his tendency to make use of hypotheses that he dismisses elsewhere, insofar as it may be that Locke is manifesting the sensibilities of the Pyrrhonian medical empiricist in employing whatever framework gets results – without committing to its underlying metaphysics.

<sup>61</sup> Carey, *Locke, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson*; and "Locke as Moral Sceptic".

<sup>62</sup> Locke, *Essay*, I.iii.10, p. 72.

<sup>63</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Skepticism*, p. 37.

on”.<sup>64</sup> Following Sextus, Locke ultimately argues that the products of custom can easily be mistaken for natural commitments, and therefore be wrongly taken to bolster the case for universal knowledge.

Locke’s account of association, written decades after his first sallies against nativism, offer a possible mechanism to explain how acquired ideas and maxims could come to seem so authoritative. More powerful than intellectual laziness, prejudice, or corruption, madness was a force capable of making people cling so tightly to their ideas that differences of opinion become permanent and intractable:

Interest, though it does a great deal in the case, yet cannot be thought to work whole Societies of Men to so universal a Perverseness, as that every one of them to a Man should knowingly maintain Falshood: Some at least must be allow’d to do what all pretend to, i.e. to pursue Truth sincerely; and therefore there must be something that blinds their Understandings, and makes them not see the falshood of what they embrace for real Truth. That which thus captivates their Reasons [...] will, when examine’d be found to be what we are speaking of: [the association of ideas].<sup>65</sup>

Locke, of course, believed innatism to be pernicious to philosophy. He was in full sympathy with his Royal Society colleague Glanvill’s claim that “while we thus mistake the infusions of education, for the principle of universal nature; we must needs fail of a scientific Theory”.<sup>66</sup> We find Locke writing, for example,

Custom, a greater power than Nature, seldom failing to make them worship for Divine, what she hath inured them to bow their Minds, and submit their Understandings to, it is no wonder, that grown *Men*, either perplexed in the necessary affairs of Life, or hot in the pursuit of Pleasures, should *not* seriously sit down to *examine their own Tenets*; especially when one of their Principles is, That Principles ought not to be questioned.<sup>67</sup>

Here the assumption of innatism is presented as one explanation (among others) for why it is hard for people to maintain a skeptical attitude toward their commitments. Ideas associated by custom, rather than being connected

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Locke: “Every church is orthodox to itself; to others, erroneous or heretical” (Vernon, *Locke on Toleration*, p. 13).

<sup>65</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xxxiii.18, p. 400. Compare Diogenes Laertius, reporting a skeptical truism: “Make a commitment, delusion is nearby” (Vogt, *Pyrrhonian Skepticism in Diogenes Laertius*, p. 23).

<sup>66</sup> As quoted by Carey, “Locke as Moral Sceptic”, p. 9.

<sup>67</sup> Locke, *Essay*, I.iii.25, p. 82.

by reason, is another – and the two work together most perniciously when mad ideas, “against which it is not in the power of Reason to help us” are mistaken for natural or inborn ones such that inquiry into the demonstrability of moral maxims stops short.<sup>68</sup>

The contingent and personalized manner in which association comes to blind the understanding makes clear that in cases of “Irreconcilable opposition between different Sects of Philosophy and Religion”, falsehoods grow up as organically as truths in the minds of the warring factions. When purportedly innate principles are in fact demonstrable truths, the cost is not so high: a muddled understanding of our own psychology, and a neglect of our God-given rational powers. When, however, they are the result of errors of judgment, faulty propositions may be adopted as revered maxims. And when they are due to mad ideas, reason is useless against them, and it is inevitable that they “shall unexamined be swallowed for a certain Truth”.<sup>69</sup> It is in this sense that the mistaking of associated ideas for naturally-formed ones can be epistemically catastrophic. The association of ideas leads to a false sense of certainty, which encourages the judgment that they are innate. When nativism is used to encourage others to adopt mad ideas, the result can be a contagion of over-hasty belief. Locke believes philosophical enthusiasm to be as dangerous as religious enthusiasm in this regard.<sup>70</sup>

Locke's skeptical approach to the natural philosophy of the understanding and its pathologies provided a critical service to his lifelong philosophical project: it supplied him with an agile account of madness with which he could diagnose those false ideas that are able to ape certain knowledge and generate maxims that feel inborn. In this way, association offset an uncomfortable skeptical strain introduced into Locke's account by his adoption of Pyrrhonian modes of argument by making it possible, at least in principle, to distinguish true ideas from those that convincingly *seem* true.

### 5. *A Christian skepticism*

Locke's use of cultural diversity to argue against inborn universal maxims frequently garnered accusations of moral skepticism, and his employment of

<sup>68</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xxiii.13, p. 398.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, II.xxiii.17, p. 400.

<sup>70</sup> Tabb, “Locke on Enthusiasm and the Association of Ideas”.

Pyrrhonian strategies was explicitly singled out for criticism.<sup>71</sup> He responded to accusations of relativism by insisting on the possibility of a demonstrative moral science, which could explain how every rational being could discover God's true laws – at least in theory. His late addition of the chapter on association to the *Essay* provided a final strategy for showing that skepticism about innate ideas need not pave the way to moral relativism. Unlike the Pyrrhonian, Locke is not neutral about the cognitive diversity that he describes. Some ideas are healthy and some are depraved, and even if in the heat of madness we cannot know which is which, the difference will matter for us. At the same time, his arguments for the ubiquity of associated ideas grounded his plea for the adoption of skeptical methods to fight back dogmatism and zealotry.

In taking a normative stance on cases of cognitive diversity, Locke is far from the Pyrrhonian skeptic, for whom mad ideas would be just further examples of the diversity of opinion, a rallying cry for equipollence. Locke argues fiercely against giving association any quarter, urging, for example, “those who have children, or the charge of their Education [...] diligently to watch, and carefully to prevent the undue Connexion of *Ideas* in the Minds of young people”.<sup>72</sup> Yet even here we find hints of Locke's skeptical commitments, for the prevention of association depends on making *tērēsis* a way of life. Children must be trained such that “they often examine those [ideas] that they find linked together in their minds whether this association of Ideas be from the visible agreement that is in the Ideas them selves or from the habitual and prevaileing custom of the mind joyning them together thus in thinking”.<sup>73</sup> Yet ultimately Locke's aim is not *ataraxia*, but the discovery of the laws of the Christian God through the proper management of the understanding. This sort of moralizing therapy was, of course, no part of ancient skepticism – as Barnes has put it, for the Skeptics “*Ταραχή* is a disease, *ἐποχή* the cure”.<sup>74</sup> For Locke the disease is our fallen state, and *epochē* only a passing means to the end of recovering God's grace.

<sup>71</sup> Carey, *Locke, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson*, p. 67. See also pp. 51-68, where Carey shows that Locke and those he criticized (namely the Cambridge Platonists) were recapitulating ancient debates between later Stoic philosophers like Epictetus and Seneca and their skeptical critics over the existence of inborn concepts (*emphuton ennoian*).

<sup>72</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xxxiii.8, p. 397.

<sup>73</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, p. 230.

<sup>74</sup> Barnes, “The Beliefs of a Pyrrhonist”, p. 18.

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# Association of Ideas and Medicine of the Mind in Locke's *Conduct of the Understanding*

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*Abstract:* The *Conduct of the Understanding* was written by Locke to therapeutically counterweight some negative epistemic aspects which already emerged in the final chapters of Book IV of the *Essay*. The order of this treatment reflects both the Aristotelian *Organon*, concluded by the *Sophistici elenchi*, and some modern scholastic manuals of logic. The *Conduct* was conceived to prevent or cure the errors of the intellect (*medicina mentis*), because the logic used so far was inadequate, as Bacon already saw. From a logical point of view, *knowledge* is idea-containment, *opinion* is idea conjunction without containment, and *error* is idea association, i.e. a connection of ideas wholly owing to chance or custom. Associations of ideas, although naturalized by the habitual action of the mind, remain unnatural in themselves since their connections have no real basis: Locke calls the association of ideas "madness". To prevent associations of ideas that have not yet occurred, Locke proposes 'meditation' upon a basic epistemic rule, while to cure associations of ideas that have already occurred, he proposes voluntary reflective 'attention' upon the habitual movements of the mind.

*Keywords:* Locke, medicine of the mind, association of ideas, attention

## 1. *Conduct of the understanding and medicine of the mind*

From what can be ascertained, John Locke's writing *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* was mentioned for the first time in a letter to William Molineux, dated the 10th of April 1697:

I have lately got a little leisure to think of some additions to my book, against the next edition, and within a few days have fallen upon a subject that I know not how far it will lead me. I have written several pages on it, but the matter, the farther I go, opens the more upon me, and I cannot yet get sight of any end of it. The title of the chapter will be *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, which, if

I shall pursue, as far as I imagine it will reach, and as it deserves, will, I conclude, make the largest chapter of my Essay.<sup>1</sup>

The “next edition” of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* that the author here has in mind is the fourth, which would be published in London two and a half years later, in early December of 1699 (although the title page says 1700). From this letter we also learn that the text, under Locke’s hand, is taking the proper form of a “chapter”, for which reason he foresees it as a considerable addition to the *Essay*. While yet difficult to measure, given the amplitude of his insights on the matter, these might lead one to presume that it could become the largest chapter yet. Indeed, the manuscript currently catalogued at the Bodleian Library as MS Locke e.1 contains several writings identified as additions to the *Essay*.<sup>2</sup> There, under the section titled, *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, we find a clear indication of its intended position, “B[ook]: IV C[hapter]: XX”,<sup>3</sup> just before the final chapter, *Of the Division of the Sciences*, and after the chapter *Of wrong Assent, or Errour*, which had been Chapter 19 until the third edition.<sup>4</sup>

This proposed location never came to be, for the *Conduct of the Understanding* would receive such a lengthy thematic development as to render it an autonomous work altogether, so that Locke never even managed to complete or publish it. This is noteworthy, however, because it would seem to indicate that the *Conduct* from its very conception represented the author’s intention to provide a therapeutic counterweight for some of the negative or problematic epistemic aspects which had emerged in the abovementioned chapter *Of wrong Assent, or Errour*, also to which *Of Enthusiasm* was added right before it in the fourth edition.

Drawing a comparison with the closing chapters of Books II and III, a noticeable symmetry appears. Book III ends with Chapter 11, *Of the Remedies of the foregoing Imperfections and Abuses*; the abuses which are in need of remedy are obviously those indicated in the previous Chapter 10, *Of the Abuse of Words*. Likewise, Book II is enriched with a final 33rd chapter in the fourth edition, namely that *Of the Association of Ideas*.

<sup>1</sup> Locke to William Molyneux, 10 April 1697, in Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 6, p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> The other manuscript containing the texts of the *Conduct* is the MS Locke c.28. For an ample description of these manuscripts see Schuurman, “Introduction”, in Locke, *Conduct*, pp. 98-106.

<sup>3</sup> MS Locke e.1, p. 62; Locke, *Conduct*, p. 153.

<sup>4</sup> Until the third edition, the chapters of Book IV totaled twenty. The fourth edition added Chapter 19, *Of Enthusiasm*, which moved the numeration of the last two chapters to 20 and 21.

Bk II	Bk III	Bk IV
29. Of clear and distinct, <i>obscure</i> and <i>confused</i> Ideas		
30. Of real and <i>fantastical</i> Ideas		
31. Of adequate and <i>inadequate</i> Ideas	9. Of the <i>Imperfection</i> of Words.	19. Of <i>Enthusiasm</i>
32. Of true and <i>false</i> Ideas	10. Of the <i>Abuse</i> of Words	20. Of <i>wrong</i> Assent, or <i>Error</i>
33. Of the <i>Association</i> of Ideas	11. Of the Remedies of the foregoing <i>Imperfections</i> and <i>Abuses</i>	<b>[20. Of the Conduct of the Understanding]</b>

The final chapter was initially projected as a possible addition to the Latin translation together with *Of Enthusiasm*, as conveyed by a letter to Molyneux on the 26th of April 1695:

What I shall add concerning Enthusiasm, I guess, will very much agree with your thoughts, since yours jump so right with mine, about the place where it is to come in, I having designed it for *chap. 18. lib. IV.* as a false principle of reasoning often made use of. [...] I think I shall make some other additions to be put into your Latin translation, and particularly concerning the Connexion of Ideas, which has not, that I know, been hitherto considered, and has, I guess, a greater influence upon our minds than is usually taken notice of.<sup>5</sup>

Of course, John Locke's *De intellectu humano* appeared only in 1701 with the other two projected chapters having debuted the previous year in the fourth edition of the *Essay*. Now, keeping in mind that the third edition saw no additional content, the first new material since the second edition of 1694 debuted in the fourth edition.

To recapitulate, during the six years stretching between the second and fourth editions, Locke proposed to make three additions: in 1695 *Enthusiasm* and *Association of Ideas*, in which diagnostics of some pathologies of the minds is proposed; in 1697 the *Conduct of the Understanding*, which also aims to offer therapeutic. Obviously, with these three, we should mention a fourth addition in that critique Locke had gradually been articulating about Malebranche's notion of seeing all things in God.<sup>6</sup> Although in some way thematically tied

<sup>5</sup> Locke to Molyneux, 26 April 1695, in Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 5, pp. 352-53.

<sup>6</sup> Previously, in Locke to William Molyneux, 23 March 1693, in Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 4, p. 665, and thereafter in Locke to William Molyneux, 8 March 1695, *ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 387, Locke had communicated to his friend the idea of adding to the *Essay* something about "P. Malbranche's opi-

to the other additions, this text remained distinct because of its polemical nature, in turn rendering it less suitable for inclusion in the *Essay*. The first two additions would effectively come to light in the fourth edition while the last would instead remain an unpolished rough-draft, only to be published in the *Posthumous Works of Mr. John Locke* in 1706. Furthermore, the effective or intended position of these chapters was, in either case, at the end of Book II or Book IV where, as we have seen in relation to Book III, Locke was inclined to expand the argument to include negative or problematic aspects as well as their possible remedies. From this perspective, the *Conduct of the Understanding* fits into a wider strategy, marking Locke's growing interest in the remedies that his philosophy might offer to the problems raised by language, religious belief and assent in general.

In each case, the treatment of mental pathologies or of its possible remedies is placed at the end of the related books. This fact in my view would seem to indicate a classical structure, at least as regards the Aristotelian *Organon* where the collection notably concludes with the *Sophistici elenchi*. As Aristotle himself would say, the *Sophistici elenchi* are a follow-up to the *Topica*, to the extent that some manuscripts place these as Book IX of that work, so as to form an articulated treatise of dialectic with them. The specific objective of the work is well synthesized by Pseudo-Alexander: "in the present book, so as to offer us a remedy able to ward-off the sophistic maladies, [Aristotle] examines the sophistic syllogism, making a strong rebuttal of the sophistic argument, in this, striving as far as possible for truth, on whose behalf the charlatan's cheap fallacies and widely held presumptions are disproven".<sup>7</sup> A case in point, as Paul Schuurman has amply demonstrated,<sup>8</sup> is that the general framework of the *Essay* – save the first book whose character more resembles that of a premise than that of an actual treatise – is symmetrical to the main parts of the Aristotelian *Organon*, which were coincidentally maintained by modern scholastics in the textbooks of Logic, as elsewhere. For example, the *Manuductio ad logicam, sive dialectica* (1615) by the Jesuit Philippe du Trieu (1580-1645) was among the textbooks in use at Oxford during the time Locke studied there, likewise, to be found among

nion concerning seeing all things in God". However, doubts about the polemical nature of such a text prompted Locke to desist from his intention although this transcript would also come to light in the *Posthumous Works* under the title, *An Examination of P. Malbranche's opinion concerning seeing all things in God*. See Simonutti, *Malebranche e la visione in Dio*, pp. 7-23.

<sup>7</sup> Alexander Aphrodisiensis, *In Sophisticos Elenchos*, 2, 6-10 [my translation].

<sup>8</sup> See Schuurman, "Introduction", in Locke, *Conduct*, pp. 52-60.

the volumes of the philosopher's personal library.<sup>9</sup> A small table may help visualize this structural correspondence:

Organon	Manuductio	Essay
<i>Categoriae</i>	<i>De termino simplici</i>	II <i>Of Ideas</i>
<i>De interpretatione</i>	<i>De enuntiatione</i>	III <i>Of Words</i>
<i>Analytica</i>	<i>De syllogismo</i>	IV <i>Of Knowledge and</i>
<i>Topica</i>	<i>De locis dialecticis</i>	<i>Opinion</i>
<i>Sophistici elenchi</i>	<i>sophisticis</i>	<i>Of Conduct Understanding</i>

The last two arguments dealt with in the *Essay*, namely *Knowledge* and *Opinion*, plus the anticipated final chapter of the *Conduct*, correspond to the three types of syllogism classically treated by Aristotelian logic: *certain*, *probable*, and *sophistic*. These last two, are confronted by Du Trieu as two halves dividing the fourth treatise *De locis*, i.e., *De locis dialecticis* and *De locis sophisticis*, and correspond respectively to Aristotle's *Topica* and *Sophistici elenchi*.

The evidence that Locke conceived the *Conduct of the Understanding* within the sphere of remedies for the errors of the intellect is confirmed not only by its placement in the argumentative strategy of the *Essay* – as we have just shown – but also by the text's opening remarks delineating its scope and content. Locke himself begins to explain why it is so important to deliberate upon the correct use of the intellect. Indeed, man acts guided by the intellect and not by the will, in as much as the latter, “never fails in its obedience to the dictates of the understanding”,<sup>10</sup> seeing as how “the Ideas and images in mens minds are the invisible powers that constantly governe them”.<sup>11</sup> The problem is, however, that we forfeit an adequate discipline for the conduct of the intellect from the very moment that the logic being employed appears to be deficient: “The Logick now in use has [...] long possessed the chair as the only art taught in the Schools for the direction of the minde in the study of the Arts and sciences”.<sup>12</sup>

To show the inadequacy of scholastic logic, used for centuries by scholars as the direct heir of Aristotelian logic, Locke now turns to the authority of the Great Lord Verulam, quoting a passage from the *Praefatio* to the *Instauratio magna pars secunda Novum organum*:

<sup>9</sup> LL, no. 2982.

<sup>10</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, par. 1, p. 153.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., par. 1, p. 154.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., par. 2, p. 154.

Qui summas Dialecticæ partes tribuerunt atque inde fidissima Scientiis præsidia comparari putarunt verissime et optime viderunt intellectum humanum sibi permissum merito suspectum esse debere. Verum infirmior omnino est malo medicina; nec ipsa mali expers. Si quidem Dialectica, quæ recepta est, licet ad civilia et artes, quæ in sermone et opinione positæ sunt, rectissime adhibeatur; naturæ tamen subtilitatem longo intervallo non attingit, et prensando, quod non capit, ad errores potius stabiliendos et quasi figendos, quam ad viam veritati aperiendam valuit.

This is a text for which Locke himself provides an English translation, including an additional verse from the *Praefatio*, which can be found at the end of the paragraph following the one quoted above:<sup>13</sup>

They says he who attributed soe much to Logick perceived very well and truly that it was not safe to trust the understanding to it self without the guard of any rules. But the remedy reachd not the evil but became a part of it. For the Logick which tooke place though it might doe well enough in civil affairs and the Arts which consisted in talke and opinion, yet comes very far short of the subtilty in the reall performances of nature and catching at what it cannot reach has served to confirme and establish errors rather than to open a way to truth. And therefor a little after he says. That it is absolutely necessary that a better and perfecter use and imployment of the minde and understanding should be introduced. Necessario requiritur ut melior et perfectior mentis et intellectus humani usus et adoperatio introducatur.

Given that the Latin text differs in only a few details of punctuation from the original, what stands out about this translation is that it is the only extensive quote in the *Conduct* and also that Locke took it upon himself to translate the passage into English, evidently to favor a wider audience than the strictly academic one. The first thing to take note of is that Locke translates *Dialectica* with *Logick*. Years later in 1733, this same choice was made by the first English translator<sup>14</sup> and appears quite sensible based on what we have previously said about the attention given to the dialectic in the modern scholastic textbooks. In this sense, the title given by Du Trieu is exemplary, *Manuductio*

<sup>13</sup> The first section “[At] Qui summas [...] aperiendam valuit” is found in Bacon, *The Instauration magna Part II*, p. 18; the second section “[Antequam vero ad remotiora, et occultiora Naturae liceat appellere,] Necessario [...] introducatur”, *ibid.*, p. 20. In Locke’s library there are two editions of the *Novum organum*, both in Latin, see LL, no. 169 and 170.

<sup>14</sup> See Bacon, *The Philosophical Works of Francis Bacon*. The previous English translations of the *Novum organum* were incomplete.

*ad logicam, sive dialectica*.<sup>15</sup> The second thing worthy of note is the fact that Locke understands *intellectum humanum sibi permissum* to mean the *human intellect left to itself*. So, not so much as the intellect left without any aid, but rather – in a more juridical sense – as confiding in the sole intellect without any proper safekeeping of the rules of logic to corroborate its testimony. This is further suggested by the fact that Locke's translation omits the phrase *atque inde fidissima Scientiis praesidia comparari putarunt*, which again identifies those who have assigned very high functions to logic or dialectics, and do so "believing that it furnished the most trustworthy aid to the sciences".<sup>16</sup>

With respect to the content of the two excerpts taken from the *Praefatio* of the *Instauratio Magna*, Locke's principal objective consists in coming to the realization that logic has long been considered the best remedy for the errors of the intellect and yet, "the remedy reachd not the evil but became a part of it".<sup>17</sup> This is a rather loose rendition of the Latin *Verum infirmior omnino est malo medicina; nec ipsa mali expers*, which can be translated literally as: "Truly, the medicine is altogether worse than the ailment; nor even free from disease itself". For this very reason it becomes absolutely necessary to introduce "a better and perfecter use and imployment of the minde and understanding".<sup>18</sup>

In the following paragraph of the *Conduct*, with the marginal title "Parts", Locke is still more explicit about the nature of his writing. The paragraph is introduced by a pair of statements that carry a slightly anti-cartesian air. The opening line, "There is tis visible great variety in mens understandings",<sup>19</sup> seems to contrast another famous opening line, "Le bon sens est la chose du monde la mieux partagée".<sup>20</sup> Likewise, the notion that "A few rules of Logick are thought sufficient in this case for those who pretend to the highest improvement"<sup>21</sup> is a clear echo of the Cartesian belief, "au lieu de ce grand nombre de préceptes dont la logique est composée, je crus que j'aurais assez des quatre suivants".<sup>22</sup> Yet, Locke would beg to differ that, "there are a great many natural defects in the understanding capable of amendment which are over looked and wholly neglected".

<sup>15</sup> In the *Ad lectorem* that opens Du Trieu's work, the author specifically justifies the option to join the term *dialectica* to *logica*.

<sup>16</sup> Bacon, *The Instauratio magna Part II*, p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, par. 3, p. 155.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 4, p. 155.

<sup>20</sup> Descartes, *Discours de la Méthode*, AT VI 1.

<sup>21</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, par. 5, p. 156.

<sup>22</sup> Descartes, *Discours de la Méthode*, AT VI 18.

Locke would hereafter add two more phrases to the paragraph. The first, fully aligned with what precedes, concludes that, “it is easy to perceive that men are guilty of a great many faults in the exercise and improvement of this facultie of the minde which hinders them in their progresse and keeps them in ignorance and error all their lives”.<sup>23</sup> In the next instance he further specifies, “Some of them [errors] I shall take notice of and endeavour to point out proper remedies for in the following Chapters”.<sup>24</sup> The philosopher’s underlying idea is thus the following: human intellect by its own nature is affected by a series of multiple defects. These defects limit the development of the human faculties, impeding them to reach the perfection to which they might have aspired had they not been snared by multiple errors. One of the determining factors in this failed development is the fact that the very nature of such defects renders them altogether unobserved to the mind, making them very difficult to correct. Herein the dual scope of the *Conduct* is subsequently deduced: first to evidence what these errors are and then to indicate possible remedies for them. These initial indications, validated by the lengthy citation of Bacon, clearly place the *Conduct of the Understanding* within the tradition that sees philosophy as *medicina mentis*.<sup>25</sup> I will insist no further on this aspect already featured by Sorana Corneanu in her work on the *Regimens of the mind*.

The manuscript of the *Conduct* has reached us in an advanced redactional state, albeit unfinished and much less ready for publication in the *Essay* or as an independent work. From this germination, it appears a rather disorganized and heterogeneous catalogue, detailing the errors of the intellect and their possible remedies. In this sense, the best way to grasp the text’s internal coherence – given what we have just gleaned from its first two paragraphs – is to herein identify a novel approach.

On one hand, its logic is novel because it seeks to leave behind the useless subtleties of scholastic syllogistics, being that, to some extent, this suffers from the same defects that it would like to emend. As evidenced by the Baconian

<sup>23</sup> Locke’s addition in MS Locke c. 28 f. 123r at the end of Chapter 1; Schuurman, “Introduction”, in Locke, *Conduct*, p. 105.

<sup>24</sup> Locke’s hand addition in MS Locke c. 28 f. 123r not in MS Locke e.1. Schuurman points out that Peter King decided to include this sentence in the *Posthumous works* (1706) but since he had not ordered the material of MS Locke e.1 into chapters, he substituted the word ‘Discourse’ for ‘Chapters’, see Schuurman, “Introduction”, in Locke, *Conduct*, pp. 117–18.

<sup>25</sup> See Corneanu, Giglioni, and Jalobeanu (eds.), *Francis Bacon and the Medicine of the Mind*; Giglioni, “Medicine of the Mind in Early Modern Philosophy”.

quote, the old logic was heavily centered on verbal dispute and, as such, remained useful only for the persuasive transmission of knowledge. It was however incapable of penetrating into the *subtilitas naturae*, or as Locke would phrase the Baconian philosopheme, “the subtilty in the reall performances of nature”.<sup>26</sup> This introduces both the concept of *reality* and that of the *actions* or *powers* of nature in an exceedingly novel and meaningful way.<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand, this logic is novel because it is a logic of ideas. As Locke himself claims at the beginning of MS Locke c.28 f. 125r,<sup>28</sup> the errors of the intellect are fundamentally of two species: “the want of determined Ideas and of Sagacity and exercise in finding out and laying in order intermediate Ideas”. Both of these errors are therefore attributed to ideas: as taken in themselves, on account of a lack of clarity and distinction in their conception, or as taken in relation to other ideas, on account of a lack of the intermediate ideas that serve to associate chains of reasoning when concordance is not self-evident. We err in the conception of ideas in as much as we accept opaque ideas as clear and confused ideas as distinct; we err in reasoning when we admit as intermediates certain ideas that are unable to truly mediate between the ideas that we seek to unite.

In the section of the *Conduct* where the title “Association”<sup>29</sup> is found in the margin, Locke describes the phenomenon of the association of ideas as follows:

By this one easy and unheeded miscariage of the understanding sandie and loose foundations become infallible principles and will not suffer them selves to be touchd or questiond. Such unnatural connections become by custom as natural to the minde, as sun and light, fire and warmth goe togeather and soe seem to carry with them as natural an evidence as self evident truths themselves.<sup>30</sup>

Locke, first of all, underlines that association is a defect by which the mind is spontaneously and unknowingly, that is habitually, carried in the manner of a second nature as it were. The ease with which the mind tends to associate ideas makes it increasingly difficult, not only to notice but moreover to revise such associations. These links, seemingly natural to the functioning of the mind,

<sup>26</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, par. 3, p. 155.

<sup>27</sup> The rare occurrences of the term ‘performance’ in the *Essay* each have to do with the *fulfillment* of an action.

<sup>28</sup> This is Locke, *Conduct*, par. 98, p. 245.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 76, p. 228.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 77, p. 229.

grown accustomed to them, yet objectively remain wholly unnatural since they are connections lacking any real foundation in things. Now I would specifically like to detail said 'association of ideas' and show its peculiarity within the Lockean logic of ideas.

## 2. *Association of ideas and logic of ideas*

As I mentioned earlier, in 1695 the "Connexion of Ideas" was flagged by Locke among the questions worthy of expansion, anticipating the Latin translation of the *Essay*. The chronology of redaction for the manuscript MS Locke e.1 shows that Locke began work on *Enthusiasm*, then moved to *Association* and finally to the *Conduct*. The three developments are closely related and, in a certain sense, represent one of Locke's common concerns as viewed under three different perspectives. The keystone – this is the point I would like to defend – is *Association*, which represents the epistemic core of the problem, with respect to which *Enthusiasm* constitutes an eminent case in religious matters while the *Conduct* concerns the therapeutic sphere.

These three developments are thus intertwined not only historically and thematically but even textually. Specifically, the manuscript on "Association" would be split in two so that one part ended up in the *Essay* and the other in the *Conduct*. In MS Locke e.1, the part on "Association" begins on page 32 and ends on page 56. The first twenty pages (32-52) were then used by Locke as Chapter 33 of the *Essay*, while the remaining part (52-56) was placed in the *Conduct*.<sup>31</sup> I prefer to start with the latter text, and then move to the *Essay*.

The opening line of the section titled, "Association" in the *Conduct* is very interesting because it would outline a differing treatment with respect to the *Essay*, assuming they are two separate works published at different times:

Though I have in the 2<sup>d</sup> book of My *Essay concerning humane understanding* treated of the *Association of Ideas* yet having donne it there historically as giving a view of the understanding in this as well as its several other ways of operateing rather than designeing there to enquire into the remedies ought to be applied to it, [...].

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pars. 76-79, pp. 228-31.

The reason why the original manuscript was partitioned thus pertains to the two different objectives sought in the two texts, although their parts flow together. In the *Essay* the treatment of the association of ideas has a nature that follows the "Historical, plain method"<sup>32</sup> preferred for that work. This method would be inspired by Baconian natural history and a medical methodology of the historical kind, as derived from the careful observation and documentation of symptoms.<sup>33</sup> In other words, with the *Essay* Locke offers us the 'diagnosis' of the association of ideas while the *Conduct* try to find a 'therapy', a "cure" in Locke's own words.

The text continues specifying that in lieu of this curative purpose, Locke will propose a few elements for consideration to all those who desire to conduce their own intellect properly. The primary reason it is worthwhile to do so is that:

[Association of Ideas] is as frequent a cause of mistake and error in us as perhaps any thing else that can be named, and is a disease of the mind as hard to be cured as any. It being a very hard thing to convince any one that things are not soe, and naturally soe as they constantly appear to him.<sup>34</sup>

Therefore, Locke places the association of ideas as the most frequent and incurable of errors. Now, the indispensable question that should here be asked is what Locke means by the expression 'association of ideas' and also why he apparently attributes a negative value to it. For the mere fact that the mind would associate ideas does not seem to be a pathological phenomenon in and of itself. Indeed, the history of thought and of psychology has recognized Locke as one of the pioneers of 'Associationism', i.e., "the doctrine according to which mental activity is primarily or essentially comprised of the association of ideas in chains of ideas according to certain laws".<sup>35</sup> It is no coincidence that in his *Introduction* to the *Conduct*, Paul Schuurman is careful to add to the expression 'association of ideas' the qualification 'wrong',<sup>36</sup> yielding to the existence of a 'good' association of ideas and a 'wrong' association of ideas.

<sup>32</sup> Locke, *Essay*, I.i.2, p. 44.

<sup>33</sup> See Brun, "La Méthode simple et historique de Locke dans l' *Essai* et la *Royal Society*".

<sup>34</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, par. 76, p. 228.

<sup>35</sup> Dromelet, Tabb, and Wolfe, "Doctrines of the Association of Ideas in Early Modern Thought", 490; see also Warren, *A History of the Association Psychology*; Young, "Association of Ideas"; Rapaport, *The History of the Concept of Association of Ideas*; Giuntini, *La chimica della mente*.

<sup>36</sup> See Schuurman, "Introduction", in Locke, *Conduct*, pp. 29, 30, 32, 48, 51, 95, 120.

Yet, if we closely examine the texts, Locke never uses the expression 'wrong association of ideas,' either in the *Conduct* or in the *Essay* where Locke speaks rather of "wrong connexion of ideas".<sup>37</sup> In the *Essay*, in fact, the term 'association' occurs only in Chapter 33 of Book II and in no other part of the text.<sup>38</sup> As such, Schuurman's auxiliary qualification seems somewhat inappropriate to me, because to Locke the term 'association' carried a negative connotation in and of itself. In other words, for Locke to say 'association of ideas' meant 'wrong connection of ideas.' According to Kathryn Tabb, in a recent article dedicated to enthusiasm and association of ideas, "Locke was invoking the early modern signification of 'association' as an ominous confederacy or union".<sup>39</sup> Therefore, for Locke there is no such thing as a wrong association of ideas because the very act of associating ideas is what in itself leads to error. Although historically Locke coined the expression "association of ideas," its meaning is quite different from what it will take on in later authors, such as David Hume.<sup>40</sup>

To better explain the peculiarity of the association of ideas according to Locke, an in-depth examination of the logic proper to ideas as they relate to distinct typologies of knowledge becomes indispensable. For this task I will rely on the analysis of Matthew Priselac, from his work on *Locke's Science of Knowledge*. Priselac's strategy is based upon an analysis of the epistemological theory contained in the *Essay*, thanks to which he finally strives to explain the relationship that ties what is at stake in Part II of the work, namely the origin and taxonomy of ideas, with that which is treated in Part IV, namely the distinction of knowledge from opinion. Priselac's underlying thesis is that: "Locke's project in the *Essay* is to provide an account of knowledge and opinion that explains their boundaries and limitations by examining the origins of our thought".<sup>41</sup> Even from the first lines of the *Essay*, the definition of the origin, nature and extension of knowledge remains an objective closely tied to the inquiry relative to opinion: "This, therefore, being my *Purpose* to enquire into the Original, Certainty, and Extent of humane Knowledge; together, with the Grounds and Degrees of Belief, Opinion, and Assent".<sup>42</sup> Indeed, the

<sup>37</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xxxiii.9, p. 397; "undue Connexion of Ideas", *ibid.*, II.xxxiii.8, p. 397; "customary connexion [of Ideas]", *ibid.*, II.xxxiii.18, p. 401.

<sup>38</sup> The term 'association', apart from the title of the chapter and of few paragraphs (7, 14, 18), occurs only one time in Locke, *Essay*, II.xxxiii.7, p. 396.

<sup>39</sup> Tabb, "Locke on Enthusiasm and the Association of Ideas", p. 77.

<sup>40</sup> Dromelet, Tabb, and Wolfe, "Doctrines of the Association of Ideas in Early Modern Thought", pp. 493-94.

<sup>41</sup> Priselac, *Locke's Science of Knowledge*, p. 7.

<sup>42</sup> Locke, *Essay*, I.i.2, p. 43.

justification of this difference between knowledge and opinion turns out to be the result and, at times, the dominant scope of the *Essay*: "It is therefore worth while, to search out the *Bounds* between Opinion and Knowledge; and examine by what Measures, in things, whereof we have no certain Knowledge, we ought to regulate our Assent, and moderate our Perswasions".<sup>43</sup> Thus, to adequately explain how the genetic inquiry of the origin of knowledge might be at the base of its distinction from opinion requires providing a fully organic account of the *Essay*.

The solution around which Priselac's attempt spins is, by vast synthesis, the following. Locke's project in the *Essay* is to provide an explanation of the nature of knowledge and of opinion, as well as of the limits that separate them, by way of examining the origin of ideas. Knowledge and opinion differ from one another on the grounds of being 'distinct genetic structures'. The genetic structure of Knowledge reveals that this is a perception of 'idea-containment': "One idea contains another when it is, at least in part, composed of and so has as a part, another idea. We have knowledge when we perceive an idea to contain another".<sup>44</sup> Opinion is instead 'conjunction without containment': "Ideas are conjoined without being contained when they are both parts of some third idea but neither contains the other as a part. We have mere opinion when we merely conjoin two ideas but don't perceive one to contain the other".<sup>45</sup> For example, let's take the idea of a particular substance. It concerns a complex substance idea, composed of the idea of a substrate – a substance<sub>support</sub> in Priselac's terminology – and of ideas about its qualities, visible, tactile, *etc.* While the idea of that particular substance contains all of these ideas within it, these ideas do not reciprocally contain each other, but are joined together in as much as they pertain to a third idea, precisely that of the particular substance. Therefore, I perceive that this particular thing possesses this or that quality, while I can only presume, without perceiving it, the type of relationship subsistent between the qualities of the substance<sub>support</sub> or between single, different qualities. The limits of my paper do not allow for further analysis of the ample and detailed argumentation with which Priselac defends his thesis; for this, I defer to his work. Instead, I prefer to take into account the association of ideas, an aspect Priselac does not consider for a very straightforward reason, because the association of ideas does not constitute a kind of knowledge, either certain or probable.

<sup>43</sup> Locke, *Essay*, I.i.3, p. 44.

<sup>44</sup> Priselac, *Locke's Science of Knowledge*, p. 85.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

Of course, while it is all too evident that Locke conceives the *Essay*, from its first chapters, as an explanation of the difference between knowledge and opinion,<sup>46</sup> only at a later moment it seems does he take note of the demand to further specify a third aspect concerning error. As a result, according to the classic tripartition which we spoke of at the beginning, three objects of logic emerge: knowledge or certainty, opinion or probability, and error or falsity. Knowledge according to Locke could be intuitive or demonstrative and also sensitive, i.e., knowledge of the real existence of particular things.<sup>47</sup> We can err in our opinions but also sometimes in intuitions or in demonstrations and obviously in knowledge of the real existence.

Although it may be quite natural to assimilate 'idea conjunction' and 'idea association',<sup>48</sup> I argue that they should be carefully distinguished from each other. Indeed, opinion differs from knowledge in that it is 'presumption' to know in the literal sense of the term:

Thus the Mind has two Faculties, conversant about Truth and Falshood. *First, Knowledge*, whereby it certainly perceives, and is undoubtedly satisfied of the Agreement or Disagreement of any Ideas. *Secondly, Judgment*, which is the putting *Ideas* together, or separating them from one another in the Mind, when their certain Agreement or Disagreement is not perceived, but *presumed* to be so; which is, as the Word imports, taken to be so before it certainly appears.<sup>49</sup>

From this point of view, the association of ideas cannot be considered as merely presuming to know, because Locke effectively treats association as a genuine form of madness: "enquiring a little by the bye into the Nature of Madness, *B.2. c.11. § 13*. I found it to spring from the very same Root, and to depend on the very same Cause we are here speaking of",<sup>50</sup> i.e., association of ideas. This certainly cannot be said of opinion, which under Locke's judgement is the faculty that we are most often constrained to use in the

<sup>46</sup> See Priselac, "Locke on Knowledge and Opinion".

<sup>47</sup> "I think, we may add to the two former sorts of *Knowledge*, this also, of the existence of particular external Objects, by that perception and Consciousness we have of the actual entrance of Ideas from them, and allow these *three degrees of Knowledge*, viz. *Intuitive, Demonstrative, and Sensitive*: in each of which, there are different degrees and ways of Evidence and Certainty" (Locke, *Essay*, IV.i.14, pp. 537-38).

<sup>48</sup> As Priselac does in this passage: "It is a conjunction, or association, between two ideas" (Priselac, *Locke's Science of Knowledge*, p. 139).

<sup>49</sup> Locke, *Essay*, IV.xiv.4, p. 653.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, II.xxxiii.4, p. 395.

state of twilight and probationership in which we find ourselves during this earthly life.<sup>51</sup>

The association of ideas is to be placed in contrast with knowledge and particularly with real knowledge. In fact, initially Locke's analysis of the association of ideas assumes natural or real connections as a proper term of comparison:

Some of our Ideas have a natural Correspondence and Connexion one with another: It is the Office and Excellency of our Reason to trace these, and hold them together in that Union and Correspondence which is founded in their peculiar Beings.<sup>52</sup>

The association of ideas is therefore defined in opposition to natural or real connection as casual or customary, meaning not due to nature but to that which is often called second nature, in this case implying that this second nature is not in accord with nature:<sup>53</sup>

Besides this there is another Connexion of Ideas wholly owing to Chance or Custom; Ideas that in themselves are not at all of kin, come to be so united in some Mens Minds, that 'tis very hard to separate them, they always keep in company, and the one no sooner at any time comes into the Understanding but its Associate appears with it; and if they are more than two which are thus united, the whole gang always inseparable shew themselves together.<sup>54</sup>

Therefore, the association of ideas concerns ideas "that in themselves are not at all of kin", meaning, whose nature or "peculiar being" does not cause them of their own right to be contained the one in the other (as in knowledge), nor to be conjoined without containment (as in opinion), but to some extent to be contained without containment, that is, to be connected to each other as closely as if their link were natural or real, without effectively being so.

It is for this reason that Locke does not hesitate to define the association of ideas as madness, and not metaphorically – as we have seen – but quite literally. In general, a "strong Combination of Ideas"<sup>55</sup> can have a double origin,

<sup>51</sup> See *ibid.*, IV.xiv.2, p. 652.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, II.xxxiii.5, p. 395.

<sup>53</sup> "Such unnatural connections become by custom as natural to the minde, as sun and light, fire and warmth goe together and soe seem to carry with them as natural an evidence as self evident truths themselves" (Locke, *Conduct*, par. 77, p. 229). On the relationship between habit and association see, Tabb, "Locke on Habituation and the Association of Ideas".

<sup>54</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xxxiii.5, p. 395.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, II.xxxiii.6, p. 396.

“either voluntarily, or by chance”.<sup>56</sup> Voluntarily when the combination is fruit of a specific training, acted out by the subject (e.g., a musician or a dancer); casual when a chance event – often traumatic in the examples Locke chose – or a series of unanticipated circumstances is the cause of the connection (e.g., an aversion or nausea). But more than anything, Locke aims to underline the typical unreality of associations, as in this most eloquent example:

The Ideas of *Goblins* and *Sprights* have really no more to do with Darkness than Light; yet let but a foolish Maid inculcate these often on the Mind of a Child, and raise them there together, possibly he shall never be able to separate them again so long as he lives, but Darkness shall ever afterwards bring with it those frightful Ideas, and they shall be so joined that he can no more bear the one than the other.<sup>57</sup>

There are three interesting elements here. First of all, the madness of the connection between fantastical ideas and real ideas. Secondly, the all too fragile role of childhood as a time prone for generating such associations. Lastly, the difficulty, if not impossibility, of remedying such associations once they are established in the mind. I would like to attempt to analyze somewhat further each of these three elements. Madness does not have so much to do with the existence of fantastical ideas, whose distinction from real ideas was elaborated in Chapter 30, but rather with the fact that ‘fantastical’ ideas would be so closely tied with ‘real’ ideas, thus producing an erred connection, namely, an association. Childhood evidences another element in the weakness or ‘passivity’ of the mind. Association happening in our minds is something that we undergo like an illness, and like an illness it should be cured. Yet Locke, in the *Conduct* as in the *Essay*, is extremely skeptical towards the real possibility of remedying the association of ideas.

### 3. *Remedies to cure the association of ideas*

In the *Essay*, the therapeutical difficulty concerning the association of ideas is traced back to one very simple reason, namely, that in the case of association the mind would be asked to cure itself by itself: “When this Combination is settled and whilst it lasts, it is not in the power of Reason to help us, and

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., II.xxxiii.10, pp. 397-98.

relieve us from the Effects of it".<sup>58</sup> This is because reasoning is incapable of influencing a connection that has occurred independently from it. Thus, only time seems to provide a remedy through the forgetfulness which it generally ushers in. Therefore, the Lockean argument in the *Essay* seems aimed primarily at emphasizing how dangerous it is to inculcate false connections of ideas into someone's mind since these are almost irreversible. This argument appears to be addressed to educators or in general to those who have a role in shaping minds.

In the *Conduct*, Locke is more explicitly set on finding possible remedies for the association of ideas: "And where then shall one with hopes of successes begin the cure?"<sup>59</sup> On the one hand, there are the remedies to association before it occurs (prophylaxis), and, on the other, the remedies to association after it has occurred (therapy or cure). Regarding the first, they more resemble a set of precautions: Locke's proposal might well be summarized by the precept, 'prevention is better than cure'. Indeed, the first preventative remedy for the association of ideas regards those who mislead the minds of others, impeding them to be free to reason. They are the heads of numerous sects, political or religious, who base their power on an authority that will not allow itself to be brought into question. They deliberately hide the truth and, as such, Locke places them into stark contrast with those who seek the truth:

they [teachers and Guides in most sects] will not suffer the grounds where on they are built to be examined, when as those who seek truth only and desire to own and propagate noe thing else freely expose their principles to the test, are pleased to have them examined, give men leave to reject them if they can [...].<sup>60</sup>

This preventative remedy extends also to parents and educators in general, whom Locke counsels against "principleing their children and Schollers well".<sup>61</sup> Finally, Locke turns to the persons who, in contrast with those who are constrained to dedicate their lives to satisfying the most basic personal needs, have instead time to dedicate to study and to the search for truth. For such as these, the philosopher concedes a single principle that should be "inculcated" in the mind by constant repetition, effectively forming a preventative rule,

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., II.xxxiii.13, p. 398.

<sup>59</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, par. 77, p. 229.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., par. 77, pp. 229-30.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., par. 78, p. 230.

literally a “caution against this evil”,<sup>62</sup> a rule that is like a ‘medicine’ that serves to ‘immunize’ the mind from the occurrence of an association of ideas:

That they never suffer any Ideas to be joynd in their understandings in any other or stronger combination than what their own nature and correspondence give them. And that they often examin those that they finde linked together in their minds, whether this assotiation of Ideas be from the visible agreement that is in the Ideas them selves or from the habitual and prevaileing custom of the minde joyning them thus together in thinking.<sup>63</sup>

Locke suggests here the use of a mental technique, i.e., meditation or examination, that recalls the philosophical spiritual exercises typically practiced in ancient schools, especially the Stoics and Epicureans, as Pierre Hadot has pointed out in numerous studies:<sup>64</sup> the philosopher is called upon to care for (*melete*) a series of principles (*logoi*), which, once repeated and assimilated, go to form that “rule of life” (*kanon*) by which the soul is fortified and prepared, as by an “armor” (*paraskeue*), enabling him to react in the face of difficulties.<sup>65</sup> On closer inspection, the rule Locke proposes here echoes the first of the precepts in Descartes’ *Discourse on the Method*: “Le premier était de ne recevoir jamais aucune chose pour vraie que je ne la connusse évidemment être telle”.<sup>66</sup> In Locke’s theory, the Cartesian criterion of evidence becomes that combination of ideas which is due to their very nature, or as we have seen, an ‘idea containment’.

Locke also foresees the possibility of intervening after association has taken place in the mind: “cure it [association] when habit has establishd it”.<sup>67</sup> In this case, the therapy proposed by the philosopher is as follows: he who would like to cure an association of ideas that occurs in his mind “must nicely observe the very quick and almost imperceptible motions of the minde in its habitual actions”.<sup>68</sup> In support of this therapeutic proposal Locke refers to what he argued in the *Essay* about the so-called ‘Molineux problem’. In *Essay* II.ix.8,

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., par. 79, p. 230.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., par. 78, p. 230.

<sup>64</sup> See Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, pp. 81-125; Hadot, *The Selected Writings*, pp. 207-26.

<sup>65</sup> See Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, p. 85; Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 319-27; Hadot, *The Inner Citadel*, pp. 35-53.

<sup>66</sup> Descartes, *Discours de la Méthode*, AT VI 18; see D’Agostino, *Spiritual Exercises and Early Modern Philosophy*, pp. 91-95.

<sup>67</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, par. 79, p. 230.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., par. 79, pp. 230-31.

the philosopher starts from the observation that in adult persons, that is, those already provided with wide experience, the "Ideas we receive by sensation, are often [...] alter'd by the Judgment, without our taking notice of it".<sup>69</sup> Locke provides an example in the vision of a uniformly colored globe. What such an object impresses on the mind is the idea of a "flat Circle variously shadow', with several degrees of Light and Brightness coming to our Eyes",<sup>70</sup> meaning a two-dimensional color patch silhouetted against the background, endowed with a gradient variation of increasingly darker patches. Locke notes:

having by use been accustomed to perceive, what kind of appearance convex Bodies are wont to make in us; what alterations are made in the reflections of Light, by the difference of the sensible Figures of Bodies, the Judgment presently, by an habitual custom, alters the Appearances into their Causes.<sup>71</sup>

This transformation, from the appearance of a figure composed of a monochrome gradient patch into the perception of a convex figure endowed with uniform color, according to Locke is characterized by three essential elements: (a) it is an 'alteration,' (b) due to an 'instantaneous' movement, and (c) driven by a 'habitual' bias. Returning now to the text of the *Conduct*, firstly we should note that Locke proposes the example of a pictorial vision, in line with what was developed for Molyneux's problem, which makes it clear that it is at least possible to make the percipient aware that "one Idea is substituted for the other".<sup>72</sup>

From this viewpoint, how can we understand Locke's suggested cure for an association of ideas that has already occurred? As we have seen, Locke does not offer much guidance other than to argue that we should "nicely observe" the rapid habitual movements of the mind. A text we find in *Essay* II.i.7 may help us. Here, Locke tries to explain why reflecting more or less on the inner operations of one's mind procures a greater or lesser variety of ideas of reflection. The reason is as follows:

For, though he that contemplates the Operations of his Mind, cannot but have plain and clear *Ideas* of them; yet unless he turn his Thoughts that way, and considers them *attentively*, he will no more have clear and distinct *Ideas* of all the *Operations of his Mind*, and all that may be observed therein, than he will have

<sup>69</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.ix.8, p. 145.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, par. 79, p. 231.

all the particular *Ideas* of any Landscape, or of the Parts and Motions of a Clock, who will not turn his Eyes to it, and with attention heed all the Parts of it.<sup>73</sup>

In explaining the inner, reflective action of observing the operations of one's mind, Locke emphasizes 'attention'.<sup>74</sup> Attention, understood here as the detailed observation of the object, is what enables the transition from confusion to clarity: "The Picture, or Clock may be so placed, that they may come in his way every day; but yet he will have but a confused *Idea* of all the Parts they are made up of, till he *applies himself with attention*, to consider them each in particular".<sup>75</sup> Attention (*prosoche*) is the most fundamental of the philosophical spiritual exercises developed by the ancient schools, in which it often had the therapeutic goal of keeping the philosopher in a state of constant tension and concentration on the fundamental rules of one's conduct, as on the present moment.<sup>76</sup> The kind of attention proposed here by Locke is a voluntary contemplative act, directed to the observation of every single detail of the object, resulting in the acquisition of a clearer and more distinct idea of it.

According to the *Conduct*, attention therapy for an association of ideas which has already occurred consists of a voluntary reflexive<sup>77</sup> act directed at perceiving those habitual movements that are normally difficult to observe in the internal activity of the mind, as they are very rapid and almost imperceptible. The qualification of these movements as 'imperceptible' emphasizes their passive nature, which attention seeks to counterbalance by active reflection. Therefore, it is not a matter of correcting the association of ideas through the contemplation of sane and correct ideas, as Kathryn Tabb rightly points out.<sup>78</sup> Instead, it is about acquiring a sort of mental habitus aimed at the careful observation of the habitual mechanisms which join ideas together. Continuing his argument, Locke polemically denounces those "learned who not seldom, in two Ideas that they have been accustomed to joyn in their mindes, substitute one for the other and I am apt to think often without perceiving it them selves".<sup>79</sup> Here, therefore, the Lockean solution goes in the direction of getting

<sup>73</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.i.7, p. 107.

<sup>74</sup> For a general overview, see Stuart, "Locke on attention".

<sup>75</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.i.7, p. 107.

<sup>76</sup> See Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, pp. 84-85. On the phenomenon of mind-wandering and the role of attention according to Locke, see Stoneham and Thorson, "Locke on Cognitive Bias", pp. 99-100.

<sup>77</sup> See Lähteenmäki, "L'attention dans la philosophie de l'esprit de John Locke", pp. 84-86.

<sup>78</sup> See Tabb, "Locke on Habituation and the Association of Ideas", p. 391.

<sup>79</sup> Locke, *Conduct*, par. 79, p. 231.

used to perceiving what one does not usually perceive, that is, of performing associations that are dictated by habit and not by the nature of ideas themselves. It is important to point out that the focus here is not on the ideas, but on the habitual movement that goes with them.

In conclusion, for Locke, both in the case of preventing the association of ideas not yet occurred and in the case of cure for an association that has already occurred, it is a matter of forming a reflexive counter-habit in the mind, by meditative exercise in the one case and by attention in the other, which is capable of actively counterbalancing subjection to erroneous habitual bias.

### *Abbreviations*

- AT: Descartes, René, *Oeuvres de Descartes*, 12 vols., eds. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, Cerf, Paris 1887-1913; Vrin, Paris 1964-1974.
- LL: Harrison, John, and Laslett, Peter, *The Library of John Locke*, 2nd ed., Clarendon Press, Oxford 1971.

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Appendix  
John Locke and Note-Taking  
*edited by*  
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# John Locke's Note-Taking: A very short Introduction

Richard Yeo

From an early age, John Locke was a note-taker, and later, a keeper of notebooks. His first experience of note-taking is likely to have been at Westminster School, London, as a student from 1646 to 1652.<sup>1</sup> In his *Ludus literarius, or the Grammar Schoole* (1612), the English schoolmaster, John Brinsley, mentioned “a little paper-booke” as obligatory classroom equipment.<sup>2</sup> The importance of collecting extracts from classical Latin authors under headings or titles (from *titulus/tituli*) in commonplace books was inculcated in all grammar school students. Another early exposure to notebooks was Locke's acquaintance with his father's memorandum book containing information about the family property in Somerset, his own work as a magistrate, and some reading notes.<sup>3</sup> He also inherited a notebook bearing his mother's name and titled “Farrago” (hodgepodge), which included household recipes for medicines and cooking.<sup>4</sup> Both these notebooks contained more miscellaneous information than school paperbooks, but nevertheless also employed headings – often in the margins. For educated young gentlemen of the day, these experiences were not unusual. However, there is something distinctive in Locke's case: soon after he began to use various notebooks, some quite disorganized, in his undergraduate studies from the summer of 1652 at Christ Church, Oxford, and then for scholarly

<sup>1</sup> Fox-Bourne, *Life of Locke*, vol. 1, pp. 15-25; von Leyden, “Introduction” to Locke, *Essays on the Law of Nature*, pp. 15-21; Woolhouse, *Locke*, pp. 10-15.

<sup>2</sup> Brinsley, *Ludus literarius*, p. 124. See Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric*, pp. 111-47; Havens, *Commonplace Books*, pp. 29-31.

<sup>3</sup> British Library, London (BL) Add. MS 28, 273. John Locke senior died on 13 February 1661; see Fox-Bourne, *Life of Locke*, vol. 1, p. 81.

<sup>4</sup> Locke's mother, Agnes Locke (née Keene, 1597-1637) died when he was about five years old. See Lovelace Collection, Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Locke e. 4, date of “52” on inside front cover signed “Agnis Locke”. Probably in the late 1650s, Locke added medical and chemical notes, sometimes in collaboration with the physician, Richard Lower (1631-1691); see Dewhurst, “An Oxford Medical Student's Notebook”, pp. 141-42.

purposes in the late 1650s, he invented his own systematic procedure for entering and retrieving material. He began applying this method in notebooks from 1660, especially in those containing his excerpts from medical books.<sup>5</sup>

Eventually, in July 1686 Locke shared this way of making notes with the Republic of Letters in an anonymous article titled “Méthode nouvelle de dresser des recueils” in the *Bibliothèque universelle et historique*, edited by the Genevan scholar, Jean Le Clerc (1657-1736), and published in Amsterdam.<sup>6</sup> From this time, he became recognized as a significant contributor to the genre of *ars excerpendi* (from *excerpere* – to select, to make excerpts), the art or skill of selecting and arranging excerpts, especially in commonplace books.<sup>7</sup> He gained a European reputation as an authority on note-taking, a status awarded in some cases by people who were unaware of the older scholastic and humanist advice.<sup>8</sup> Of course, Locke called his contribution a *new* method in acknowledgement of these earlier intellectual traditions. After his death in October 1704, the “New Method” (as it was called) was published in two English editions of 1706; the original French version was reprinted in 1710 and 1732; and German and Dutch translations appeared, respectively, in 1711 and 1739.<sup>9</sup> There is now a body of work on the conventions and procedures that regulate Locke’s commonplace books, and this has facilitated some studies that examine the content of the actual notebooks.<sup>10</sup>

One thing Locke did not mention in the article of 1686 was his use of another kind of notebook, the journal. He did not keep one of these until late 1675 when he set off for France (possibly for health reasons) without his commonplace books, but he maintained an annual journal until just before

<sup>5</sup> See BL, Add. MS 32554; MSS Locke f. 19 and d. 9; Milton, “Locke at Oxford”, p. 34; Milton, “Locke’s life and times”.

<sup>6</sup> [Locke], “Méthode nouvelle”.

<sup>7</sup> Placcius, *De arte excerpendi*, pp. 8-11. See Cevoloni, *De Arte Excerpendi*; Zedelmaier, “Excerpting/Commonplaces”.

<sup>8</sup> Yeo, “Locke’s ‘New Method’”, pp. 27-29; Allan, *Commonplace Books and Reading*, pp. 63-70; Yeo, *Notebooks*, pp. 215-18; Locke, *Literary and Historical Writings*, pp. 52-56. At least from the early 1700s, Locke was lauded as “the great Master of Order”; see Chambers, *Cyclopaedia*, vol. 1, “Common-Places”; Yeo, “Ephraim Chambers’s *Cyclopaedia*”.

<sup>9</sup> See Locke, *Literary and Historical Writings*, pp. 51-52; Locke, “A New Method of a Common-Place-Book”.

<sup>10</sup> For example, on the method, see Meynell, “Locke’s Method of Common-placing”; Milton, “Locke’s Medical Notebooks”; Yeo, “Locke’s ‘New Method’”; Stolberg, “Locke’s ‘New Method’”; on the content, Walmsley and Milton, “Locke’s notebook ‘Adversaria 4’”; Anstey, *Locke and Natural Philosophy*, passim.

his death in October 1704.<sup>11</sup> Although there were some entries in the journals used in France which Locke did not wish to publicize, there is nothing mysterious about this silence: the journal simply did not belong to the scholarly tradition of *ars excerpendi*.

From the mid-twentieth century, John Lough, W. von Leyden and Kenneth Dewhurst brought sections of Locke's journals to a wider readership. We remain indebted to them. Their work improved on the inadequate selection and editing of the small number of extracts in *The Life of John Locke* (1829) by Lord Peter King (1776-1833)<sup>12</sup> and on the somewhat better account in Henry R. Fox-Bourne's *The Life of John Locke* (1876). Fox-Bourne had access to the journal of 1679 in the British Museum, but relied on King for extracts from the others.<sup>13</sup> Lough offered non-medical extracts from the four journals Locke kept in France; von Leyden published some 'philosophical' entries written in shorthand from the journals of 1676 and 1677, thus adding to what Richard Aaron and Jocelyn Gibb had done in 1936.<sup>14</sup> Dewhurst produced "a complete edition" of the medical notes in the journals from 1675 to 1698.<sup>15</sup> More recently, Mark Goldie included important entries from some of the journals in his *Locke: Political Essays* (1997).<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, the journals kept in France have not been fully transcribed, edited or published, and the current separate selections make it difficult to appreciate the sequence and context of the entries.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the significant works just mentioned are editions of the journals, not close or extended analyses of their multifarious content, or of how Locke used them.

Outside the community of Locke specialists, the status of the journals is damaged by comparisons with Samuel Pepys' famous diary which, since

<sup>11</sup> Bodleian MSS Locke f. 1-10 and BL, Add. MS 15642. Before this trip Locke used the memoranda books MSS Locke f. 11, f. 12, f. 13 for financial accounts.

<sup>12</sup> King, *Life of Locke*, pp. 41-118. King (the 7th Lord King) was the great-grandson of Locke's cousin, Lord Chancellor Peter King, to whom Locke bequeathed half his books and most of his manuscripts. King had access to these when writing about Locke. See LL, pp. 8-9, 55-56. For criticism of King's editing of journal extracts, see von Leyden, "Notes", p. 63.

<sup>13</sup> Fox-Bourne, *Life of Locke*, vol. 1, pp. 337-38. The British Museum acquired this journal in December 1845.

<sup>14</sup> Lough, *Locke's Travels in France*; Locke, *Essays on the Law of Nature*, pp. 258-81; Locke, *An Early Draft*, pp. 75-125.

<sup>15</sup> Dewhurst, *Locke*, p. x; see pp. 62-151 for selected entries from 1675-1679.

<sup>16</sup> Locke, *Political Essays*, pp. 235-67; 269-82; 289-91. See the "philosophical" journal entries between 1676 and 1679 listed in Schankula, "A Summary Catalogue", pp. 4, 27-30.

<sup>17</sup> For a recent reflection on the importance of this task, see Terenzio, "Il contenuto dei *Journals* di Locke". See also the notice of a "projected edition [of the journals]" in the John Locke bibliography at <https://openpublishing.psu.edu/locke/bib/Clarendon-ed.html>.

published in 1825, has remained the exemplar of unreserved self-disclosure in a notebook.<sup>18</sup> In 1967, William Matthews, a co-editor of Pepys' *Diary*, remarked that Locke's journal was "very scrappy and disappointing, but has biographical value".<sup>19</sup> In order to avoid such annoyance following inappropriate expectations, we should recognize that the self-reporting in the diaries of contemporaries such as Pepys, John Evelyn and Robert Hooke jars with the controlled and secretive *persona* Locke cultivated in his letters and conversation.<sup>20</sup> Goldie sums this up in the context of what Locke's correspondence betrays: "His record-keeping was meticulous to the point of obsessional, though he was scarcely ever confessional and never autobiographical".<sup>21</sup> Whereas some contemporary diaries exhibited the features of what came to be called "egodocuments", Locke's journals did this only obliquely – which is not to say that sound inferences cannot be drawn.<sup>22</sup> Even with better access to the original material, closer attention must be paid to the context in which Locke kept journals for the first time – in France, from his arrival on 14 November 1675 to his departure for England on 8 May 1679.<sup>23</sup> Awareness of the conventions and expectations governing the two kinds of notebook Locke used is essential.

We need a short account of the commonplace book and the journal (or diary).<sup>24</sup> In early modern Europe these were two different formats for the collection of information and knowledge in notebooks, or "paperbooks".<sup>25</sup> It is helpful to start with some obvious differences: commonplace books stored textual extracts from authoritative texts organised thematically or alphabetically under Heads (in English) or titles; journals, by definition, comprised entries about daily actions, agendas and thoughts entered in chronological

<sup>18</sup> This portrayal must be qualified by what is now known about Pepys' careful revisions; see Dawson, "Histories and Texts"; Smyth, *Autobiography*, pp. 2 n. 3, 54–55.

<sup>19</sup> Matthews, *British Diaries*, p. 36; Pepys, *Diary of Samuel Pepys*.

<sup>20</sup> Not long before he died, Locke told Anthony Collins that 'in my whole life I have been constantly against any thing that makes a shew, noe maxime being more agreeable to my condition and temper than *Qui bene latuit bene vixit*' [he who has lived well hidden has lived well; trans. de Beer]. Locke to Collins, 26 May 1704, Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 8, no. 3544, p. 301, cited in Yeo, "Locke on Conversation", pp. 24–25.

<sup>21</sup> Goldie (ed.), *Locke. Selected Correspondence*, p. xv.

<sup>22</sup> Dekker, *Egodocuments*.

<sup>23</sup> While in France, Locke used the 'new-style' Gregorian calendar. On his return to London he gave two dates in his journal using, respectively, the Julian and Gregorian calendars: "Wed. 30 Apr:/10 May". See BL, Add. MS 15642, p. 93.

<sup>24</sup> See Yeo, "Notebooks".

<sup>25</sup> See Locke's English draft of the "New Method" in BL, Add. MS 28728, fols. 54–63, at fol. 57v for "paperbooke"; and for "un livre de papier blanc", see [Locke], "Méthode nouvelle", p. 320.

order. Indeed, the notion of daily notes, a *diurnal* record, was the essence of the various names for journals – diary, day-booke, *diario*, *Tagebuch*. The fundamental unit of the commonplace book was topical (themes, excerpts, aphorisms) not temporal; the entries were not dated because the focus was on the selected excerpts, not on when these were collected.<sup>26</sup>

The commonplace book was associated with study in both grammar school and university; as Ann Moss observed, “it was part of the initial intellectual experience of every schoolboy”.<sup>27</sup> These notebooks were intended to encourage the selection and storage of choice excerpts famous ancient authors such as Ovid, Virgil, Horace, Cicero and Seneca.<sup>28</sup> From the Renaissance, the nature and purpose of the commonplace book was outlined in a plethora of manuals and treatises. In *De formando studio*, a long letter of 1484, the Dutch scholar, Rodolphus Agricola (c.1443–1485), urged this as habitual practice. Humanist authors such as Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536) and Juan Luis Vives (1493–1540) endorsed this advice and gave instructions on compiling and arranging notebooks.<sup>29</sup> The emphasis was on remembering and imitating selected passages from reputable works and, especially in the case of young scholars, of morally sound ones. The organization of the excerpts was deemed crucial: keeping like with like, in a *common* place, under a suitable head or title, aided memory.<sup>30</sup> When study was largely confined to a set of canonical texts, this was easily achieved by pre-assigning standard heads to pages or sections of a notebook on the expectation that these would be filled as reading proceeded.<sup>31</sup> A frequent consequence was that some pages remained vacant while others were bursting with entries.<sup>32</sup>

Beyond grammar school and university, personalized versions of the commonplace book were used by scholars who mined a wider range of texts, not just

<sup>26</sup> See Lejeune, *On Diary*, pp. 79–80 for the distinction between dating events mentioned in an entry and dating an entry as “the time of writing”. The latter only became crucial from the seventeenth century; see, for example, the notebook MS Locke e. 4 mentioned above which on p. 144 shows a date of “feb: 6.1654/5” within one entry, but the entries themselves are not dated.

<sup>27</sup> Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, p. viii.

<sup>28</sup> Blair, *Too Much to Know*, p. 35.

<sup>29</sup> Erasmus, *De Copia/De Ratione Studii* (published in 1511–1512); Vives, *Vives on Education*, for his *De tradendis disciplinis* (1531).

<sup>30</sup> The Renaissance humanists often cited Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian on this principle: namely, that “it is chiefly order that gives distinctness to memory”; Watson, *Cicero on Oratory and Orators*, pp. 186–91.

<sup>31</sup> This approach lived on: see the commonplace book (from 1660s) of the diplomat and virtuoso, Robert Southwell (1635–1702), in Havens, *Commonplace Books*, pp. 67–69; Yeo, *Notebooks*, pp. 64–68.

<sup>32</sup> Locke’s “New Method” addressed this; see the references in n. 10 above.

ancient classics promoted by the humanists, but more recent, modern, ones.<sup>33</sup> With this extension in mind, the manuscript scholar, Peter Beal, has suggested that these notebooks “constituted the primary intellectual tool for organizing knowledge and thought among the intelligentsia of the seventeenth century.”<sup>34</sup> Especially in continental Europe, Latin treatises and manuals devoted to *ars excerpenti* sustained a discussion about notes, memory, judgement, and even critical thinking.<sup>35</sup> Two Jesuit teachers – Francesco Sacchini (1570-1625) and Jeremias Drexel (1581-1638) – published influential works on the practice and value of note-taking.<sup>36</sup> As well as confirming the foundational role of commonplace books in grammar schools, these authors (especially Drexel) reflected the desire of scholars, some pursuing original projects, for methods more sophisticated than those involved in undergraduate study. This was especially the case as they explored a wider range of subjects beyond those already interpreted in terms of commonplaces, and as continuing inquiry generated more and more notes.<sup>37</sup> In his *Polyhistor* (1688), the German scholar, Daniel Georg Morhof (1639-1691), recommended gathering “what occurs to us when reading an author or in everyday reflection, also what we have observed or what has been told to us by others.”<sup>38</sup> This is a fair description of the more diverse material, not necessarily reliant on textual excerpts, in Locke’s journals in France.

The journal was not so inextricably linked with study and reading but rather with daily actions in various spheres – commercial, military, political, religious, and personal. One of the injunctions to keep journals was associated with travel. In his *Method for Travel. Shewed by taking the View of France* (1605), Robert Dallington counselled travellers not to take books with them in case they were prohibited by the Inquisition, but rather to carry “a Giornale, wherein from day today, he shall set downe” notes about the geography, archi-

<sup>33</sup> See Décultot, Krämer, and Zedelmaier, “Towards a History of Excerpting in Modernity”.

<sup>34</sup> Beal, “Notions in Garrison”, p. 134.

<sup>35</sup> Cevolini, *De Arte Excerptendi*; Zedelmaier, “Excerpting/Commonplaces”.

<sup>36</sup> Sacchini, *De ratione libros cum profectu legendi libellus* (a little book on how to read with profit) in 1614; Drexel, *Aurifodina* (full title in bibliography). Sacchini taught rhetoric at the Collegio Romano; Drexel was professor of rhetoric at the Jesuit seminary in Dilligen, and later court preacher to Maximilian I in Bavaria; see Blair, *Too Much to Know*, pp. 70, 77-80.

<sup>37</sup> Indeed, in 1531 the German Protestant theologian, Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560), had already made it clear that suitable commonplaces could be drawn from the world (*res*), not just from words (*verba*). See Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, p. 120, citing Melanchthon’s *De locis communibus ratio* (1531).

<sup>38</sup> Zedelmaier, “Excerpting/Commonplacing”, pp. 442-43, citing Daniel Georg Morhof, *Polyhistor* (1688), part 1, Book III, ch. 1.

ecture and customs of the country.<sup>39</sup> James Howell's *Instructions for Forreine Travell* (1642) offered similar guidance for the gentleman: "He must alwayes have a *Diary* about him, when he is in motion of Journeys, to set down what his Eyes meetes with most remarquable in the day time, out of which he may raise matter of discours at night..."<sup>40</sup> These works belonged to the *ars apodemica* literature which provided advice on what to observe and note.<sup>41</sup>

The journals that emerged in Europe from the fifteenth century were informed by the notion of "accounting" – merchants accounting for financial transactions and individuals confessing their daily thoughts and deeds in writing. Commercial account books included the "journal" at the midpoint of a process that began with the "waste book" and concluded with the "ledger" (the transfer from waste book to journal happened daily).<sup>42</sup> In a section of his *Summa de arithmetica, geometria, proportioni & proportionalita* (1494), Luca Pacioli explained bookkeeping procedures, presenting them as having a moral force, even though the journals of merchants were corporate, rather than personal, notebooks.<sup>43</sup> The religious applications, in both Catholic and Protestant confessions, were powerful: the poet, John Donne (1572-1631), explained in a sermon of 1629 that "God sees the sins of the Elect, ... and in his Ephemerides, his journals, he writes them downe under that Title, sins, and he reads them every day".<sup>44</sup> In his introduction to John Beadle's *The Journal or Diary of a Thoughtful Christian* (1656), John Fuller (born c. 1640) stated that "God kept a Diary in the Creation of the world"<sup>45</sup> and gave this rationale in his endorsement of Beadle's promotion of a journal appropriate for a Christian life:

We have our State Diurnals, relating the National Affaires. Tradesmen keep their shop books. Merchants Accompt books. ... Travellers a Journall of all they have seen. ... A Christian that would be exact hath more need, and may reap much more good by such a Journal as this. ('To the Reader, Octob. 12., 1655', sig. bv).<sup>46</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Dallington, *A Method for Travell*, sig. Cv.

<sup>40</sup> Howell, *Instructions for Forreine Travell*, p. 30; see Stoye, *English Travellers Abroad*; Black, *The British Abroad*.

<sup>41</sup> See Stagl, *History of Curiosity*. For Locke's views on travel, and its influence on him, see Di Biase (ed.), *Locke and Travel Literature*.

<sup>42</sup> Vine, *Miscellaneous Order*, pp. 149-57.

<sup>43</sup> Aho, *Confession and Bookkeeping*.

<sup>44</sup> Donne, *LXXX sermons*, sermon XXIV ("Easter-day" 1629), p. 240.

<sup>45</sup> Fuller, "To the Reader", sig. b4 (2)r.

<sup>46</sup> Cited in Sherman, *Telling Time*, p. 49; Smyth, *Autobiography*, p. 118.

On this premise, both Jesuits and Puritans advocated spiritual diaries for the daily scrutiny of efforts and failings in an attempt to match the register that would inform Divine judgement.

Locke's decision to start a journal was not predicated on this accounting framework. Instead, it was forced on him when he left for France for what turned out to be a three and a half-year sojourn. He did not take any of his commonplace books, some of which were far too large for ease of travel; but, for the first time (apart from various memoranda), he started an annual journal which now served as the single storehouse for the extensive information and reflections he recorded. My article in the appendix of this issue asks what happened when his dependence for at least fifteen years on the commonplace book as the instrument of information management was displaced, for a time, by the journal. What was gained and lost in this change?

In this appendix Giuliana Di Biase provides the first Italian translation of Locke's English draft (February 1685) of the article published in French in 1686 as "Méthode nouvelle".<sup>47</sup> This opens in the style of a letter (headed "Epistola") to Nicolas Toinard (1628-1706) as a member of the Republic of Letters.<sup>48</sup> The draft was a formalized description of the procedures Locke had been using since 1660, and it was written about nine years after he began to use journals in France, a fact which, as I have said, he did not disclose. Di Biase also translates an entry from Locke's journal made on 4 September 1677, and extracts from two of his letters. The journal entry, titled "Adversaria" in the margin, concerns the principal headings to be considered when making notes. The first of the letters, dated 14/24 February 1685, was sent to Toinard, probably from Utrecht.<sup>49</sup> Included with this letter was the English draft of the "New Method". Locke wanted Toinard to arrange translation and publication of this piece in a French journal, saying that his command of that language was not sufficient for this task.<sup>50</sup> The second letter of 16 May

<sup>47</sup> BL, Add. MS 28728, fols. 54-63; printed in Locke, *Literary and Historical Writings*, pp. 215-32. There is no title on the manuscript but Locke and Toinard referred to it as the "Adversariorum methodus"; *ibid.*, p. 147; Toinard to Locke, 26 February/8 March 1685, in Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 2, no. 812, pp. 694-96, at p. 695.

<sup>48</sup> See Goldgar, *Impolite Learning*.

<sup>49</sup> See the journal entry in MS Locke, f. 8 (14 February 1685), p. 261 for Locke's return "From Amsterdam to Utrecht".

<sup>50</sup> Locke to Toinard, 14/24 February 1685, in Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 2, no. 811, pp. 691-94, at pp. 691-92; Latin trans. by de Beer. See Locke, *Literary and Historical Writings*, pp. 35-37, 41-43 on their correspondence dating back to August 1679, and the eventual translation by Jean Le Clerc, most likely working from a Latin version.

1699 answers some inquiries from Samuel Bold (1649-1737), one of Locke's admirers, about memory and notes. Locke's reply affirmed the manifold benefits of a lifetime of note-taking, not only with regard to textual excerpts but also trains of ideas, especially the "thoughts that come often unsought, and, as it were, drop into the mind", and which were "the most valuable of any we have".<sup>51</sup>

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# John Locke's Note-Taking in France, 1675-1679: Between Journals and Commonplace Books

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*Abstract:* On 12 November 1675, the physician and philosopher, John Locke (1632-1704), sailed for France without his commonplace books, the notebooks on which he had come to rely. For the next three and a half years, he assiduously recorded in journals things that he saw, heard, thought and read. What effects, if any, did this switch have on his note-taking and thinking? I suggest that Locke embraced the new options presented by the journal form in which notes were not necessarily tied to textual excerpts. Unlike the commonplace book, the journal demanded the dating of entries; and its portability encouraged the noting of on-the-spot observation, testimony, conversation, and trains of thought. On this basis, Locke pursued his inquiries under the rubric of Baconian natural history, adding 'Queries' to both excerpts and empirical observations, taking case histories of his patients, and venturing into new philosophical topics connected with *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690). The journal offered the freedom to make a note on any topic on any page; but this meant that Locke had to overlook the distinction between subjects he classified as either 'Physica' (medicine and science) or 'Ethica' (politics and religion) and entered in separate commonplace books. He regarded this as a temporary situation, setting up each journal with marginal heads/titles, cross-references and indexes that linked them to the commonplace books at home. On his return, he transferred selected material from the journals to the appropriate commonplace books. After appreciating the flexibility of the journal in France, Locke consolidated his existing database and retained his well-tried method of searching it.

*Keywords:* John Locke, journal, commonplace book, indexes, classification of knowledge, queries, transfer of information

In a letter of 25 April 1690, John Locke offered an intriguing piece of information to the German classical scholar, Johann Graevius:

\* I thank the two anonymous referees for their valuable suggestions, and the editor, Giuliana Di Biase, and Mary Louise Yeo for helpful comments on drafts. For permission to quote from manuscripts in their care, I am grateful to the Bodleian Library, Oxford and the British Library, London.

You will find enclosed herein a fragment of an ancient Roman journal [fragmentum diarii antique Romani], which was recently communicated to me by that distinguished and learned man the earl of Carbery [John Vaughan]. I have the greater pleasure in sending it to you because I do not remember having come across anything of the sort anywhere.<sup>1</sup>

This is the only instance, as far as I know, in which Locke specified the journal (or diary) as a type of notebook worthy of scholarly interest. As we shall see, he used journals from 12 November 1675 until 24 October 1704, making a financial entry just before his death on 28 October;<sup>2</sup> but he did not reflect on the type of note-taking journals entailed. However, in an article entitled “Méthode nouvelle” (“New Method”) in the *Bibliothèque universelle et historique* (published in Amsterdam in July 1686), he gave a detailed explication of his way of using commonplace books over the last twenty-five years, a method that determined the entry and retrieval of notes.<sup>3</sup> One reason for this contrast between silence and explicit attention is that the commonplace book belonged to the genre of *ars excerptendi* (the art or skill of excerpting), a scholarly practice that flourished, especially in German lands, from the early 1600s.<sup>4</sup> In his *De arte excerptendi* (1689), the Hamburg jurist and scholar, Vincent Placcius (1642-1699), discussed several exponents of note-taking advice, including Locke, referring to his anonymous contribution as a “libro Gallico Anonymo”.<sup>5</sup> In this article I ask what kind of journals Locke kept in France and whether they were connected in any way with the commonplace books he maintained during a lifetime of note-taking. I suggest that he worked deliberately to make the journals partners of these other notebooks.

<sup>1</sup> Locke to J.G. Graevius, 25 April 1690 in Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 4, no. 1286, pp. 63-64 (quotation trans. from Latin by E.S. de Beer). Graevius was professor of politics and history at the University of Utrecht. On ancient journals, see Bacon, *Advancement*, pp. 69-70.

<sup>2</sup> Lovelace Collection, Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Locke f. 10, p. 28 [error for p. 24]. For extant scholarship on the journals, see the “Introduction” to this issue; and Terenzio, “Journals di Locke”.

<sup>3</sup> [Locke], “Méthode nouvelle de dresser des recueils” (the modern spelling, “*recueils*”, displaced “*recueils*” in the eighteenth century); Locke, “A New Method of a Common-Place-Book.” For accounts of this method, see Meynell, “Locke’s Method of Common-placing”; Yeo, “Locke’s ‘New Method’”; Yeo, *Notebooks*, pp. 176-82, 212-18; Stolberg, “Locke’s New Method”, pp. 452-55; Locke, *Literary and Historical*, pp. 30-34, 46-50 in the section “Writings on the New Method” by Milton and Yeo.

<sup>4</sup> This note-taking was theorized in learned Latin manuals and treatises; see Zedelmaier, “De ratione excerptendi”; Cevolini, *De arte excerptendi*; Cevolini, *Forgetting*; Décultot, Krämer and Zedelmaier, “History of Excerpting in Modernity”; Zedelmaier, “Excerpting/Commonplaces”.

<sup>5</sup> Placcius, *De arte excerptendi*, p. 10. For advice and reflection on note-taking, see Blair, *Too Much to Know*, pp. 62-116; Yeo, *Notebooks*.

When Locke sailed for France on 12 November 1675, it was probably with the aim of improving his health; he did not return for almost three and a half years.<sup>6</sup> He set out on this sojourn without his commonplace books, large and small – the paper tools on which he normally relied.<sup>7</sup> The size of the folio commonplace books ruled them out as travel companions.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, for the first time in his life Locke began to keep a journal, starting with an entry in shorthand logging his departure from Gravesend, London for Calais.<sup>9</sup> During his time in France the four journals he used comprised some 1400 pages.<sup>10</sup> Apart from the first, started in London, they are bound with a French almanac for the year.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, “almanac” became a label in Locke’s personal referencing: thus on 5 April 1677 he made a list of “Things sent home”, which included “Almanac 76” along with books and other items.<sup>12</sup> This must be the journal for 1676 – an identity confirmed by a later “Inventory” of books which includes “Alman. 76.77.78.79”.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Locke most likely suffered from chronic asthma but thought it might be phthisis (tuberculosis); see Cranston, *Locke*, p. 160. For an overview of his time in France, see Bonno, *Relations Intellectuelles*, pp. 45-105.

<sup>7</sup> The Scottish philosopher, Alexander Fraser, implied that Locke did have some commonplace books with him; see Fraser, “Prolegomena”, p. xxviii: “In France, for the first time, his [Locke’s] daily history may be traced in the circumstantial record of a journal, as well as in common-place books”. But see Locke, *Essay Concerning Toleration*, p. 137, n. 2 (editors’ introduction) for the absence of these notebooks in France. They were probably left at the Earl of Shaftesbury’s residence, Exeter House, London where Locke had been living since May 1667. See Cranston, *Locke*, pp. 108-9.

<sup>8</sup> For example, MS Locke d. 9. This notebook, called “Adversaria Physica”, measures 286×186 mm. In contrast, the journals were almost pocket-book size: MS Locke f. 3 measures 161×108 mm. It is worth noting that most of the medical commonplace books were smaller: MS Locke f. 19 measures 135×83 mm. See Milton, “Locke’s Medical Notebooks”.

<sup>9</sup> MS Locke, f. 1, p. 1 (12 November 1675). Before this trip Locke did keep memoranda notebooks (for example, MSS Locke f. 11, f. 12, f. 13) for financial accounts, including book purchases and other matters. Cranston, “Locke in France”, col. 737 may have had the early memoranda in mind: “On his travels, as at home, he [Locke] kept a journal ...”. See Locke, *Essay concerning Toleration*, pp. 2-3 (editors’ introduction) for the absence of a regular journal until November 1675.

<sup>10</sup> The last entry of the French trip is dated 6 May 1679, in the fourth journal; British Library (BL), London, Add. MS 15642, p. 92.

<sup>11</sup> See MS Locke f. 2 (1677), bound with *Le grand almanach journalier*. On the significance of almanacs, see Smyth, *Autobiography*, pp. 15-56. While in France, Locke used the new-style Gregorian calendar; see MS Locke f. 1, p. 1 for 19/29 November 1675 (3rd entry) and 20/30 November 1675 (4th entry) – the last of the entries until he returned home showing dates, respectively, in the Julian and Gregorian calendars.

<sup>12</sup> MS Locke f. 2, pp. 100-3, at p. 102 (5 April 1677), “Things sent home”; Lough, “Locke’s Reading”, p. 237.

<sup>13</sup> MS Locke f. 4, p. 8 (3 February 1680). These journals and other manuscripts (including a draft of the *Essay* titled “Intellectus”) were left in Oxford with George Walls, a fellow scholar at Christ Church, Oxford, while Locke travelled to Salisbury; see Locke, *Draft C*, pp. xxiii-xxiv (editors’ introduction). Walls had accompanied Locke for some of the time in France; they took language lessons with a “French M<sup>r</sup>” [Master<sup>r</sup>]; MS Locke f. 1, p. 37 (9 January 1676); Lough, *Travels*, p. 17, n. 5.

These were the four journals used in France. The entries in these were fully dated and made in strict chronological order, whereas the majority of the notebooks he left in England were commonplace books arranged by topical headings attached to undated entries.<sup>14</sup> It is possible that Locke worked and travelled with sections of the journal in unbound quires before binding them at the end of each year.<sup>15</sup> He obviously had his annual journal close at hand as he read, observed, thought, and conversed on his travels, which included extended stays in Paris and Montpellier (where he lived for about fourteen months from 4 January 1676).<sup>16</sup>

Locke's journal entries, although regular, were not driven by an obligation to account for each day.<sup>17</sup> In fact, unlike those in Samuel Pepys' diary, his entries are not strictly daily ones, although they sometimes approximated to this when he travelled from place to place. There is nothing in them like Pepys' confession that he had missed a day, or more, and was now repairing this gap: "Up, and enter all my Journall since the 28th of October, having every day's passage well in my head, though it troubles me to remember it".<sup>18</sup> This comment is significant alongside Stuart Sherman's observation that "No English diary before Pepys's moves literally day by day over the entire course of the document".<sup>19</sup> Locke did not respond to a blank diary page that must be filled, but rather to things he saw, heard, read and thought. In this respect his sensibility is closer to that of Nicolas Fabri de Peiresc (1580-1637), the French scholar and antiquarian of whom the philosopher, Pierre Gassendi, remarked that "He was so unweary in writing, that he presently noted down, whatever he met with".<sup>20</sup> This might appear as almost impulsive registering of whatever touched the senses; however, both these note-takers were informed by well-established interests and a conviction that material stored in the present would be useful in the future.

<sup>14</sup> Despite these distinctions, the boundary between commonplace books and other collections of notes was porous; see Vine, *Miscellaneous Order*, pp. 30-34.

<sup>15</sup> Locke, *Draft C*, p. xxii, n. 2 (editors' introduction).

<sup>16</sup> Locke had spent a short time in Paris in early October 1672; see Cranston, *Locke*, pp. 145-46; Locke to John Strachey [mid-October 1672], Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, no. 264, pp. 366-69.

<sup>17</sup> Compare an entry in the diary (from 1624) of the German schoolmaster, David Beck, who lived in the Netherlands: "The 19th, weather as the day before. I wrote an ABC-poem before noon. Read in the afternoon... Did nothing extraordinary besides that. Walked in the evening 4 or 5 times in The Hague without talking to anyone", cited in Blaak, "Autobiographical Reading", p. 63.

<sup>18</sup> Pepys, *Diaries*, 10 November 1665, p. 552.

<sup>19</sup> Sherman, *Telling Time*, p. 35.

<sup>20</sup> Gassendi, *Mirroure*, Book VI, pp. 191-92 cited in Miller, *Peiresc's Mediterranean World*, p. 13; also p. 28. See MS Locke f. 14, pp. 28, 29, 76 for favourable notices of Gassendi from Boyle and others; and Milton, "Date and Significance", pp. 58-60.

### 1. *Titles, adversaria, indexes and maps (or schemes)*

In France, Locke adopted journals, deciding not to travel with any of the commonplace books he had been using for at least fifteen years.<sup>21</sup> However, it is important to recognize that although he had not kept regular journals (aside from memoranda containing financial transactions), Locke did not lack experience of the grind of *daily* note-taking. From 24 June 1666 until June 1683, with some gaps, including the years in France, he maintained a weather "Register" in Oxford, making entries under "*Aer*" (air) in the back of a large commonplace book.<sup>22</sup> He later continued these records at "Oates", the home of Damaris Masham and her husband, Sir Francis Masham, in High Laver, Essex from December 1691 until May 1703. In doing so, Locke displayed the disciplined, and perhaps compulsive, aspects of his note-taking and personality. On average he made these records once each day, but as early as the third day he filled in six sets of observations at various hours between nine in the morning and ten at night. Occasionally he made late-night entries, such as one on 7 July 1666 at 11pm when he noted "Lightning" – possibly part of a storm which woke him.<sup>23</sup> Although Locke was already a meticulous commonplace note-taker, the habits demanded by this Register may have supported his journal-keeping in France.<sup>24</sup>

One important feature of Locke's practice in the journals is not modelled on other journals of the time, but rather on recent commonplacing techniques. As soon as he made entries in the first journal, Locke inserted titles (from *titulus/tituli*) in the margins next to them. Those on the first page are "Calais", "Portage", "Vectura", "Diging [sic]", "Invalides" and "Pension", recording things he noticed on the way to Paris and on his first day there (he stayed only ten days before leaving, via Lyons, for Montpellier). This practice derived from

<sup>21</sup> Locke began to apply the systematic procedures, later called the "New Method", in 1660; Milton, "Locke at Oxford", p. 34.

<sup>22</sup> MS Locke d. 9, pp. 531-471 rev. Locke began the Register at the back of the notebook and filled approximately sixty pages.

<sup>23</sup> See Yeo, *Notebooks*, pp. 1-5, 188-95; Yeo, "Thinking with Excerpts", pp. 197-98.

<sup>24</sup> Locke continued to make weather observations in his journal, especially between May 1676 and February 1677 (Lough, *Locke's Travels*, p. xxii). In the absence of his dedicated Register it is not clear how these could contribute to a methodical natural history. Some measurements may be trials of his instruments, such as the hygrometer (not thermometer, as Lough says on p. 107) alluded to in an entry about moisture in "marine winde"; MS Locke f. 1, p. 363 (26 July 1676), "Winde". See also Locke to Toinard (in Latin), 16/26 July 1678 in Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, no. 394, p. 596 for "Hygrometrum". From 30 July 1666 he entered readings from an hygrometer in his "Register".

developments within *ars excerpendi*. Since the aim of such note-taking was the retention of excerpts for future use, reliable retrieval was crucial. There was a strong conviction that this was facilitated by giving entries heads, or titles (as Francis Bacon and Locke preferred). However, an important exception was allowed: namely, that notes might be made on loose sheets, or in small paperbooks, as they occurred in reading – that is, in chronological order before being copied into appropriate sections of a commonplace book. The analogy with the passage from merchants’ waste books, via journals, to ledgers was routinely cited.<sup>25</sup> The Cambridge tutor, Richard Holdsworth, contended that “paper bookes of a portable size in Octavo” were ideal for this initial collection because, as he conceded, indolent students found it too much “to rise every foot to a great Folio book, & toss it and turn it for evry [every] little pasage y<sup>t</sup> [that] is to be writt downe”.<sup>26</sup> It is likely that the intended transfer to topical collections often did not occur. In his *Of Education* (1673), the Oxford scholar and tutor, Obadiah Walker, recommended making an index to several paperbooks containing excerpts – without mentioning any consolidation of these in a large commonplace book.<sup>27</sup>

In subjects from philology to medicine and natural philosophy, many scholars opted for these preliminary notes (called *adversaria*), often admitting that they were collected in an *ordine fortuito*, not according to a systematic method.<sup>28</sup> The chemist and experimental philosopher, Robert Boyle, spoke in the early 1670s of “tumble[ing] over some of my *Adversaria*”, describing such “loose Notes” as being taken without “any other order then that wherein they chanc’d to occurr to me”.<sup>29</sup> At first glance Locke’s “New Method” might appear to produce such a fortuitous collection, but this was not so. Indeed, one of its advantages was that it made the two-step process from loose notes to organized commonplace books redundant. When making an entry Locke immediately assigned a title to it and wrote this, as he said, “in large letters in the margent

<sup>25</sup> More generally, see Smyth, *Autobiography*, pp. 61-65; Vine, *Miscellaneous Order*, pp. 150-57.

<sup>26</sup> Holdsworth, “Directions” (composed c. 1615-1637), nos. 50-51, pp. 651-52; see Yeo, *Notebooks*, pp. 49-53.

<sup>27</sup> Walker, *Of Education*, pp. 129-30. For Locke’s copy, see LL, no. 1019 (under “Education”).

<sup>28</sup> See Sanderson, *Logicae artis compendium*, pp. 110-14 for the contrast between two ways of gathering commonplaces: *methodica* and *adversaria*; see LL, no. 2548<sup>a</sup>. This work is the most likely source of Locke’s knowledge of the *ars excerpendi* literature.

<sup>29</sup> Boyle, “New Experiments” (1674), p. 225; “Cogitationes Physicae” (1670s-1680s), Boyle Papers (BP), Royal Society of London, vol. 8, fol. 211<sup>r</sup>. See also Yeo, *Notebooks*, pp. 151-70. Boyle usually added marginal Titles to entries in his “workdiaries” (from 1647 to 1691) but acknowledged the disarray of his papers; see Hunter and Littleton, “Work-diaries”.

[margin]”. Each double opening of a notebook was reserved for entries with titles sharing the same first letter/next vowel combination (for example, *Me* for “Melancholia”, *Ve* for “Vertigo”). Locke called this a “classis”, or class, and his “Index” allowed for 100 of these (see Fig. 1). This practice meant that disparate topics, such as “Veterinaria”, “Vertigo” and “Vegetabilia” (all of the *Ve* “class”) appeared on the same page, whereas cognate subjects such as “Respiratio” and “Sanguis” were scattered throughout the notebook.<sup>30</sup> Yet even so, Locke’s method guaranteed that the collection of notes, which he called “my adversaria”, was searchable and retrievable.<sup>31</sup>

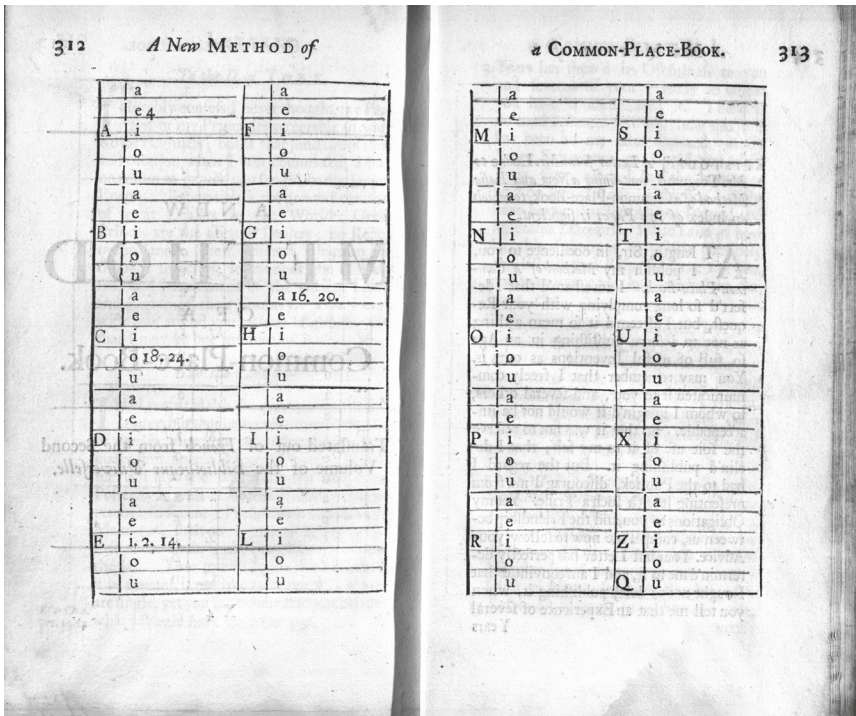


Figure 1: Locke’s two-page index containing 100 cells as described in his “New Method”. Locke, “A New Method of a Common-Place-Book”, 1706, pp. 312-13.

<sup>30</sup> See MS Locke d. 9, p. 2 for *Ve* titles; MS Locke f. 19, pp. 158-59, 338 for “Respiratio” and pp. 212-13, 272, 302-3 for “Sanguis”.

<sup>31</sup> BL, Add. MS 28728, fols. 54-63, at fol. 57r; also fol. 61r. This manuscript did not carry a title but Locke called it “Adversariorum methodus”; Locke, *Literary and Historical*, p. 147. See [Locke], “Méthode nouvelle”, p. 323 for “le mot *Adversaria*”.

C	Cardelliers 116	Diatribe 251, 259, 272	Finger 289	Hamorrhoids 401, 408	Jacocca 749, 752
Canaliculi 219	Canvers 116	Diagrams 46, 153, 154	Flowers, 9, 256	Harve 272	Johannavantes 172
Cardiastriani 201, 209	Consuls 118, 119	Dobson 251	Flies 251	Harmitage 18	Johannes bus 351
Celso 251	Contra Las Comas 120	Doctores 455	Floranca 260	Harria 157	Joy 255
Capere 357	Costre 169, 170	Domatus 515	Fransy man 139	Haves 204, 206	Young 52, 55, 76
Caterpillar 89, 6	Colmularium 184	Dreaming 256	France 277	Hilsteria 288, 311	Hay 459
Castra chris 508	Cogui mania 205	Drachma 457	Frag 470	Holagogium 11	India 25
Campasella 507	Colica 242	Ducance 219	Fuell 466	Hospital de Dieu 14	Joy Annuaire 110
Campora 524	Colica 308	Ducados 475	G	Horreum 17	Judicium 177
Canis 524	Comfort 235	E	Gardner 270	Horreum 17	L
Celestius 25	Colours 258	Easton 273, 467	Galia 480	Horreum 308, 2310	Lacyle boys 2
Centes 108, 142, 145	Colo 457	Eccelesia 115	Genietha feath 219	56, 205	Languor 117
260, 264, 275, 279	Col of Funer 511	Edips 274, 280	Genietha 418	Hornedea 155	Lambeth 218
Cells 139, 118	Comeditos 511	Edis of Nerke 269	Geny 410	Holmoffe 254	Lapis lamula 276
cura albifacio 244	Coffe 512	Edis 278	Genza 460	Hope 231	Lex humana 123
cura albifacio 244	Co 823	Eggs 264	Gilio 509	Horse 512	Lechia 174
chorra 152	Crux 190	Empyema 458	God the Father 41, 366	Hortuette 519	Leyfic 400
Cypripa 207	Crux 190	Episcopi 97, 109, 115	Graces 17	Hospital 40	Lignum 2, 38, 73, 248
Cypripis 218	Crux 190	Episcopi 289, 383, 384	Graves 17, 286, 444, 445	Hospital 40	Lyon 7, 8, 17
Chilum 38, chere 41	D	Effage 283, 367	Griff 374, 490	H	Lyonis 240
Cyrtorhony 114	Danten 454	Effices 308	Gyracian 521	Haemorrhoidal 248	Lushoten 262
Choker 258	Danseoy 465	Excommunication 107, 110	Guiz 170, 505	Haemia 523	Lym 289
Cives 276	Deym 29	Exchange 156	Gun powder plot 277	Havari 240	Lycos 319
Clemens 514	Denarius 73, 245	Extady 256	Guilla femina 267	Lushoten 262	Lycos 319
Compositio 430	Deu Paper 10, 2, 488	Exoniam 289, 290, 312	Guilbert 288	Lym 289	Lycos 319
Collip 352	Deuyth 335	F	Grudo 523	Lycos 319	Lycos 319
Comit 2	Deffrenny 456	Fabius 370	H	Lygonia 460	Lycos 319
Colly 8	Daniel 426, 429, 488	Fabius 370	Harve 272	Lygonia 460	Lycos 319
Comunicacion 98	Dogma 283, 300	Faste Dieu 271, 272	Harve 272	Lygonia 460	Lycos 319
Comitry 106	Dimer 36	Falsis 356	Harve 272, 304, 306	Lygonia 460	Lycos 319
X. Gordon 157	Diabolo 51	Fai th 415, 418, 428	354	Lygonia 460	Lycos 319
Contra 114, 285	Division 72	Fisphala la chermach	Happnoffe 73, 244	Lygonia 460	Lycos 319
Contra Janico 116	Disale 194	Fig. 283, 448, 295		Lygonia 460	Lycos 319

Figure 2. The conventional index in the journal of 1676 showing titles under the letters C to L. MS Locke f. 1, pp. 528-29. By permission of The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

By inserting titles in the margins of his journals, Locke brought chronological diary-like entries closer to the family of *ars excerpendi* notebooks. Indeed, he reserved the margins of his journals solely for such titles, placing the dates *within* the entries. At the end of each year, he created an index of titles arranged in alphabetical order and located at the back of the notebook (see Fig. 2).<sup>32</sup> In this index of the first journal, the titles range from “Abbeys” and “Acidula” to “Uva” and “Vulnus”. Until this index was done, Locke had no easy way of searching each journal for particular titles. In contrast, the “New Method” index functioned immediately because a page number was written in the appropriate cell as soon as an entry was made (see the cells for *Ae*, *Co*, *Ei* and *Ha* in Fig. 1). As a partial solution Locke set up backward

<sup>32</sup> For the historical complications behind this taken-for-granted tool, see Duncan, *Index*.

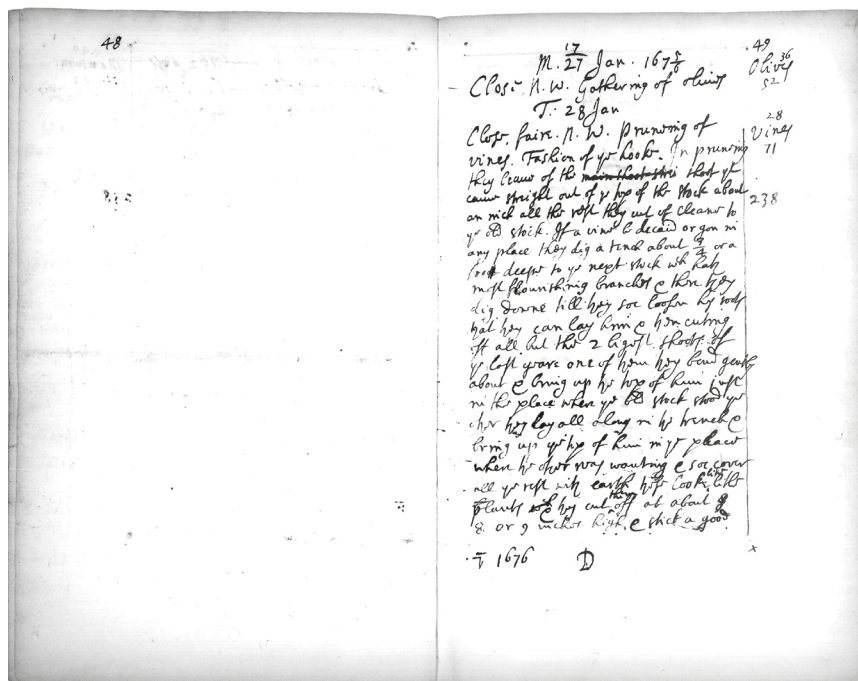


Figure 3. Titles for “Olives” and “Vines” with back and forward cross-references to pages within this journal. MS Locke f. 1, pp. 48-49 (28 January 1676). By permission of The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

and forward cross-references for selected titles. Early in the first journal there are numbers written above and below “Olives” and “Vines” indicating, respectively, the previous page and the following page on which these titles occurred: for “Olives” on p. 49 the backward reference is “36”, and the forward one “52” (see Fig. 3).<sup>33</sup> These references were his attempt to compensate for what the two-page index of the “New Method” provided: the ability to search for any entry at any time.

<sup>33</sup> Locke almost always used Latin for titles in the commonplace books, but usually English for those in the journals.

R	S	T	V
a	a 18-151-166-176	a 226	a 69-131
	a ε	u ε 72	a ε 18
	i 146-173-181-189-209	i	i
	o 242	o	o
	u 106-146	u	u 220
a	a	a	a
ε ε	ε ε 86-109	ε ε 199	ε ε 104-215
i 117-129-240-243	i o	i	i 225
o	o	o 6	o
u	u	u	u 1-7-35-201
a	a 217	a	a <sup>6</sup>
i	i ε 40	i q 194	i ε (7-28-49-71-122-134-158-168)
	i 130-152	i	i 45-151
	o 99-110	o	o 108-164
	u	u 73-102-121-243	u 70-131
a 26	a	a	a
o ε	o ε	o ε 101	o
i	i 209	i	
o	o	o	
u 252	u	u 4-201	
a	a	a	a
u	u ε	u ε	u ε
	i	i	i
	o	o	o
	u 252	u 2	u 54-157

Figure 4. A page from the incomplete “New Method” index in the journal of 1676, using first letter/next *two* vowels. Note that the *Vie* cell is full. MS Locke f. 1, p. 547. By permission of The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

Locke’s desire to maintain his established note-taking practices in France led to a remarkable situation. Although the first three journals all have standard alphabetical indexes at the back, the first journal also has an unfinished “New Method” index that occupies the last ten pages.<sup>34</sup> It is likely that Locke began to record titles in the appropriate cells as he entered them in the journal but stopped at p. 253 because the result was a cumbersome and inefficient index. Then at the end of the year he reverted to an index of titles in alphabetical order, with page numbers (as in Fig. 2). There are two possible reasons for this failure of Locke’s attempt to apply the “New Method” to his journal. Firstly, according to the “New Method” each double opening is reserved for a single “class”. When making an entry (say, “Vines”) in a commonplace book,

<sup>34</sup> The “New Method” index is at the back of the journal, MS Locke f. 1, pp. 539-48. The preceding pp. 533-38 are blank. The normal index is at pp. 527-32. The fourth journal does not have an index.

one consulted the index to see if any page already contained entries for the relevant "class" (*V*i**); if so, the new entry was added to that page. If there was no page already containing titles of the *V*i** "class", the entry was made in the next unused double opening, which then continued to be reserved for titles of that class, and the page number was recorded in the index. Consequently, several entries sharing titles of the *same* "class" might be on just one page of a notebook and the page number entered in only one cell of the two-page Index. However, in the journal, a page could host several titles of *different* "classes". For example, in the journal entry for 7 May 1676, there a seven titles belonging to seven "classes" on p. 251 (just before he gave up); thus "251" needed to be recorded in multiple cells, producing a heavily populated index. Secondly, whereas many of Locke's commonplace books were dedicated to either medical or non-medical topics (see below), the journals hosted an unrestricted range of topics. Hence there were many titles (approximately 520 according to the alphabetical index) and also many of each "class" to accommodate in the index. Locke correctly judged that this would be an issue in the journal and laid out an index that catered for a second vowel and which occupied ten rather than two pages.<sup>35</sup> This did reduce some cluttering: for example, without this measure the fifteen entries under *V*i** would have been squeezed into one cell (see Fig. 4). Nevertheless, with only half the journal indexed (up to p. 253 of 526 pages of entries) several cells were already unable to accommodate another page number.<sup>36</sup> This was the end of Locke's bid to extend the "New Method" to his journals.<sup>37</sup>

One feature of Locke's note-taking – the use of separate commonplace books for different subjects – could not be reinstated in his journals because entries were made without regard to topics. In the English draft (1685) of the "New Method" he recommended keeping at least two notebooks as "two different repositorys for those two great branches of Knowledg morall & naturall".<sup>38</sup> This is what he had in fact done since 1660: two commonplace books from this

<sup>35</sup> In the English draft (BL Add. MS 28728, fols. 60*r-v*) Locke mentions the option of two vowels, giving 500 classes. See MS Locke d. 9, p. 534 for his partial use of a second vowel in the index; and the image in Yeo, *Notebooks*, p. 180.

<sup>36</sup> In addition to the *V*i*/e* cell, the others were *Me/u*, *Mo/e*, *Oi/a*, *Po/e*, *Sa/i*.

<sup>37</sup> Locke did apply the "New Method" in two memoranda books kept in France: MS Locke f. 15 used in 1677-1678, index at pp. ii-iii; MS Locke f. 28 used in 1678-1679, index at pp. 2-3.

<sup>38</sup> BL Add. MS 28728, fol. 60*v*. Accepting the Latin draft of 1685 (BL Add. MS 28728, fol. 73*r*), the French article of 1686 suggested a third branch, "*la science des signes*"; [Locke], "*Méthode nouvelle*", p. 326. This is the first announcement of the tripartite classification – "*natural Philosophy*"; "*Ethicks*"; "*Doctrine of Signs*" – given in the final chapter of the *Essay*, IV.xxi.

time were labelled “Adversaria Ethica” and “Adversaria Physica” (MS Locke, d. 9), and two others as “Lemmata Ethica” (MS Locke d. 10) and “Lemmata Physica” (MS Locke d. 11).<sup>39</sup> Locke did not explicitly define these categories but it is clear from the content of the notebooks that “Physica” embraced medicine, natural history and other sciences whereas “Ethica” covered moral, religious and political topics, including cross-cultural comparisons. Use of this dichotomy preceded his schemes, or maps, of knowledge started in the early 1670s.<sup>40</sup> Although Locke could not enforce the usual division of subjects on the journal entries he did not stop thinking about this issue, addressing it in at least two entries. In the long entry on “Study” (begun on 26 March 1677, finished on 9 May 1677) there is an affirmation of the importance of disposing thoughts and material in their “proper places” as in a “regular chest of drawers”, a metaphor that echoes the actual filing cabinets suggested and built about this time.<sup>41</sup>

A great help to the memory & meanes to avoid confusion in our thoughts is to draw out & have frequently before us a scheme of those sciences we employ our studys in, a map as it were of the Mundus intelligibilis. This perhaps will be best don by every one himself for his owne use as best agreeable to his owne notions, though the nearer it comes to the nature & order of things it is still the better.<sup>42</sup>

About five months later in an entry of 4 September 1677, Locke outlined one such “scheme” that showed “the principall parts or heads of things to be taken notice of” when “making Adversaria”, or notes. This comprised

<sup>39</sup> The notebook, “Adversaria Ethica”, is in private ownership; microfilm copies are held in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (MS Film 77) and the Houghton Library, Harvard. Locke wrote “Adversaria 1661” inside the front cover, but the earliest entries are from c.1667; see Milton, “Dating of Adversaria 1661”. In his Lemmata notebooks (MSS Locke d. 10 and d. 11), Locke pre-allocated a separate page to each letter/next two vowels combination; see the images in Stolberg, “Locke’s New Method”, p. 462 and Yeo, “Thinking with Excerpts”, p. 186 from, respectively, MSS Locke d. 10 and d. 11.

<sup>40</sup> On the various schemes Locke outlined in manuscripts between c.1670 and c.1687, see Di Biase, “Theologia, Ethica”; Di Biase, “Physica in Locke’s *Adversaria*”; Milton, *Abridgements*, pp. lxxxix-lxxxii. I thank John Milton for a pre-publication copy of his “General Introduction”.

<sup>41</sup> See Placcius, *De arte excerpenti*, pp. 124-49, with images facing pp. 138, 140; Malcolm, “Harrison and his ‘Ark of Studies’”; Yeo, “Harrison’s *Arca studiorum*”.

<sup>42</sup> MS Locke f. 2, pp. 128-29 (5 April 1677). When citing from the journals I retain Locke’s spelling but expand contractions. The full entry is at pp. 85-132 (Locke’s pagination), with insertions of some other titles. For early-modern reflections on the externalization of memory, see Yeo, “Between Memory and Paperbooks”.

four main branches of knowledge: Philosophica, Historica, Immitanda and Acquirenda.<sup>43</sup> At the end of the entry, as an after-thought, Locke added a fifth “head”, “*Historica Physica*”, covering “the history of natural causes and effects”. This improved the alignment between “Philosophica” and what counted as “Physica” in his notebooks. Locke made it clear that empirical information, for example in medicine, chemistry (or chymistry) and physiology, was crucial in seeking “light into the nature of things which is that which I called above *philosophica*”.<sup>44</sup> The second “head” of “Historica”, which included “the opinions we finde amongst mankinde concerning god religion & morality & the rules they have made to them selves”, definitely captures some of the content of the “Ethica” notebooks and invites, though not explicitly, the cross-cultural material Locke included.<sup>45</sup> However, the binary division displayed in the notebooks is not easily visible. We need to appreciate that in assigning entries to “Physica” or “Ethica”, Locke was not attempting to posit relationships among the several component disciplines – as he did in his various schemes.<sup>46</sup>

In the scheme presented in the journal of 1677, the last two headings, “Immitanda” (“any beneficial arts”, including self-cultivation) and “Acquirenda” (“naturall products of the country fit to be transplanted into ours”) were connected with note-taking for the first time.<sup>47</sup> There is a question as to why Locke felt the need to introduce these two categories when all the likely material fitted into either the “Physica” or “Ethica” notebooks. Significantly there is an entry in the journal of 1677 directly above the one for “Adversaria”, with “Imitanda” [sic] as a title in the margin. It concerns moral techniques, such as mediation, to preserve the peace. It is the kind of note that, if at home, Locke would enter in “Adversaria Ethica”, as he did in c. 1672 for excerpts on Japanese

<sup>43</sup> MS Locke f. 2, pp. 247-52 (4 September 1677), “Adversaria”, printed in Locke, *Early Draft*, pp. 92-94; Locke, *Political Essays*, pp. 265-67. On the link with note-taking, see Yeo, *Notebooks*, pp. 204-5.

<sup>44</sup> MS Locke f. 2, p. 252.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248.

<sup>46</sup> Among the schemes it is useful to distinguish between two types (or series, since there are several of each type): one in which the classification is based on major disciplines and subjects (type A) and the other on ways of knowing (type B). Those marked “Adversaria” (type B) were sketched between August and November 1677; they include MS Locke c. 28, fols. 50-51; MS Locke f. 15, pp. 119-20, 122-23; and the journal entry of 4 September 1677. See Yeo, *Notebooks*, pp. 204-5; Milton, *Abridgements*, pp. lxxxii-lxxxviii.

<sup>47</sup> MS Locke f. 2, pp. 250-51 (4 September 1677). See the scheme in MS Locke f. 15, p. 123 where these two headings appear as subdivisions of “Agendorum”.

religious beliefs and practices.<sup>48</sup> These, and the many journal entries made from early 1676 on Catholic indulgences, relics, saints, the virgin Mary, liturgy, processions and doctrines, were about techniques “for governing of polities or a mans private self” – as stated in the definition of “Immitanda”.<sup>49</sup> However, it is likely that two preoccupations in France – the project on wine-making and agriculture, and a concern with cross-cultural observations stimulated by travel reports – gave special purpose to this concept. Locke used “Immitanda” as a title for some of his loose notes on Gabriel Sagard’s account of the Huron, a native American people, in his *Le Grand Voyage du Pay des Hurons* (1632).<sup>50</sup> In the journals, however, “Immitanda” and “Acquirenda” are rarely seen as titles.<sup>51</sup> This is not surprising if Locke conceived these two headings as upper-level categories equivalent to “Philosophica” and “Historica”, as he outlined them in the entry of 4 September 1677. Yet there is no evidence of this intention. As it turned out, he never created separate notebooks devoted to “Immitanda” and “Acquirenda” and the material covered by these two categories was absorbed into the existing notebooks. When Locke started new commonplace books in mid-1679, the distinction between “Physica” and “Ethica” remained as the principal classification.

## 2. *Accumulating information*

Early in his trip, Locke consulted Albert Jouvin de Rochefort’s *Le Voyageur d’Europe* (1672) about the town walls of Avignon.<sup>52</sup> However, it is unlikely that he needed a travel manual to tell him what might be worthy of note, although his biographer, Maurice Cranston, insinuated that he did. A few years before

<sup>48</sup> “Adversaria Ethica”, pp. 132, 134, 136, 138, 140-43, 155. Most of this material came from Montanus, *Atlas Japannensis*, pp. 471, 473, 479 (in Locke’s citations). See also “Lemmata Ethica” (MS Locke d. 10), pp. 12-14, 163 for entries on comparative religious doctrines.

<sup>49</sup> MS Locke f. 2, pp. 250-51 (4 September 1677). On Catholicism, see MS Locke f. 1, p. 98 (8 February 1676), “Canonization”. For similar entries, see “Catholics” in the index of Lough, *Locke’s Travels*.

<sup>50</sup> Talbot, *Great Ocean*, pp. 26-28, MS Locke c. 33, fols. 9-10; Farr, “Locke Surveys New France”, pp. 54-60. See Lough, “Locke’s Reading”, pp. 250-52 for reading notes on Sagard.

<sup>51</sup> There is one instance of each in the indexes of the first three journals, and none in the first 92 pages of the journal of 1679, which has no index. There is one entry titled “Imitanda [sic]” in “Adversaria Physica” (MS Locke d. 9, p. 98) and one in “Adversaria Ethica”, p. 316, both made in 1697. The two excerpts are taken from Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations* (1599), pp. 96 and 22 (in Locke’s citations). See LL, no. 1374.

<sup>52</sup> de Rochefort, *Le Voyageur d’Europe*; MS Locke f. 1, p. 24 (31 December 1675), “Avignon” has this title in the margin.

the publication of his important *John Locke. A Biography* (1957), Cranston gave this colourful assessment:

It cannot be pretended that Locke was a good travel writer. ... Put him in Versailles ... and the best he can find to say about it concerns the mechanics of the waterworks; from the *Tuileries* and the *Invalides* our philosopher ... offers little more than carefully paced-out measurements of the gardens. A meat-packer on vacation from Ohio could scarcely do worse.<sup>53</sup>

Where Cranston found a lack of flair, Kenneth Dewhurst welcomed Locke's notice of "plain measurable facts."<sup>54</sup> Preferences aside, we must resist any implication that Locke's travel interests were myopic rather than expansive. Ten years earlier he had been on a diplomatic mission to Cleves, the seat of the Elector of Brandenburg, and he came to France with a repertoire of established interests, a keen curiosity, and a thirst for new information.<sup>55</sup>

It is reasonable to surmise that the travel journal, familiar by the early 1600s, played some part in shaping what Locke observed; however, he was already a proficient note-taker by the time he left for France. When he noted something it was often an addition to what he had previously seen, heard, read or thought concerning a broad range of subjects including political and financial administration, comparative religion, customs and beliefs, architecture, technology, measurement, meteorology, agriculture, medicine, natural history and natural philosophy. To be sure, he sometimes did perform the role of the traveller, revelling in details of the cost and quality of food, wine, horses, and the inns he slept in – mentioning on one occasion his approval of the "clean sheets of the country & a pretty girl to lay them on."<sup>56</sup> But on certain topics, Locke's note-taking was far more persistent and forensic than anything expected in the diary of a gentleman traveller. For example, his quizzing of local officials about the administration of taxes almost matches the locally-garnered minutiae in the *relazioni* sent by Italian diplomats, and spies, to their masters in Venice.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Cranston, "Locke in France", cols. 736-37. This is a review of Lough, *Locke's Travels*.

<sup>54</sup> Dewhurst, *Locke*, p. 51. On Locke's philosophical interest here, see Anstey, "Locke on measurement", with citations from the journals of 1676 and 1677.

<sup>55</sup> On this visit to Cleves, see Cranston, *Locke*, pp. 81-87; Woolhouse, *Locke*, pp. 59-63. On Locke as a scholarly traveller, see Talbot, *Great Ocean*; Simonutti, "Inspirational Journeys".

<sup>56</sup> See Locke's letter of 1 March 1676 to an unnamed correspondent about his journey from Calais to Paris (drafted in Montpellier in early December 1675); printed in Lough, *Locke's Travels*, Appendix A, pp. 276-81, at p. 280; Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, no. 310, pp. 439-44, at p. 443.

<sup>57</sup> On *relazioni*, see Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, pp. 108-18.

He was also aware of the over-riding power of the *intendants* appointed by the King – who gave him “constant intelligence” – taking the precaution, as Lough observed, of committing this point to shorthand.<sup>58</sup>

The two types of notebook – commonplace books and registers – that Locke used before November 1675 stipulated the kind of information to be collected and the way it should be entered. In commonplace books the material was anchored to a book, testimony or observation and stored under a suitable heading; in the weather register the information was of a specific kind – date and time, temperature, air pressure, humidity etc – and no other, and recorded in designated columns. In contrast, the journal was an open-ended container receiving whatever material the owner decided to notice, albeit constrained to some degree by the conventions relating to the type of journal. The flurry of diverse topics soon after Locke landed in France confirms this. However, it would be wrong to regard these journals as merely capturing the landscapes, buildings, events, and people encountered on horseback, from a boat, or through a coach window. While a succession of diverse topics, often not linked to an excerpt, is certainly a feature of the journals, another aspect is the concentration on a single topic over several days. This is evident in Locke’s vigilant observation of his medical patients and, indeed, of his own episodes of ill health. When he starts on one of these case histories almost all other topics are displaced for days: the illness of the Elizabeth, Countess of Northumberland, occupied nineteen pages over two weeks (2-16 December 1677) without notice of any other topic apart from “Convulsio” to indicate the fits and severe facial pain she was suffering. In the opening entry of Thursday, 2 December, Locke wrote: “I was cald to my Lady Ambassadorice whom I found crying out in one of her fits”. Over the next two days, prompted by his notes, he sent harrowing letters to his friend, the physician, John Maplecroft, confessing that he was writing “in haste and in feare”.<sup>59</sup> With relief, on 16 December, Locke remarked of his patient that she was “Quite well”.<sup>60</sup> About a month earlier the notes under “Febris” regarding the condition of his aristocratic acquaintance,

<sup>58</sup> MS Locke f. 2, p. 198 (12 July 1677), “Politia Galliae”. The two English words quoted here are not in shorthand. For comments, see Lough, *Locke’s Travels*, pp. xliii-xliv.

<sup>59</sup> MS Locke f. 2, pp. 370-88, at p. 370 (2-16 December 1677), “Countesse of Northumberlands case”; Locke to Maplecroft, 4 December 1677, Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, no. 360, pp. 525-28. Elizabeth was the wife of the English ambassador, Ralph Montagu.

<sup>60</sup> MS Locke f. 2, p. 388 (16 December 1677); see also MS Locke f. 3, pp. 22-24 (24 January 1678). Dewhurst, “Symposium”, p. 24 says that Locke’s “letters contain the first description of [what is now called] trigeminal neuralgia in Europe”.

Thomas Herbert, the future eighth Earl of Pembroke (from 1683), run from 16 to 25 November 1677. Even in the midst of daily observations and prescriptions, Locke was able to pen two extended notes on "Species" and "Hypocondriacus" – the latter with no hint that Herbert was displaying this condition.<sup>61</sup>

### 3. Baconian information

In a review of Lough's *Locke's Travels*, Pierre Michel remarked "that all the possible ways of taking notes on travel are represented" in Locke's journals.<sup>62</sup> I suggest that one of these was the manner in which Locke envisaged Baconian natural history as a framework for information collection in France. In his essay on "Travaile" (1625), Francis Bacon did indeed sound like a dispenser of travel advice, listing institutions and places to visit – including courts of princes and justices, churches, monasteries, monuments, harbours, libraries, colleges, gardens, arsenals, warehouses. Most of these were in Locke's itinerary, but his journals, while travelling and *in situ* in Montpellier and Paris, conform in a significant way with Bacon's more general counsel that a traveller should "keepe also a Diary" and "sucke the Experience of many".<sup>63</sup> Although he did not give specific tips about keeping either journals or commonplace books, Bacon discussed the kind of information worth seeking, noting, and storing.<sup>64</sup> In the *Parasceve* (Preparative), published with the *Novum organum* in 1620, he sketched an approach to the gathering of preliminary material for "a natural and experimental history" embracing a large range of subjects under four umbrella categories: celestial phenomena, history of "the greater masses", species and the "history of man". Acknowledging that these subjects had to be studied via specific topics, he listed 130 "Particular Histories" – that is, detailed descriptions – such as the history of "the air" (no. 14), "illnesses" (no. 59), "intellectual faculties" (no. 78) and "wine-making" (no. 83).<sup>65</sup> Many of these intersected with Locke's abiding interests.

<sup>61</sup> MS Locke f. 2, pp. 353-68 (16-25 November 1677), "Febris"; also pp. 356-58 (19 November 1677), "Species"; pp. 366-67 (22 November 1677), "Hypocondriacus". Locke dedicated the *Essay* (1690) to Herbert as "Thomas Earl of Pembroke".

<sup>62</sup> Michel, "Notes et Discussions", p. 292.

<sup>63</sup> Bacon, "Of Travaile", pp. 56-57. See also Bacon, *Advancement*, p. 70 for "Dyaries".

<sup>64</sup> The clearest instance of advice regarding such practice is Bacon's 1608 audit of his paperbooks. See Bacon "Commentarius solutus", BL Add. MS 27278; Vine, *Miscellaneous Order*, pp. 215-20.

<sup>65</sup> Bacon, *Parasceve*, pp. 474-85; see p. 473 for "Particular Histories".

Did Locke's note-taking in France follow Bacon's model?<sup>66</sup> In terms of some of the injunctions about appropriate information and its sources, there was broad agreement: seek a balance between collecting copious material and recording it with brevity and clarity.<sup>67</sup> Both thinkers adopted a tolerant stance with respect to what Bacon referred to as "the reliability of the materials taken into natural history": namely, that well-known and everyday phenomena should be included along with the rare and novel; dubious reports to be entered, perhaps with a qualification.<sup>68</sup> Regarding the excerpting of information from ancient texts, there was a difference of opinion. Although Bacon recognized that Aristotle, Pliny the Elder and others assembled material relevant to natural history, their status was affected by one of his aversions: "no more of antiquities, citations ... and, in short, everything philological."<sup>69</sup> In contrast, Locke was willing to cite ancient authors and to copy extracts from their works in both his commonplace books and journals. In a journal entry of 5 March 1678 he mentioned Pliny, Aetius ("Medicin Grec tres scavant") and Hippocrates on fevers. In October of that year he quoted Plutarch's "Life of Lycurgus" on the child-rearing practices of the Spartans.<sup>70</sup> Whereas Bacon decreed that "no author should be cited save in matters of doubt", Locke noted both ancient and modern sources in the interest of building an historical record of opinions on a topic.<sup>71</sup> Collectively, the material in his commonplace books and journals, accumulated over a lifetime, did just that.

At the end of the *Parasceve*, Bacon admitted that something was missing: "I intend, by putting questions on all the individual titles to instruct men in the case of every one of these histories what most of all should be investigated and written up". Significantly, he insisted that these must be "questions (not about causes, I say, but facts) ... added, to prompt and encourage further investigation".<sup>72</sup> Locke agreed that description must be coupled with interrogation, but he also employed "queries" that often did precisely what Bacon prohibited: they conjectured about causal processes.

<sup>66</sup> I am not asserting that Bacon's *Parasceve* directly guided Locke; however, in Royal Society circles there was a general sense of Bacon's preferences. On Boyle as a likely conduit, see Anstey, *Locke and Natural Philosophy*, pp. 46-59.

<sup>67</sup> Bacon, *Parasceve*, aphorism no. 3, pp. 456-57.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, aphorisms no. 8, pp. 466-69; no. 6, pp. 464-65.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, aphorisms no. 9, pp. 468-69; no. 3, pp. 456-57.

<sup>70</sup> MS Locke f. 3, p. 46 (5 March 1678), "Quartana" (in French); MS Locke f. 3, pp. 306-7 (3 October 1678), "Infants" (in French).

<sup>71</sup> Bacon, *Parasceve*, aphorism no. 3, p. 457.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, aphorisms no. 10, p. 473; no. 9, p. 469.

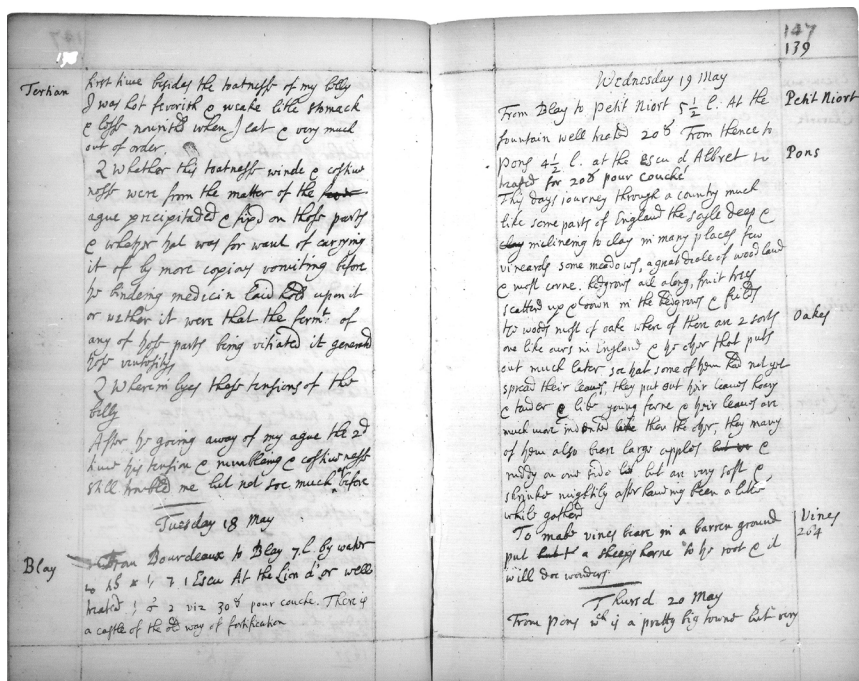


Figure 5. Two Queries (“Q”), incorporating two others, relating to Locke’s accident on 2 April 1677, made at a later date when he was able to recount his symptoms. MS Locke f. 2, pp. 135-38, at p. 138 (14 May 1677), “Tertian”. By permission of The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

Locke’s practice of attaching queries (usually marked “Q”, or “q”) to some entries began in his commonplace books in about 1666.<sup>73</sup> In the journals, there is an early medical query on 2 June 1676 in an entry on “Apoplexie”: “Query whether the vessels of the lungs are usually broken in apoplexy and whether the blood be coagulated in the veins?”<sup>74</sup> Not all such queries speculate about physiological processes; rather, they ask about “facts”, as Bacon advised. For example, regarding treatment of “Diarrhoea” in a patient, Locke recorded: “Query: was

<sup>73</sup> Queries were not an essential feature of the *ars excerptendi* genre; but for examples in Locke’s notebooks (especially MSS Locke d. 9 and f. 19), see Yeo, “Thinking with Excerpts”, pp. 193-97. More generally, see Yeo, “Queries”.

<sup>74</sup> MS Locke f. 1, pp. 268-69 (2 June 1676), “Apoplexie”. There are earlier non-medical queries, such as “Sea/Mare”, p. 67 (5 February 1676): “Q. – Have not these [oyster shells] been left there by the sea since retreated”. This query was inserted at a later date, within the entry rather than in the margin.

the clyster too cold through the dispenser's carelessness? The patient complained about this".<sup>75</sup> Others ask about the efficacy of possible variables. Thus in reporting on a drink to heal wounds Locke wrote: "Q which contributes most to it, the hony [honey] or the herbs?"<sup>76</sup> Regarding the lowering of a patient's temperature, he added: "Q: whether it were his litle breathing in the night or the purgeing that removed the fever?"<sup>77</sup> The full range of these queries is evident in Locke's diagnosis and treatment of his own fever, which he said began on 2 April 1677 in Agen on the way to Bordeaux. He identified the proximate cause of this condition as "a great pole haveing fell upon my head in the boat". Due to recurring fits, he did not make an entry about this until 14 May, but by this time he was able to generate two "Qs" that pondered both treatments and possible causes (see Fig. 5).<sup>78</sup>

Locke was most likely to engage in queries about causes when the topic was one on which he had already worked. In April 1678 he visited the scholar and virtuoso Nicolas Toinard (1628-1706) in Paris. When Toinard extracted the stopper from a large bottle of wine "there rose such a multitude of litle bubbles that they swelled the wine above the mouth of the bottle".<sup>79</sup> This phenomenon was not new to Locke, as this entry explains: "At his chamber [Toinard's] I saw by chance an experiment which confirmed me in an opinion I have had for a long time viz that in fermentation new aer is generated". Locke's previous experience dated to the mid-1660s in Oxford, when he experimented and speculated in collaboration with the physician, Richard Lower, about the role of fermentation in human respiration.<sup>80</sup> One result was Locke's "Respirationis usus" (c.1666/67) in which he rejected the Galenic view that respiration cooled the blood and heart, and instead contended that it enabled a volatile salt (probably a nitrous one) carried in the air to be drawn into the blood, thus producing a fermentation that heated and enlivened the body.<sup>81</sup> At Toinard's house about

<sup>75</sup> MS Locke f. 3, pp. 60-61 (8 March 1678), "Diarrhoea" (in Latin, trans. Dewhurst, *Locke*, p. 108).

<sup>76</sup> MS Locke f. 2, pp. 98-100 (5 April 1677), "Vulneraria".

<sup>77</sup> MS Locke f. 3, p. 87 (28 March 1678), "Dysenteria".

<sup>78</sup> MS Locke f. 2, pp. 135-38, at p. 138 (14 May 1677), "Tertian" (tertian ague, a fever occurring every third, or alternate, day). One of the two "Qs" includes two further queries.

<sup>79</sup> MS Locke f. 3, pp. 110-11 (21 April 1678), "Fermentation". Toinard and Locke first met in Paris at about this time; Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, pp. 579-82. See also Di Biase, *Locke e Thoynard*.

<sup>80</sup> Dewhurst, *Locke*, pp. 7-8, 12-15; Frank, *Harvey and the Oxford Physiologists*, pp. 186-92, 195-97. See the detailed account in Walmsley, "Locke on Respiration".

<sup>81</sup> Locke, "Respirationis usus" (c.1666/1667) in Walmsley and Meyer, "Locke's 'Respirationis usus'", pp. 19, 21.

a decade later, Locke included three queries in a journal entry that follows up on his earlier thinking. The last of these invoked the corpuscular hypothesis to explain that fermentation loosens some “particles” in a mixture; it is signed “JL”, marking it as an original contribution to debate.<sup>82</sup> We can see that some of Locke’s note-taking exceeded the limits set by Bacon for a preliminary natural history: on certain topics, Locke was not a novice observer in the early stage of a collective project, but rather a theorist seeking to advance an on-going inquiry by posing specific conjectures about causes.

#### 4. *Distinctive note-taking in the journals*

Do Locke’s notes in the journals differ in significant ways from those in his commonplace books? One reason to ask this is that while in France he was without access to either his personal library or to the Bodleian and other libraries in Oxford that supported his reading and study from the late-1650s. However, it would be quite wrong to think that entries in the journals never included textual excerpts. Lough’s study of Locke’s reading in France shows that although his commonplace books were not at hand, his usual way of making notes as excerpts (*ars excerpendi*) continued strongly in the first three journals, stimulated in part by his book purchases in France.<sup>83</sup> Even in entries which do not include a textual excerpt, there are often references to some relevant printed source such as *Journal des Scavans*.<sup>84</sup> A significant development in France is the frequency with which Locke cited the opinion of authors and experts *about* books. He drew upon conversations with physicians, apothecaries, *savants* and travellers, such as François Bernier, Adrien Auzout and Henri Justel in Paris;<sup>85</sup> Charles Barbeyrac, Pierre Magnol and Pierre Jolly in Montpellier. Some of them told Locke what to read and what to ignore; for example, on 20 October 1678 he reported that Magnol, a botanist and physician, critically assessed the works of several botanical authors, concluding with the judgement that “John Bauhinus is but a compiler”.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>82</sup> MS Locke f. 3, p. 111 (21 April 1678), “Fermentation”, “Aer”.

<sup>83</sup> Lough, “Locke’s Reading”; also Simonutti, “Inspirational Journeys”; Carey, “Locke, Travel Literature”.

<sup>84</sup> See MS Locke f. 1, pp. 268-69, at p. 269 (2 June 1676), “Apoplexie” for the direction to “Journal des Scavans 20 Aug 67”.

<sup>85</sup> Justel, a scholar and librarian, emigrated to England in 1681 and became a Fellow of the Royal Society; Woolhouse, *Locke*, pp. 125, 138-39, 147, 161.

<sup>86</sup> MS Locke, f. 3, p. 311 (20 October 1678), “Botanica”. The reference is to Jean Bauhin (1541-1613).

There *are* ways in which some of the notes in the journals differ from those in the commonplace books – namely, in drawing on a wider range of sources, beyond printed books.<sup>87</sup> In the journals there are more instances of on-the-spot observation, testimony, conversation, and trains of thought. These notes are, very broadly, of two kinds: those which record empirical information (including queries about it) and those which comprise philosophical reflections on a range of concepts connected with drafts of the *Essay*.

Regarding the first kind, some of Locke's favourite topics were extended and deepened through exposure to new empirical sources. His early medical interests, as represented in various commonplace books, such as MS Locke d. 9 and MS Locke f. 19, continued in France; however, he was also able to pursue certain topics in a new way, aided by conversations with some leading physicians and through care of his own patients. One such focus was the psychosomatic conditions of hysteria, hypochondria and melancholy, together with attendant afflictions such as epilepsy, mania/delirium and vertigo. These conditions were not new to Locke – there are entries on them in some of his medical notebooks, such as MS Locke f. 19 which included his notes in Latin on Thomas Willis's lectures at Oxford in 1663-1664.<sup>88</sup> In his *Cerebri Anatome* (1664) Willis discussed brain function and various complaints with a neurological component such as lack of sleep, pain, hysteria, delirium and melancholia.<sup>89</sup> Locke followed this precedent and, on occasions, offered his own opinions (signed "JL") such as the proposition that although vertigo was often seen in conjunction with epilepsy and mania, it could also be an effect of "any acute disease", and that it involved the stomach as well as the head.<sup>90</sup> Moreover, conversations offered him a range of views on both conceptual issues and empirical details: for example, on 18 June 1676 he noted Barbeyrac's opinion that "hysterica is a species of epilepsy" and, on 9 July of that year, he summarised Magnol's detailed description of the rigid behaviour patterns of a female hysteric whose "fits were very admirable".<sup>91</sup> Locke's notes do not primarily

<sup>87</sup> I am not suggesting that there were only textual excerpts in Locke's commonplace books; see Yeo, "Thinking with Excerpts".

<sup>88</sup> Dewhurst, *Willis's Oxford Lectures*. This edition includes Richard Lower's notes taken at Willis's lectures of c.1661-1662. See also Dewhurst, *Locke*, pp. 11-13.

<sup>89</sup> See MS Locke f. 3, p. 133 (18 May 1678), "Cerebri anatome" for authorities on "Anatomy of the brain", including "Willisium"; trans. of Latin in Dewhurst, *Locke*, p. 122.

<sup>90</sup> MS Locke f. 3, p. 219 (22 July 1678), "Vertigo". On the stomach, see MS Locke f. 3, pp. 203-4 (16 July 1678), "Vertigo", "Stomachus"; and p. 210 (19 July 1678), "Vertigo".

<sup>91</sup> MS Locke f. 1, p. 288 (18 June 1676), "Hysterica", citing "Dr. Barbirac"; MS Locke f. 1, pp. 311-12 (9 July 1676), "Hysterica"; shorthand expanded in Dewhurst, *Locke*, pp. 69-70.

reject authorities, but rather augment his own bank of ideas and information from testimony and direct observation of patients. Nevertheless, in the entry immediately before the one on vertigo he declared his frustration with the Galenic approach, and those doctors still in its thrall who "have given little thought, or none at all, to the specific nature or peculiar ferment (whatever in fact that is) of each disease".<sup>92</sup>

While in France, Locke focussed on some topics which had not previously occupied his attention. On 30 December 1675 in the early pages of his first journal, he made notes under "Husbandry/Agricultura" and, soon after arriving in Montpellier, he made observations under "Olivae" (9 and 24 January) and "Vines" (28 January). He also drew up lists of various kinds, such as the one in an entry on "Grapes" of 7 February 1676 and on plumbs, pears and peaches of 15 August 1678, and others on prunes, oranges, figs and silk (see Fig. 6).<sup>93</sup> The entries under these titles are often cross-referenced within each journal because Locke wanted to find them when composing a response to the request, or command, of his employer and patron, Anthony Ashley Cooper (from 1672, first Earl of Shaftesbury) for what Locke interpreted as a preliminary natural history of agriculture. After collating these notes on his return to England he dedicated a manuscript-book called "Observations upon the growth and culture of vines and olives" to Shaftesbury or, as Locke called him, "my Lord Ashley".<sup>94</sup> Bacon had included the "History of wine-making" in his *Parasceve*, but it was not a topic which Locke had investigated.<sup>95</sup> He acknowledged this (as discussed earlier) by including the categories "Immitanda" and "Acquirenda" in the entry of 4 September 1677 that offered a scheme of knowledge which might inform note-taking: the former covered the crafts of wine and oil-making, the latter the transport of grapes, vines, olives and fruit to England.

<sup>92</sup> MS Locke f. 3, p. 217 (22 July 1678), "MM"; Dewhurst, *Locke*, pp. 136-37 trans. of the Latin. Compare "Morbus", BL Add. MS 32554, pp. 232-33, 237, 246, 248, 250, probably written c. 1666; Anstey, *Locke and Natural Philosophy*, p. 181.

<sup>93</sup> MS Locke f. 1, pp. 68-70 (7 February 1676), "Uva, Grapes"; MS Locke f. 1, pp. 136-38 (29 February 1676), "Olivae"; MS Locke, f. 3, pp. 254-55 (15 August 1678) "Plumbs drying".

<sup>94</sup> Locke, "Observations". This was based on Locke's presentation copy, Public Record Office, The National Archives (TNA), London (TNA, PRO 30/24/47/35), 1 February 1679/1680. For the receipt of this, see John Hoskins to Locke, 1 February 1680, in Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 2, no. 528, pp. 154-56. The work was first published in London in 1766.

<sup>95</sup> Bacon, *Parasceve*, item no. 83, p. 481.

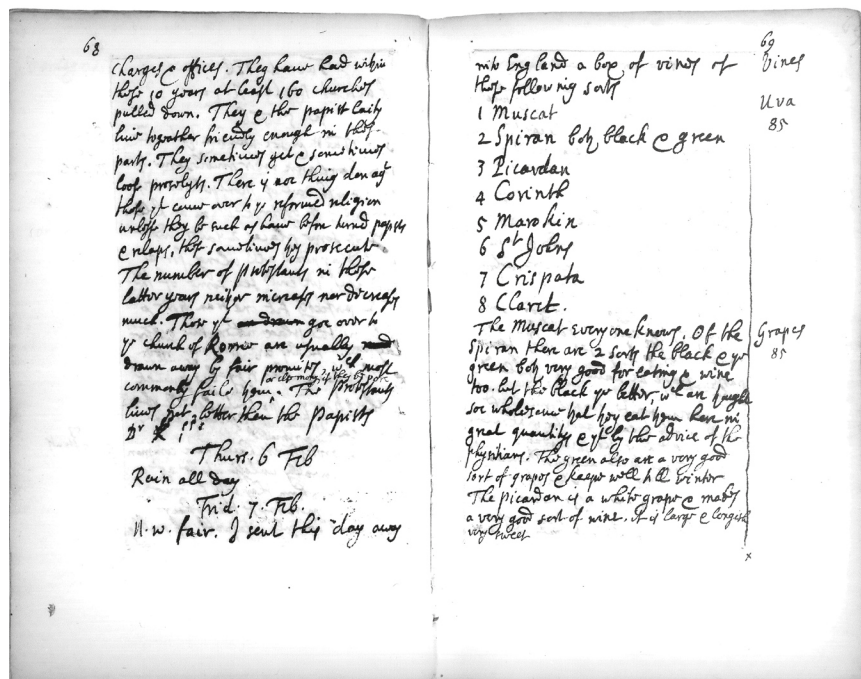


Figure 6. Locke's list of Vines/Uva/Grapes collected in Montpellier. MS Locke f. 1, p. 69 (7 February 1676). By permission of The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

The intensity of Locke's efforts is manifest during the first months in France. Very soon he was ready to send a box containing eight varieties of vine to Shaftesbury.<sup>96</sup> The detail and rigour of his information-gathering is displayed in a long entry of 10 February 1676 on "The manner of making oyle", which includes a list of twenty-three numbered points about the "Oyle presse".<sup>97</sup> We should not forget that, for Locke, list-making was compulsive and by no means restricted to this project. Immediately after the virtual essay on oil-pressing he enumerated "The Bishops of this Province", giving eighteen names.<sup>98</sup> Another pervasive feature of his note-taking is the desire to measure whenever and wherever feasible, an urge nicely betrayed when something thwarted it. When

<sup>96</sup> MS Locke f. 1, pp. 68-70 (7 February 1676), "Vines", "Uva", "Grapes".

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 76-94 (10 February 1676), "Oyle/Oleum"; Lough, *Locke's Travels*, pp. 31-38.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97 (10 February 1676), "Bishops Episcopi".

seeking to describe part of an oil press he remarked, with frustration, that "At the little end is a screw, whereof the very screw (for it standing upright I could not measure it) was, as I guess, about thirteen or fourteen feet".<sup>99</sup> Although Locke's collection of this information is consonant with a Baconian natural history, he did not envisage a systematic comparison of vines and grapes from various regions, such as Burgundy, Champagne and Bordeaux.<sup>100</sup> As Tim Unwin has suggested, this may be because his efforts were directed to satisfying Shaftesbury's immediate demands, with some possibility that what he found, mainly in Montpellier, might eventually assist "English aspirations to develop vineyards in north America".<sup>101</sup>

For these notes, Locke relied on information exchanged in conversation with people who exhibited various degrees of skill and knowledge.<sup>102</sup> Of course, this also applied to his medical inquiries but most of these communications involved respected authors and practitioners, and their testimony was not doubted.<sup>103</sup> The contrast with Locke's natural history projects is clear from his remark about garnering material while travelling in the countryside. On the way to Avignon he crossed the river "Durance", noticing the quick current and the confirmation about this from "the informacion of the ferry man".<sup>104</sup> This scenario was typical of his exchanges about olives, vines, fruit etc with peasants in the fields, gardeners, fruit cultivators, wine makers and keepers of silkworms. Thus in March 1676 in Montpellier he noted that "A peasant working in the vineard said they [vines] were never the worse".<sup>105</sup> When he knew the name of an informant he noted it: thus "Jacques, the gardiner at the Physic Garden" on

<sup>99</sup> Locke, "Observations", p. 345.

<sup>100</sup> Yet while in Bordeaux Locke made sure he saw the famous "Pontiac" vineyard of Arnaud de Pontac (1599-1681); see MS Locke f. 2, pp. 134-35 (14 May 1677), "Pontiac wine".

<sup>101</sup> Unwin, "Locke's Interest in Wine", pp. 123, 141-43, 149. On fruit suitable to Carolina, see Armitage, "Locke, Carolina", pp. 611-12 for citation of undated entries in one of the memorandum books (dated "30 Jun 1677") kept in France: MS Locke, f. 15, pp. 26, 42, 91.

<sup>102</sup> This sociability sits uneasily with Locke's acknowledgement of his wariness and shyness; "Lingua" [1694] in "Adversaria Ethica", p. 38; Locke to Sir John Somers, 28 January 1698 in Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 6, no. 2384, pp. 306-9, at p. 308 – albeit, in this case, when giving reasons for declining an offer of a diplomatic mission. See also Yeo, "Locke on Conversation".

<sup>103</sup> See MS Locke f. 3, pp. 152-56 (2-3 June 1678), "Quartana" at p. 153 on "Mr Auzot [Auzout]" and his knowledge of fevers: "and this he told me him self. He is well-educated & trustworthy" (last sentence in Latin); Dewhurst, *Locke*, p. 125.

<sup>104</sup> MS Locke f. 1, p. 219 (20 April 1676), "Durance".

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151 (10 March 1676), "Vitis". Contrast Locke's annoyance in Bordeaux when he could not "learne of the work men for want of understanding Gascoin". MS Locke f. 2, p. 134 (14 May 1677), "Pontiac wine".

violets, Madame Fesquet on silkworms and Madame de Superville about drying fruit.<sup>106</sup> Locke duly entered such information but when possible also assessed the reliability of his sources: for example, regarding the importation of orange trees from Italy he wrote “As the Gardener told me; ... but I am afraid in this later part of the story the gardiner made bold with truth”.<sup>107</sup> When he came across local practices he registered some without comment and others with doubt: for example, “Q. also whether, as they say here, linen washed in the old of the moon will be stiffer than what is washed in the new?”.<sup>108</sup> Travelling from Blaye to Petit Niort in May 1677 he noted this local belief: “to make vines beare in a barren ground put a sheeps horne to the root & it will doe wonders”.<sup>109</sup> Later, when incorporating this point in the *Observations* he added that “I have no great faith in it, but mention it because it may so easily be tried”.<sup>110</sup>

This sums up Locke’s attitude to the information he collected, not just on agriculture, but on many other topics: make notes, measure if appropriate, seek out experts, interrogate the testimony of other sources where possible; and include doubtful material, at least provisionally, as Bacon advised.<sup>111</sup> Then test empirical facts when feasible, postpone theoretical and therapeutic judgements in the preliminary stage of an inquiry, but assert them on topics in which one is already well-versed. Locke did this himself: his comment on fermentation at Toinard’s house in 1678 is one example. In another case on 1 July 1677 he described the use of the mineral waters at Balaruc for various maladies, affirming that “I have proved this during the last season in the cases of several important patients”.<sup>112</sup> Accumulation of information and experience was his warrant.

The second, quite different, kind of note found in Locke’s journals concerns the preservation of ideas and trains of thought. In his “brief life” of Thomas Hobbes, the diarist and virtuoso, John Aubrey, reported that Hobbes accompanied Bacon on his contemplative walks, ready with “inke and paper” to take

<sup>106</sup> MS Locke, f. 1, p. 179 (3 April 1676), “Viola”; pp. 264-69 (2 June 1676), “Silk wormes”; MS Locke f. 3, pp. 255-56 (15 August 1678), “Pears drying”.

<sup>107</sup> MS Locke, f. 2, pp. 189-90 (7 July 1677), “Orange trees”.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83 (20 March 1677), “Q Moon”; shorthand expanded in Lough, *Locke’s Travels*, p. 136.

<sup>109</sup> MS Locke f. 2, p. 139 (19 May 1677), “Vines”; copied to MS Locke d. 9, p. 264 in 1681.

<sup>110</sup> Locke, *Observations*, p. 331.

<sup>111</sup> Locke argued that testimony increased in value if it conformed with “our own Knowledge, Observation, and Experience”; Locke, *Essay*, IV.xv.4. His notes provided one reference point. See also Shapin, *Social History*, pp. 213-14.

<sup>112</sup> MS Locke f. 2, pp. 191-97, at p. 195 (11 July 1677), “Baleruc [sic] waters”; trans. from French, Dewhurst, *Locke*, p. 85.

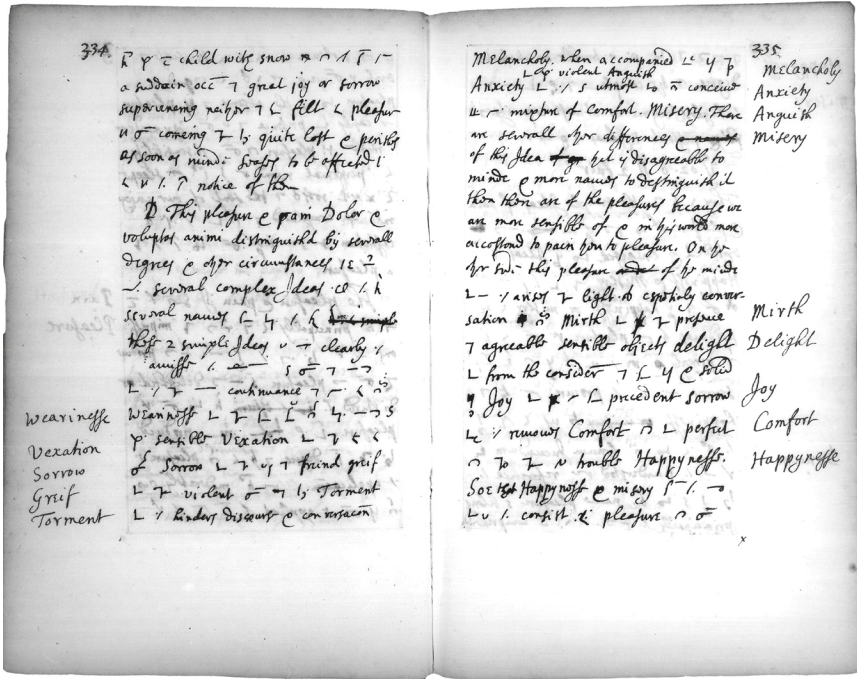


Figure 7. Some of the titles in the series of entries concerning the “Passions”. MS Locke f. 1, pp. 325-347, at pp. 334-335 (16 July 1676). By permission of The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

down “his Notions”; and when composing the *Leviathan* he “carried always a Note-booke in his pocket, and as soon as a Thought ‘darted’, he presently entred it into his Booke, or otherwise he might perhaps have lost it”.<sup>113</sup> The physician and mathematician, William Petty, also a friend of Aubrey, spoke of his “many flying thoughts” which must be captured.<sup>114</sup>

Many of the philosophical entries in Locke’s journals in France display this character. In his *Essay*, Locke recognized that “Ideas” often “float in our mind, without any reflection or regard of the Understanding”. Reinforcing this in a letter of 16 May 1699 to Samuel Bold, he observed that “The thoughts that come often unsought, and, as it were, drop into the mind, are commonly the most valuable of any we have, and therefore should be secured, because

<sup>113</sup> Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, pp. 426-27, 429.

<sup>114</sup> Petty, *Advice*, sig. A2, 2<sup>r</sup> (in dedication to Samuel Hartlib); Yeo, *Notebooks*, p. 21.

they seldom return again".<sup>115</sup> In making notes he sought to ensure that certain thoughts were given proper "Attention" and "registred in the Memory".<sup>116</sup> Compared with most entries in his commonplace books the philosophical journal entries are distinctive in not being reliant on excerpts as a starting point. However, they are not necessarily unexpected inspirations; rather, most are associated with current projects. These entries start on 27 March 1676 and mark Locke's return to philosophy after the completion of Drafts A and B of the *Essay*.<sup>117</sup>

The most arresting example of Locke's philosophical entries is the rush of ideas starting on 16 July 1676. These entries, the first of which is "Passions" (the governing category), are in shorthand with marginal titles in longhand.<sup>118</sup> After this there are approximately eighteen subsidiary concepts such as Love, Desire, Hope and Hatred, entered on the one day in Montpellier (see Fig. 7).<sup>119</sup> More than once, Pain and Pleasure feature in this entry: in the *Essay*, Locke said that these ideas "are the hinges on which our *Passions* turn". As von Leyden suggested, this sequence of notes is a trial run for what a full account of the Passions might be – as Locke acknowledged in the *Essay* by stressing in the chapter "Of Modes of Pleasure and Pain" that what he said must not be mistaken "as a Discourse of the *Passions*; they are *many more than those* I have here named".<sup>120</sup> Some of these ideas involving the passions are indexed in the journal for 1676 as separate items to be retrieved when required. Indeed, Locke obliquely referenced "Study", the subject of the longest entry in the four journals, as belonging to any comprehensive report on the passions, which would include the pleasure "of well directed study in the search and discovery of Truth".<sup>121</sup>

There are some entries that raise important philosophical issues, while also beginning with an excerpt. The entry on "Extasy/Dreaming" of 14 May 1676

<sup>115</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xix.1; Locke to Bold, 16 May 1699 in Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 6, no. 2590, pp. 626-30, at p. 628; also Yeo, *Notebooks*, pp. 214-15.

<sup>116</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xix.1.

<sup>117</sup> See the editors' introduction in Locke, *Draft C*, pp. xviii-xix; and p. xviii for their count of thirty philosophical entries between March 1676 and October 1678. See also Schankula, "Summary Catalogue", pp. 24, 27-30 for "philosophical" entries in the journals kept in France.

<sup>118</sup> MS Locke f. 1, pp. 325-47 (16 July 1676). These are preceded by substantial entries on Extension, Simple Ideas, Will, Pleasure and Pain.

<sup>119</sup> Locke, *Essays on the Law of Nature*, pp. 265-72 for expansion of the shorthand; see also Locke, *Political Essays*, pp. 237-45.

<sup>120</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xx.3; II.xx.18; Locke, *Essays on the Law of Nature*, pp. 264-65 (von Leyden's introduction).

<sup>121</sup> Locke, *Essay*, II.xx.18.

opens with a quotation – “The way of falling into an Exstasie” – and a marginal reference to “59/p. 41”.<sup>122</sup> This indicates “Lemmata Ethica” (MS Locke d. 10, p. 41) where, under “Exstasis” (dated 1682), the entry duplicates the opening of a sentence from François Bernier’s *Suite des Memoires sur l’Empire du Grand Mogol* (1671), identified in both entries as on page 158 in a book of 252 pages. Locke read this work in France and made other references to it on the previous day.<sup>123</sup> His note in the journal, immediately below the excerpt, opens with a query: “Q Whether Exstasie be any thing else but dreaming with the eyes open ...”.<sup>124</sup> There is no doubt that by copying Bernier’s description of instances of extasy into “Lemmata Ethica”, Locke recognized this feature of Hinduism (and of the Brahmin elite) as pertaining to comparative religious practices and culture. In “Adversaria Ethica” (from c. 1672) he had already made several entries on Brahminism (again citing Bernier) and also on Japanese religion.<sup>125</sup> However, Locke’s own thinking about extasy being “any thing else but dreaming with the eyes open”, and his following reasoning about the contrast with “wakeing” ideas, does not fit under “Ethica” as he conceived it; indeed, there is nothing like this in any of his commonplace books.<sup>126</sup>

### 5. *Putting things back together*

Although the journal entries carried titles, they were not arranged by topic or subject; this meant that the distinction between “Physica” and “Ethica” became invisible. However, established habits quickly reasserted themselves: once back in London, Locke prepared two new commonplace books, MS Locke c. 42A

<sup>122</sup> MS Locke f. 1, p. 256 (14 May 1676), “Extasy/Dreaming”.

<sup>123</sup> Lough, “Locke’s Reading”, p. 231. See LL, no. 286a, published in Paris; this is not the edition printed in The Hague that Locke cites in MS Locke f. 1, p. 254 (13 May 1676). See Bernier, *Continuation of Memoires*, p. 138. For Locke’s acquaintance with Bernier and his works, see Bonno, *Relations Intellectuelles*, pp. 55, 80, 84-86, 97-99; Lough, *Locke’s Travels*, p. 177, n. 1.

<sup>124</sup> A version of this query appeared in the *Essay*, II.xix.1; see Locke, *Draft C*, p. xx.

<sup>125</sup> For Bernier, see “Adversaria Ethica”, pp. 100, 155; see n. 48 above for the notes on Japanese religion. For Locke’s questions about ethnography and comparative religion, see Carey, “Locke’s Use of Inquiries”, pp. 24-31.

<sup>126</sup> J. R. Milton has suggested that Locke may have chosen not to use commonplace books “for recording philosophical material, but rather for factual information of various kinds”, or that he did, but the relevant ones were lost. Milton, “Locke at Oxford”, p. 38; also p. 46. The presence of Draft A of the *Essay* (under “Intellectus” in “Adversaria Ethica”, pp. 56-95) does not affect this comment: it is a lengthy draft of a work, not a standard entry.

(medicine and sciences) and c. 42B (comparative religion, culture and politics) to receive selected material from the journals.<sup>127</sup> He also made further transfers into some of his existing commonplace books, especially “Adversaria Physica”, “Adversaria Ethica” and “Lemmata Ethica”.<sup>128</sup> This was possible because the marginal titles, indexes and internal cross-references in the journals aided searches for entries. A significant outcome of this process was the introduction, for the first time, of dated entries in the commonplace books – a gift from the journals that now allowed a documented history of Locke’s reading and thinking.<sup>129</sup> When he copied material from a journal Locke recorded the date of the entry and also the date on which he entered this material in a commonplace book. Some of these transfers were made in 1679, indicated by 79 either at the top of the page or in the margins; only sections of pages, not individual entries, were dated.<sup>130</sup> As an illustration of this procedure, the journal entry of 9 July 1676 on “Hysterica” in MS Locke f. 1, pp. 311-12 has a marginal reference to “60. p. 183” which indicates “Adversaria Physica”, called 60 because of the date 1660 on its inside front cover. At page 183 of this notebook, the entry on “Hysterica” continues on to p. 268 where there is a cross-reference to “76 p. 312”, the location of the original journal entry. The transfer of material from the journals did not cease in 1679. Indeed, the entry on “Hysterica” just cited was transferred in 1681; two on “Rheumatismus”, also from that journal, were copied into “Adversaria Physica” in 1681-1682.<sup>131</sup> This confirms Locke’s continuing, or reactivated, interest in certain topics and it meant that the journals kept in France enjoyed an after-life.

<sup>127</sup> Originally two separate commonplace books, Parts A and B are now bound together. The first entry in Part A, p. 1 copies (with variations) an entry in MS Locke f. 1, p. 51 (28 January 1676), “Diabetes”. Locke also started a commonplace book (MS Locke d 1) while preparing to leave for England in early 1679. It begins with both scientific and ethical topics (pp. 1-49), whereas entries from p. 53 are exclusively ethical, political and religious. While in France and later in the Netherlands, Locke made notes of his reading on large sheets, labelling them “Adversaria”. See MS Locke c. 33, fols. 1-16; and Locke, *Literary and Historical*, p. 34, n. 7.

<sup>128</sup> See Locke, *Draft C*, p. xxiii for the editors’ list of several entries (marginal mark 61) transferred from the journal MS Locke f. 1 to “Adversaria Ethica”; however, in contrast with “Adversaria Physica”, cross-references to the journal are rarely given.

<sup>129</sup> Two qualifications: Locke usually dated *empirical* observations (Yeo, “Thinking with Excerpts”, p. 191) and the order of some of the entries can be determined (Milton, “Dating of Adversaria 1661”, p. 111, n. 14).

<sup>130</sup> For an announcement of this practice, which continued for all future entries in commonplace books, not just for transfers from journals, see English draft of “New Method”, BL Add. MS 28728, fols. 60v-61r; Locke, *Literary and Historical*, pp. 226-27.

<sup>131</sup> See the entries on “Rheumatismus” in MS Locke f. 1, p. 407 (18 August 1676) and p. 466 (9 October 1676), both transferred to MS Locke d. 9, p. 37.

However, not everything fitted smoothly, or completely, back together. Indeed, the consolidation of some information in commonplace books highlighted the disaggregated status of journal entries left uncopied. Although this was predictable, given the large number of entries, it is possible that some journal notes had no obvious home in the existing commonplace books. Any secure generalization about this requires more investigation, but one instance involves "Adversaria Physica", the commonplace book that hosted Locke's ongoing interests in medicine (both theory and therapeutics), chemistry, physiology and agricultural topics.<sup>132</sup> Many notes in the journals united easily with those sharing the same titles in this commonplace book and other medical notebooks – for example, Apoplexie, Epilepsia, Febris, Hernia, Hysteria, Respiratio, Rheumatismus, Sanguis, Tumor, Vertigo, Vulnus. In contrast, entries on mania/madness starting in mid-1676 were not transferred to this commonplace book even though it already held six entries on this concept.<sup>133</sup> There was space available on p. 113 for more entries at the time in 1679 when Locke made other notes under "Machina" and "Mars", but none of the six entries on "Mania"/"Madnesse" in the journals is there. It is feasible that these were left uncopied because Locke did not approach madness in neurological and physiological terms, as Thomas Willis did in the lectures Lower and Locke recorded from 1661,<sup>134</sup> but rather as a matter of psychology involving the formation of "obscure or confused notions of things" that created a dangerous starting point for sound reasoning and judgement.<sup>135</sup> We have already met another example of notes left in the journals because they did not belong in the commonplace books, namely, the philosophical entries on Space, Extension, Simple Ideas, Memory, Will, Power, and the various Passions. However, not all of these remained homeless – some were incorporated in drafts of the *Essay*.

<sup>132</sup> It is clear that this notebook was the default repository for these topics because some cross-references in the journals simply cite a page, without the 60. Thus on 24 February 1676 in MS Locke f. 1, pp. 122 and 131, Locke wrote 238 in the margin under both "Vineard" and "Vinum", knowing that this was all he needed: MS Locke d. 9, p. 238. There was no confusion with "Lemmata Physica" because he made no transfers to that notebook; see Milton, "Dating of 'Adversaria 1661'", p. 115.

<sup>133</sup> MS Locke d. 9, pp. 112-113, "Mania".

<sup>134</sup> See Willis on "Mania" in MS Locke f. 19, pp. 114-19.

<sup>135</sup> MS Locke, f. 2, p. 347 (11 November 1677), "Error". Relevant entries include MS Locke, f. 1, p. 320 (15 July 1676), "Mania/Fatuitas (stupidity)"; MS Locke, f. 2, p. 348 (11 November 1677), "Madnesse/Folly": "where a man argues right upon wrong notions or termes he does like a mad man, where he makes wrong consequences he does like a foole"; MS Locke f. 3, pp. 19-21 (22 January 1678), "Madnesse".

As studies of humanist commonplace books have shown, textual excerpting sacrificed context and often details of the book being commonplaced.<sup>136</sup> Something similar occurred in Locke's notebooks when transfers of single entries neglected surrounding information. In one of the commonplace books started in 1679, he copied the entry on "Hernia" from his journal entry for 19 March 1676. Immediately above this there is another entry under "Vulnus" which he copied into the same commonplace book.<sup>137</sup> However, this proximity of related entries ("Hernia" and "Vulnus") in the journal was lost in the transfer: the topics ended up on different pages due to the different alphabetical classes (*He* and *Vu*) of the titles. Similarly, entries on "Hysterica" and "Epilepsia" of 18 June 1676 were separated when copied into Locke's "Practica" notebook devoted to Daniel Sennert's *Praxis medica* (1656) – hence the marginal cross-references to "pr. p. 690 and pr. p 167".<sup>138</sup> The compensation for such losses was that various sources on the same topic were brought together in one notebook, allowing for comparisons of earlier and later notes, and sparking new ideas, assisted by the fact that Locke often added to copied entries, or brought several together, sometimes in the course of expanding shorthand into longhand.<sup>139</sup>

Locke's notes certainly included what scholars have called brief facts or nuggets of information gathered from books, observation and testimony; but some of them were more than this.<sup>140</sup> Those excerpts and observations with which Locke interacted by attaching comments, queries and his own signature formed higher level clusters of information and thought relating to certain classes of facts.<sup>141</sup> Material from the journals significantly added to, and in some cases initiated, these clusters on favourite subjects such as respiration, arthritis, wounds, fevers, hysteria, weather, agriculture, wine-making and comparative religion. These expandable notes became powerful tools for the advancement of projects, even if Locke did not publish on all of them.

<sup>136</sup> See Cave, *Cornucopian Text*; Crane, *Framing Authority*; Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>137</sup> MS Locke, f. 1, p. 157 (19 March 1676), "Vulnus, Hernia" copied to MS Locke c. 42A, pp. 8, 10.

<sup>138</sup> MS Locke f. 1, p. 288 (18 June 1676), "Hysterica", "Epilepsia". The "Practica" notebook is in the Biblioteca Marciana (Ms. Lat. 23), Venice; see Stolberg, "Locke's New Method", p. 451.

<sup>139</sup> See MS Locke f. 1, pp. 122-23 (24 February 1676), "Vineard", and related entries from the same journal copied in 1679 to MS Locke d. 9, p. 238 under "Vinea"; also MS Locke f. 1, pp. 311-12 (9 July 1676), "Hysterica" copied in 1681 to MS Locke d. 9, p. 183, continued on p. 268 and expanded into longhand.

<sup>140</sup> Daston, "Perché i fatti sono brevi?"; Blair, *Too Much to Know*, pp. 2, 198.

<sup>141</sup> Yeo, "Thinking with Excerpts", p. 199.

## 6. Conclusion

Locke's adoption of journals in France was a significant moment in his lifetime of note-taking. It entailed departures from his usual habits: there were no separate notebooks for topics belonging to the "Physica" and "Ethica" categories; each entry was immediately dated; and the indexes were not completed until the end of each year. However, Locke took advantage of the freedoms allowed by the journal form – the liberty to note anything on any page, touching on several ideas in succession; the option of pursuing a single topic over several days in consecutive pages, as seen in some of the medical and philosophical entries; and the chance to develop pre-existing topics. He did not abandon note-taking centred on excerpts from books, but while in France more of his notes were initiated by observation, conversation and reflection; and many of these incorporated queries (already present in some commonplace books) that involved theoretical conjectures. The latter included philosophical queries relevant to the *Essay*. These actions contributed to the variety and detail we now see in the journals. Yet on return to England, Locke did not make the journal his notebook of choice; rather, he enriched his commonplace books with material collected in the journals.

When the commonplace book resumed its function as the repository of information, queries and ideas, Locke continued the journal as an annual diary of names, appointments, financial transactions (including book purchases), lists of various kinds and some notices of passages in books. Any generalization about the content and purpose of the journals after May 1679 is complicated by the fact that he did occasionally enter significant material, such as the entries on religion, reason, knowledge, and enthusiasm printed by Mark Goldie, and the important reflection on memory and personal identity of 5 June 1683.<sup>142</sup> During his exile in the Netherlands from 7/17 September 1683 to February 1689, Locke was again without his commonplace books and depended on journals in conjunction with drafts of his *Epistola de Tolerantia* (1689) and the *Essay* (1690). The journals of this period are beyond the scope of this article, but one observation seems safe: after he returned to England the marginal titles, indexes and cross-references that linked the journals to the commonplace books begin to disappear. "Cash" (for financial matters) remains as a recurring

<sup>142</sup> Locke, *Political Essays*, pp. 277-82; 289-91 (from MSS Locke f. 4, f. 5, f. 6). See MS Locke f. 7, p. 107 (5 June 1683) beginning "Identity of persons".

preoccupation, but even significant entries are without titles.<sup>143</sup> Moreover, no journal after 1678 has an index. It seems that by the 1680s Locke was no longer concerned with effective communication between the journals and commonplace books, or perhaps assumed he could rely on memory and page turning to find what he wanted – a feasible option given the steadily reducing length of the post-1679 journals. There are only twenty-four pages in the final journal of 1704, closing with its last entry on 24 October, four days before Locke's death.<sup>144</sup>

When he reached London on 30 April 1679, Locke had already made the decision to return to his former note-taking practices.<sup>145</sup> Did he miss a chance to explore a new path, “one less traveled by”?<sup>146</sup> The main alternative was a recourse to “loose” notes on slips of paper – in contrast with those organized in some fashion and kept in bound notebooks.<sup>147</sup> Thus in considering the best way of writing about novel, and perhaps inchoate, empirical particulars Robert Boyle eschewed “Methodical Treatises” and favoured writing in “a more loose and unconfin'd way”.<sup>148</sup> Locke shared Boyle's anxiety about premature generalization in science and advised careful collection of information as a preparation for conjecture and theory. However, in his view, this did not entail a completely unstructured archive. Quite the opposite. From the start, Locke avoided the prospect of a chaos of notes and the sensation Boyle described, positively, as tumbling over “divers loose Notes”.<sup>149</sup> Indeed, in labelling some of his early notebooks as either “Physica” or “Ethica”, Locke foreshadowed the declaration in the final chapter of the *Essay* about “the three great Provinces of the intellectual World, wholly separate and distinct one from another”.<sup>150</sup> This

<sup>143</sup> For helpful comments on the post-1679 journals, see Terenzio, “Journals di Locke”, pp. 202-5. This time away from England put Locke's commonplace books into suspended animation; some were not used intensively again, whereas “Adversaria Theologica” (MS Locke c. 43) was started in c. 1694.

<sup>144</sup> MS Locke f. 10, p. 28 [error for p. 24]. After 1683 as the journals reduced in size they came to be bound as follows: MS Locke f. 8 (1684-85); MS Locke f. 9 (1686-88) and MS Locke f. 10 (1689-1704). The commonplace books also decline in use: the latest date (for a page) in both “Adversaria Ethica” and “Adversaria Physica” is 1698.

<sup>145</sup> See BL Add. MS 15642, p. 93 for the day he landed in London as 30 April/10 May 1679.

<sup>146</sup> Frost, “The Road not Taken”, p. 131.

<sup>147</sup> For an early example, see Kraemer and Zedelmaier, “Instruments of Invention”, pp. 330-31, 334.

<sup>148</sup> Boyle, *Excellency*, p. 82, cited in Yeo, “Loose Notes”, pp. 336-37. See also Gassendi, *Mirrouir*, Book VI, pp. 191-92 on Peiresc's loose pages.

<sup>149</sup> Cited in Yeo, “Loose Notes”, p. 343; see n. 29 above.

<sup>150</sup> Locke, *Essay*, IV.xxi. The third division was “*the Doctrine of Signs*”; see n. 38 above.

willingness to delineate between fields of inquiry which, by implication, could for the most part be pursued independently, fits with Locke's preference for keeping like with like over the unexpected combinations welcomed by those who recommended loose notes.<sup>151</sup> Although the arrangement of his commonplace books was in terms of titles of the same "class", not subjects, it did bring old and new notes, and past and present authorities on certain topics, together on the same pages, such as those hosting the entries on olives, vines, grapes and fruit; epilepsy, hysteria, melancholy and vertigo. This collation of material supported comparison of data and opinion across both time and space which, in itself, could generate new ideas.

In the article of 1686 describing his "New Method" of making, arranging and retrieving *adversaria*, Locke did not mention his journals, no doubt because they did not belong to the *ars excerpenti* genre. But in referring to twenty-five years of experience using this method, he overlooked the period in France in which he tried to ensure that the journals could deliver their content to the commonplace books left at home.<sup>152</sup> Locke's accumulation of information in notes was not an unguided gathering of novel and curious things (although this was one aspect); rather, it was a deliberate building on *previous* notes, a practice that sometimes revealed shifts in his thinking. The journal entries amassed in France significantly expanded the network of cross-references and transfers, evident to a more limited extent in the pre-1676 commonplace books. More research, hopefully aided by digital searching, may reveal the extent to which the four journals Locke maintained during his travels played their part in assembling a copious and orderly repository of information and ideas over a lifetime.

### *Abbreviations*

LL: Harrison, John, and Laslett, Peter, *The Library of John Locke*, 2nd ed., Clarendon Press, Oxford 1971.

<sup>151</sup> See Cevolini, "Universal Index", pp. 36-38, 43-46; Yeo, "Harrison's *Arca studiorum*". For reflection on this scholarship, see Crişane, "Traversing Disciplinary Boundaries".

<sup>152</sup> In the letter of dedication Locke said more than twenty years; in the text, twenty-five ("25 ans"); [Locke], "Méthode nouvelle", pp. 319, 321.

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*ADVERSARIORUM METHODUS*  
VERSIONE INGLESE\*

British Library, Add. MS 28728, fos 54-63

\* La traduzione italiana, a cura di Giuliana Di Biase, fa riferimento al testo in inglese dell'*Adversariorum Methodus* (1685), così come esso appare nel volume *John Locke. Literary and Historical Writings*, a c. di J.R. Milton, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2019, pp. 215-32. Si ringrazia il professor Milton per il consenso alla traduzione del testo, la prima in lingua italiana [N.d.T.].

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## Epistola

Signore<sup>1</sup>

provo vergogna per il fatto che dobbiate prendervi la briga di chiedermi per la seconda volta qualsiasi cosa sia in mio potere fare, soprattutto se si tratta di un'inezia quale è appunto quella che menzionate nella vostra ultima lettera. So che non imputerete il mio ritardo nel soddisfare la vostra richiesta di renderla pubblica ad una qualche grettezza mentale, che si potrebbe sospettare mi faccia desiderare che resti ignota al pubblico. In verità, benché io la abbia mostrata a molti che, pur non avendomela chiesta, pensavo che ne avrebbero fatto probabilmente uso, lo scarso valore che le attribuisco mi sembrava una ragione sufficiente a mantenerla entro i limiti di una comunicazione privata. D'altra parte, poiché l'esperienza che ne avete fatta per alcuni anni, insieme all'approvazione di molti vostri amici ai quali ne avete parlato, vi fa persistere nel vostro desiderio di vederla pubblicata, mi sono sforzato di mettere per iscritto la descrizione, che vi invio con questa, del mio metodo per fare raccolte a sostegno della mia cattiva memoria. Benché lo abbia usato in questi ultimi vent'anni senza trovarvi alcun inconveniente e senza essere tentato di cambiarlo, e benché ne abbia trovati pochi

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tra coloro ai quali l'ho mostrato che non abbiano abbandonato il loro metodo precedente per farne uso, tuttavia non potrei mai, se non fosse per le vostre ripetute insistenze, risolvermi ad attribuirgli un valore tale da giu-

<sup>1</sup> Nicolas Toinard [N.d.C.]. Locke conobbe l'erudito orleanese Nicolas Toinard, o Thoynard (1628-1706), durante il suo soggiorno in Francia (1675-79) e intrattenne con lui un intenso scambio epistolare negli anni successivi. Toinard fa riferimento al nuovo metodo per comporre *adversaria* messo a punto da Locke già in una lettera dell'agosto 1679, in cui lo invita a pubblicarlo; a questa richiesta, ripetuta negli anni successivi, si riferisce Locke nell'Epistola. Il testo inglese dell'*Adversariorum methodus* fu inviato da Locke a Toinard nel febbraio del 1685, con la speranza che l'amico francese potesse trovargli una collocazione nelle miscellanee parigine. Sulla genesi del testo, di cui esistono anche una versione in latino ed una in francese, e sul ruolo di Toinard nella sua composizione, si veda *John Locke. Literary and Historical Writings*, pp. 36-38 e 147-8. La versione francese, pubblicata nel 1686, è apparsa in lingua italiana nel volume di Alberto Cevolini, *De arte excerpenti. Imparare a dimenticare nella modernità*, Olshki, Firenze 2006, pp. 215-42 [N.d.T.].

dicarlo adatto alla stampa in un'epoca che abbonda di scoperte così eccellenti e di maggiore importanza. Tuttavia, poiché continuate a pensare che la sua pubblicazione possa essere di qualche utilità, mi lascio vincere, infine, e lo affido alle vostre mani perché ne facciate ciò che volete, assumendovene la responsabilità. Riceverete con questa la descrizione che ne ho fatto cercando di renderla il più possibile concisa e semplice, così da non importunarvi con la ripetizione di qualcuno dei vantaggi che mi hanno portato a preferirlo ad altri modi di comporre *Adversaria*, dei quali vi ho parlato a lungo quando, circa 6 o 7 anni orsono, mi sono preso la libertà di proporvelo a Parigi, compiacendomi unicamente di questo ulteriore vantaggio, che esso cioè mi fornisce l'occasione di mostrarvi con quale deferenza sono

Signore,

Il vostro più umile e più obbediente servitore

J. Locke

Epilogus Vi ho scritto questo secondo il metodo dei miei *adversaria* e ho fatto uso di proposito delle parole *Epistola*, *Adversaria*, *Epilogus* come 12 titoli, benché non penso sia probabile che se ne faccia molto uso [continua a p. 12]

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*Adversariorum methodus*) Prendo un quaderno di qualsivoglia grandezza, in 8vo, in 4to o in folio, come meglio si adatta al mio scopo, e divido le prime due pagine che si aprono insieme in 25 spazi equidistanti mediante linee tracciate con la matita nera, come si vede nello schema. Ogni insieme quinario di questi spazi è preceduto da una delle venti lettere (delle quali faccio uso) e ogni singolo spazio da una delle 5 vocali. Questo è il mio Indice, e non avrò bisogno di aggiungerne un altro anche se il mio zibaldone fosse tanto ampio quanto un dizionario di Calepino.<sup>2</sup>

Una volta fatto l'Indice, la cosa successiva da fare è tracciare delle linee con la matita nera sul resto del quaderno, così da lasciare sul lato sinistro di ogni

<sup>2</sup> Ambrogio Calepino (1435-1511), *Dictionarium Linguae Latinae*, pubblicato per la prima volta nel 1502 e ristampato più volte in seguito. Locke possedeva le copie delle edizioni di Lione del 1663 e del 1681 (LL 569 e 569a) [N.d.C.].

pagina un margine largo più di un centimetro, se si tratta di un volume in folio, e proporzionalmente più stretto nel caso di volumi di formato minore, in modo da non occupare troppo dello spazio destinato alla scrittura. Tuttavia, a questo riguardo ognuno può fare come preferisce. Generalmente, io traccio delle linee anche in cima alla pagina, come avviene su questo foglio.

Una volta che il mio quaderno è stato così suddiviso mediante linee e le pagine numerate come avviene nei libri stampati,<sup>3</sup> il suo uso è il seguente.

Suppongo che, qualunque sia il contenuto del libro che si trascrive a sostegno della memoria e per ritornarvi all'occasione, esso sia posto sotto qualche

p. 5

titolo, che deve sempre ridursi ad una certa parola per trovarlo di nuovo. Ogni parola comincia con una delle 24 lettere,<sup>4</sup> e ogni parola contiene almeno una vocale. Per comodità, faccio uso soltanto di 20 o 21 lettere, come si può vedere nello schema, perché colloco la .K. sotto la .C., v. p. 16, la .Y. sotto la .I., la .W. sotto la .V, e la Q, che non è mai seguita da altra vocale che non sia la U, la colloco prima della .U. della .Z., come si vede nello schema, perché i titoli in Z.U. sono molto rari e non ricordo di averne mai incontrato uno di quella classe da quando ho cominciato ad usare questo metodo. Se si vuole inserire la .Q. alla fine, mantenendola separata come un eteroclitico (come facevo all'inizio), si faccia pure come si preferisce.

Quando mi capita di trovare qualcosa che penso sia opportuno trascrivere nei miei Adversaria, considero dapprima sotto quale titolo credo che sarò incline a cercarla. Supponiamo che esso sia, ad esempio, Epistola, cerco dunque nel mio indice la E, che è la prima lettera, e la .i., che è la vocale v successiva, per vedere se ci sia qualche numero dopo di essa. Se c'è, esso

p. 6

Adversariorum methodus) mi indirizza alla pagina in cui andrò a scrivere Epistola a grandi lettere nel margine, e ciò che devo scrivere sotto quel titolo lo trascrivo nell'altra porzione della pagina, continuando la prima riga dalla fine del titolo, come si vede che faccio qui dopo il titolo Adversariorum methodus; così trascrivo su un rigo 10 parole o 10 pagine, a seconda

<sup>3</sup> Con i numeri dispari sul retto dei fogli, e i pari sul verso [N.d.C.].

<sup>4</sup> Si considerano I/J e U/V ciascuna come una lettera [N.d.C.].

dell'occasione, lasciando il margine pulito, non essendovi altro da scrivere in quest'ultimo che non sia la parola caratteristica del titolo.

Se, guardando nell'Indice, non trovo alcun numero sotto E.I., allora vado alla prima pagina vuota, che all'inizio sarà necessariamente la 2a, poi scrivo dopo E.I. il numero .2., come nello schema, e il titolo Epistola nel margine di pagina 2, mentre ciò che va sotto quel titolo lo scrivo nel corpo della pagina.

D'ora in avanti, le due pagine che si aprono insieme, ovvero la 2a e la 3a, sono riservate a tutti i titoli della classe E.I., cioè a tutti quelli dei quali la prima lettera è la .E. e la vocale seguente è la .I., ad es. Ebrietas,

p. 7

Elixir, Epilepsia, Ebionita, Eclipsis etc., se ho un solo quaderno per soggetti che appartengono a scienze diverse, perché a questo riguardo ciascuno può regolarsi come preferisce. La ragione per cui comincio ogni classe sul verso di un foglio, facendo rientrare nella stessa classe due pagine di due fogli diversi piuttosto che due pagine dello stesso foglio, è perché sono visibili insieme e così si risparmia il tempo e la fatica di voltare i fogli.

Quando si presenta un nuovo titolo, ad es. Adversaria, guardo di nuovo nel mio indice sotto A:E, e se non vi trovo scritto nessun numero, vado alla prima pagina pulita nel verso di un foglio e scrivo in quella pagina il titolo in lettere maiuscole, cominciando con Adversaria nel margine e annotandone il numero sotto A E; poi scrivo sotto quel titolo in minuscolo ciò di cui devo prendere nota, come si vede qui a p. 4, etc. D'ora in avanti, le pagine 4 e 5 sono dedicate ai titoli di quella classe, ovvero a quelli dei quali la prima lettera è la .A. e la vocale seguente E, ad es. Aer, Agasilaus, Aera, etc.

v Quando le due pagine destinate ad una qualsivoglia classe

p. 8

*Adversariorum methodus.* sono piene, cerco la prima pagina pulita nel verso di un foglio, e se si tratta di quella immediatamente successiva, scrivo una .v. per "verte" in fondo al margine della pagina riempita e in cima alla pagina successiva, ma se questa è stata occupata da altre classi, scrivo in fondo al margine dell'ultima pagina piena sul recto del foglio il numero della prima pagina vuota nel verso del foglio e, dopo avervi scritto di nuovo il mio titolo, ci scrivo sopra proprio come se fosse la pagina immediatamente successiva. In cima a questa nuova pagina, scrivo anche il numero dell'ultima pagina

piena della stessa classe. Mediante questi numeri posti in fondo ad una delle pagine e in cima all'altra, che si riferiscono reciprocamente l'uno all'altro, si può facilmente continuare ciò che talvolta è stato scritto a distanza di 100 pagine come se si trattasse proprio della pagina successiva, tralasciando tutto ciò che è nel mezzo come se si trattasse di un unico foglio. Per cui capita che, benché talvolta io scriva parte di una frase alla fine di una pagina e l'altra parte all'inizio di un'altra pagina dopo molti fogli, non si crea confusione o disordine nel leggerla, non più di quanta se ne crei nel leggere ciò che è scritto in una

p. 9

serie continua di pagine che si succedono l'una all'altra. Un esempio di questo lo si può trovare a p. 3 e 12, p. 11 e 14.

Ogni volta che scrivo un numero in fondo ad uno qualunque dei margini, lo trascivo anche nel mio Indice, ma quando scrivo solo v. per "verte" non trascivo nulla nel mio Indice.

Se una parola è un monosillabo e comincia con una vocale, considero quella vocale come l'iniziale e al tempo stesso come la vocale caratteristica. Ad esempio, scrivo Ars sotto A.A. e Os sotto O.O.

Quando tutte le pagine del quaderno hanno il verso del foglio riempito da una qualche classe di titoli, si possono utilizzare per nuove classi, se si vuole, le pagine che sono vuote nel recto del foglio servendosi dei numeri come in precedenza, oppure preparare un nuovo quaderno, secondo quanto si ritiene opportuno.

Se qualcuno pensa che queste 100 classi siano troppo poche, così che alcune di esse conteranno troppi titoli diversi, può accrescerle fino a 500 aggiungendo la 2a vocale di ogni parola; se non sbaglio, seguendo questo  
v metodo ho ricavato un

p. 10

Adversariorum methodus) Indice per voi. Ho fatto esperienza di entrambi, ma preferisco il primo che è di gran lunga il più semplice. Chiunque ne farà la prova scoprirà che quelle 100 classi sono sufficienti, soprattutto se si hanno molti quaderni per le diverse scienze, o almeno se si fa uso di due archivi diversi per i due grandi rami della conoscenza, morale e naturale. In

diverse occasioni l'ho anche modificato, dandogli forme che forse sarebbero più gradite all'immaginazione di alcuni, o che sarebbero più adatte a certi scopi particolari; tuttavia, questo metodo semplice che ho descritto qui credo sia generalmente il migliore e tale da servire benissimo a qualsivoglia scopo.

Si potrebbe forse dire qualcosa a proposito della lingua più adatta per i titoli e ad altre loro caratteristiche. A questo riguardo, credo che la lingua latina sia la migliore per coloro che la comprendono e sempre nel caso nominativo singolare, nel quale l'ultima vocale sarà quella caratteristica, come accade sempre nei bisillabi che iniziano con una vocale e in tutti i monosillabi.

Per rendere più rapida la ricerca anche di un particolare estratto tra i 85 propri adversaria, un segno, come in questo caso 85, può essere di grande aiuto, perché ricordarsi pressappoco quando si è letto il libro da cui lo si è tratto può essere d'aiuto nell'orientare la propria

p. 11

ricerca, oltre che per altri scopi. In corrispondenza con il primo titolo che 85 appare in una qualsivoglia classe per l'anno 85, inserisco quei numeri sul lato opposto nel margine, come in questo caso; essi costituiscono un segno che ha valore fino al punto in cui si inserisce l'estratto di un anno successivo.

Faccio inoltre uso di un metodo per citare gli autori che mi serve anche per le altre edizioni oltre a quella che utilizzo, anche se quest'ultima non è suddivisa in capitoli o sezioni, il che forse sarebbe auspicabile per tutti i libri, o almeno sarebbe desiderabile che coloro che stampano una seconda edizione indicassero le pagine della prima in margine, così che quei numeri possano in seguito interpretarsi come sezioni; anche se non riguardano la suddivisione del contenuto, essi sarebbero nondimeno utili per le citazioni. Anche il libraio troverebbe in questo il suo vantaggio e farebbe meglio a ritardare la pubblicazione di una nuova edizione, perché spesso accade che si preferisca una vecchia edizione che si è già usata, o che si è vista citata da altri, ad una nuova che è altrettanto buona o persino migliore, solo a motivo del numero delle pagine. A questo riguardo, la soluzione che propongo costituirebbe un facile rimedio.

Il mio metodo per le citazioni è il seguente. Prima di trascrivere un qualsivoglia contenuto da un certo autore scrivo nel mio Adversaria anzitutto il suo nome, il titolo del trattato, il volume, la data di quella edizione e il numero

14 delle pagine come [continua a p. 14]

p. 12 [continua da p. 3]

Epilogus in altre occasioni ma per utilizzarli qui come esempi del mio metodo, mediante i quali sarà forse compreso meglio che con una spiegazione assai più ampia.

p. 13 [vuota]

p. 14 [continua da p.11]

Adversariorum methodus.) nell'esempio di Kircher a p. 16, poi faccio un segno da qualche parte nel libro per ricordarmi che l'ho trascritto nei miei avversaria, così che se lo dimentico non dovrò preoccuparmi di consultare un'altra volta i miei avversaria per fare ciò che ho già fatto. Il segno che uso è il numero delle pagine di quella edizione scritto in fondo alla copertina del libro, così che quando il libro è aperto posso vederlo all'occasione senza voltare le pagine, nella qual cosa si troverà una doppia utilità.

Dunque, quando trascrivo qualcosa da un qualsivoglia libro e desidero citare il luogo, scrivo solo questo, ovvero Kircher <sup>206</sup>/<sub>337</sub>, come si può vedere sotto il titolo Asbestus, dove mi risparmio di scrivere Kircheri China illustrata parte 4a cap.11 p. 206, e non solo questo. Infatti, il numero in alto nel mio modo di citare indica la pagina, così come quello in basso indica il trattato e l'edizione; ma esso mi serve anche per individuare in modo approssimativo dove si trova quella pagina, oppure, mediante la regola del 3, per trovarla con precisione in qualunque altra edizione dello stesso trattato. Sono sicuro che questo sia meglio del p. m.<sup>5</sup> che trovo spesso nelle citazioni.

Asbestus Atlas Sinicus<sup>6</sup> ait in Taniu Tartariae regno supra lapides nasci herbam quandam quae

p. 15

<sup>5</sup> *Plus minus*, i.e. più o meno [N.d.C.]

<sup>6</sup> *Atlas Sinicus, sive Magni Sinarum Imperii Geographica Descriptio* (Amsterdam, 1655) [N.d.C.]

Asbestus ab igne non consumatur, haec enim in ignem projecta rubescit quidem & aliquo modo ignescit ateducta ex igne mox pristinum candorem recuperat nonnihil in cinericium declinantem, non adeo in longum excrescit sed sub forma capillaris excrescentiae, fragilis et imbecillis consistentiae, aquae imposita in lutum abit statimque consumitur & atque haec est descriptio herbae Asbestinae in qua ego insignem errorem noto, dum herbam illi putant quod nos pura lapidiae substantiae filamenta asserimus Kircher <sup>206</sup>/<sub>337</sub>.<sup>7</sup>

Memorandum: il titolo a pagina 8 non è inserito come dovrebbe, essendo stato dimenticato fino a dopo che fu scritta la pagina.<sup>8</sup>

p. 16

Kircher Athanasii Kircheri e soc. Jesu China illustrata fol. Amstelodami 1667 p. 237.

<sup>7</sup> “L’*Atlas Sinicus* dice che a Taniu, un regno della Tartaria, c’è una certa erba che cresce sopra le rocce e che non è consumata dal fuoco. Se la si getta nel fuoco diventa rossa ed arde, effettivamente, ma una volta tirata fuori dal fuoco subito recupera la lucentezza originaria, benché si riduca in piccola parte in cenere; non si sviluppa molto in lunghezza ma sotto forma di filamenti di consistenza fragile e debole, e quando la si mette nell’acqua si trasforma in fango e subito si consuma. Questa è la descrizione dell’erba Asbestina, nella quale noto un errore importante, cioè che quelli credono che si tratti di un’erba mentre noi li consideriamo filamenti non adulterati di sostanza lapidica”. Athanasius Kircher, *China Monumentis, quâ Sacris quâ Profanis, Nec non variis Naturae & Artis Spectaculis, Aliarumque rerum memorabilium Argumentis Illustrata*, Amsterdam, 1667, pp. 206-7 [N.d.C.]

<sup>8</sup> Il titolo (in margine) “Adversariorum Methodus” a p. 8 è stato ommesso accidentalmente, e fu aggiunto successivamente nel margine [N.d.C.]

ADVERSARIA<sup>9</sup>

(MS Locke f. 2, pp. 247-52, 4 settembre 1677)

Nel leggere libri e comporre *Adversaria*, credo che queste siano le parti principali o titoli di argomenti da prendere in considerazione. La prima è la conoscenza degli oggetti, della loro essenza e natura, delle proprietà, cause e conseguenze di ogni specie, che chiamo *philosophica* e che deve essere suddivisa secondo i diversi ordini e specie di oggetti. Progrediamo nella conoscenza vera e autentica di questi solo fin dove possiamo nozioni vere delle cose così come sono realmente nelle loro esistenze distinte. Questo incremento nella nostra comprensione si ottiene più attraverso la meditazione che attraverso la lettura, benché anche quest'ultima non sia da trascurarsi. La facoltà maggiormente esercitata in quest'ambito è il giudizio.

Il secondo titolo è la Storia; a questo riguardo, poiché è di per sé impossibile oltre che inutile per noi ricordare tutti i particolari, credo [che sia] estremamente utile osservare le opinioni che si incontrano tra gli uomini a proposito di Dio, della religione e della morale, e le regole che si sono date, oppure che la prassi ha stabilito in ciascuno di questi ambiti. In questo caso, è la memoria la facoltà più utilizzata.

Il terzo titolo è quello di maggiore uso e comprende ciò che troviamo conveniente imitare in altri popoli, sia che si tratti della saggezza pubblica che di quella privata; tutte le arti che sono utili alla nostra esistenza.

Il quarto comprende tutti i prodotti naturali che possono trapiantarsi nel nostro paese, oppure le comodità che si possono vantaggiosamente commerciare. Queste riguardano la prassi ovvero l'azione.

Denomino dunque il primo *Adversaria Philosophica*; esso deve suddividersi nelle diverse specie di oggetti dei quali si viene a conoscenza.

Il secondo lo denomino *Adversaria Historica*; esso comprende (1), le opinioni o tradizioni che possono trovarsi tra gli uomini in riferimento a Dio, alla creazione, alla rivelazione, alle profezie e ai miracoli. (2) Le loro norme o istitu-

<sup>9</sup> La traduzione italiana, a c. di Giuliana Di Biase, fa riferimento al testo in inglese così come esso appare nel volume *John Locke. Political Essays*, a c. di Mark Goldie, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge-New York 1997, pp. 265-67 [N.d.T.].

zioni riguardanti quelli che sono considerati doveri, peccati o cose indifferenti in materia religiosa, oppure ciò che è comandato, proibito o permesso dalle loro leggi municipali per gli scopi della società civile; chiamo *Instituta* questa parte, che riguarda: (i) [materie] di pertinenza della legge divina e relative al culto divino (doveri religiosi, peccati, 'cose indifferenti'); (ii) [materie] di pertinenza della legge civile (doveri civili, crimini, azioni lecite).

I modi nei quali si è soliti ottenere benedizioni dalla divinità o espiare i propri peccati li denomino *Petitoria* ed *Expiatoria*. Infine, ogni pratica soprannaturale che è oggetto di osservanza, ad esempio le arti magiche o le vere e proprie profezie.

Denomino il terzo *Adversaria Immitanda*. Si tratta di qualsivoglia saggia pratica possa trovarsi in uso per governare la cosa pubblica o se stessi, ma anche di ogni arte benefica impiegata sui corpi naturali per perfezionarli in vista dell'uso che ne facciamo. Esso contiene questi titoli: Politica o saggezza civile; prudenza o saggezza privata; fisica, ovvero le arti riguardanti il bere, il cibo, la medicina, i movimenti umani, gli organi sensoriali.

Denomino il quarto *Adversaria Acquirenda*; esso riguarda i prodotti naturali di un paese che si prestano ad essere trapiantati e propagati nei nostri, oppure ad essere importati da noi per qualche qualità molto utile che possiedono. Ancora, si tratta di prendere nota delle comodità di un paese, naturali o artificiali, che sono esportate, e il cui approvvigionamento mediante il commercio è il compito proprio della mercatura; i titoli sono i seguenti: *Acquirenda* e *Merces*.

Ce n'è ancora un altro, che riguarda la storia delle cause naturali ed effetti, a proposito del quale può essere utile, durante la lettura, prestare attenzione alle molteplici proprietà dei corpi e ai molteplici effetti che molti corpi, o le loro qualità, hanno gli uni sugli altri, e osservare soprattutto quelle che possono contribuire al perfezionamento delle arti, oppure aiutarci a comprendere la natura delle cose; questo rientra in ciò che sopra ho denominato *philosophica*, che penso consista nell'aver un'idea esatta, chiara e distinta della natura di tutto quello che, nelle cose naturali o negli esseri reali, ha a che fare con le cause, le proprietà e gli effetti, oppure con tutto ciò che di essi possiamo conoscere, posto che ne ignoriamo l'essenza, mentre per quel che riguarda gli enti morali si tratta della loro essenza e conseguenze. Chiamo questa storia naturale *Historica Physica, referenda secundum species*.

Estratto della lettera di Locke a Nicolas Toinard, 14/24 febbraio 1685<sup>10</sup>

Voi che bevete vino buono e vi godete un bel sole forse non vi immaginate che noi qui siamo congelati per oltre un terzo dell'anno, e così, a quanto pare, mi avete già accusato più volte di mancarvi di rispetto e di riconoscenza perché ho tanto a lungo tardato nel rispondere all'onore che mi avete fatto con le vostre del 7 dicembre e del 4 di quest'anno; in verità, benché fossi determinato ad obbedirvi donando al pubblico il mio metodo per fare le raccolte, non sapevo in che modo assolvere il mio obbligo, vedendo nella vostra di dicembre che avevate un'idea sull'argomento molto diversa dalla mia.<sup>11</sup> Ad ogni modo, dopo avere riflettuto molto ed esitato a lungo riguardo a che cosa fosse meglio fare, ho preso alla fine la decisione che forse meno ti aspettavi; spero tuttavia che, quando avrai considerato attentamente la questione in tutti i suoi aspetti, sarai d'accordo con me che non avrei potuto decidere meglio riguardo al modo pubblicare questo metodo. Dunque, questa è l'essenza del mio piano:

1° Poiché questo soggetto non potrebbe in alcun modo raggiungere l'ampiezza di un volume regolare, e poiché sarebbe ridicolo aumentarne la mole con materiale che non abbia attinenza con esso, ho pensato che si debba necessariamente inserirlo in una di quelle miscellanee che ora si pubblicano dappertutto; in verità, le nostre miscellanee inglesi languono al momento, o sono fatte con scarsa cura. In Germania mancano da tempo, per di più una pubblicazione di questo tipo richiede la presenza dell'autore, o di qualcuno che comprenda la materia altrettanto bene. Per questo l'ho affidata alle tue mani, perché sia inserita nelle vostre effemeridi, se sembrasse opportuno.

2° L'ho scritta in inglese perché posso esprimermi meglio e più succintamente in quella lingua; non conosco il francese così bene da riuscire a preparare un piccolo trattato di questo tipo in quella lingua così come si conviene. Eccolo dunque a te in inglese; non ti meravigliare perché lo conosci già, inoltre ci sono presso di voi così tanti che conoscono l'inglese che non ti mancherà un interprete che lo traduca, se vuoi, parola per parola, o che in tua presenza fornisca una traduzione un po' più accurata; senza dubbio, capirai ciò che voglio dire e lo trascriverai in francese con la massima chiarezza, come è tuo solito. Quanto

<sup>10</sup> Il testo della lettera, scritta in parte in francese e in parte in latino, si trova in *The Correspondence of John Locke*, a c. di E.S. de Beer, vol. 2, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1976, no. 811, pp. 691-94. Sono in latino nel testo tutte le istruzioni relative al modo di comporre *adversaria* [N.d.T.].

<sup>11</sup> Qui si interrompe il testo in francese e comincia quello in latino, che prosegue fino a termine dell'estratto [N.d.T.].

alla tua preoccupazione di provvedere un indice, penso che sia da trascurarsi del tutto, perché non lo si potrebbe adattare in nessun modo a volumi di formato diverso, non dico solo a quelli in quarto e in ottavo, ma anche a quelli in folio, essendo così grande la differenza [nel formato] della carta. Credo che un modo di gran lunga migliore sia dividere le prime due pagine del libro in 25 parti uguali, come vedi che ho fatto nel mio; chiunque può tracciare queste linee secondo il formato del suo libro. Lo si può fare con facilità anche con la matita nera, se non si vuole tracciare ogni volta la quinta riga con l'inchiostro per ottenere una demarcazione più netta, come vedi che è stato fatto nella tavola che ti allego. Fatti guidare dal tuo istinto piuttosto che dal mio consiglio. Nei miei libri, non aggiungo mai una linea di demarcazione tra le note scritte con l'inchiostro se non una cortissima, come puoi vedere in fondo alla tavola. Vorrei che queste pagine contenessero non solo una descrizione ma anche una esemplificazione del mio metodo; raccomanderei di stampare questa descrizione nello stesso modo, perché gli esempi insegnano più delle istruzioni. Ciò che ho aggiunto alla fine riguardo al metodo per citare gli autori puoi ometterlo se vuoi, perché forse non merita di essere pubblicato; soltanto, non vorrei lasciarti all'oscuro riguardo a qualsivoglia dettaglio relativo al mio modo di procedere in questa materia. Anzi, ti consento qualunque cosa, decidi quello che vuoi riguardo a ciascuna parte o all'intero. Se ritieni che abbia omesso qualcosa, lo aggiungerò; se pensi che qualche punto sia troppo conciso o oscuro fornirò una spiegazione più ampia seguendo il tuo consiglio, e se disapprovi qualcosa lo correggerò.

Estratto dalla lettera di Locke a Samuel Bold, 16 maggio 1699<sup>12</sup>

Dite che dimenticate molte cose perché vi sfuggono; ne ho fatto esperienza personalmente, ma Lord Bacone ha provveduto un rimedio sicuro a questo. Ricordo che, in una delle sue opere, consiglia di non uscire mai senza penna e

<sup>12</sup> Il testo in inglese della lettera, da cui si è ricavato l'estratto, può trovarsi in Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 6, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1981, no. 2590, pp. 626-30; la traduzione italiana, a c. di Giuliana Di Biase, si riferisce alle pp. 627-28. L'ecclesiastico inglese Samuel Bold (1649-1737) fu autore di due scritti in difesa di Locke: *Observations of the Animadversions on a late book entitled: The Reasonableness of Christianity*, Oxford 1698, e *Some considerations on the principal objections and arguments which have been published against Mr. Locke's Essay on Human Understanding*, Oxford 1702. Con Locke Bold intrattenne una copiosa corrispondenza dal 1697 fino alla morte del filosofo, avvenuta nel 1704 [N.d.T.].

inchiostro, o senza qualcosa con cui scrivere, e di non tralasciare di annotare tutti i pensieri di qualche importanza che ci vengono in mente. Devo ammettere di non averlo fatto spesso, e di essermene spesso pentito. I pensieri che ci vengono senza che li sollecitiamo, come se fossero instillati nella mente, sono di solito i più preziosi tra quelli che abbiamo e pertanto dovrebbero essere fissati, perché di rado tornano di nuovo. Dite anche che dimenticate molte cose perché i vostri pensieri non sono sufficientemente costanti e intensi da poterli seguire fino ad un punto preciso. Permettetemi di pensare che vi sbagliate a questo proposito, sia riguardo a voi stesso che alle vostre capacità. Prendete nota dei vostri pensieri su qualsivoglia soggetto fin dove li avete seguiti in un qualunque momento, poi continuate a svilupparli in un altro momento quando vedete che la vostra mente è nella disposizione giusta per farlo, e così via finché li avrete portati avanti fin dove vi è possibile, e vi convincerete che, se ne avete dimenticato qualcuno, non è stato perché la vostra mente manca della forza necessaria a portarli fino ad un certo punto, bensì perché la memoria manca di conservare una lunga catena di ragionamenti, che la mente è restia a ripercorrere dopo che l'ha spezzata; e così, una volta che la connessione e concatenazione sono sfuggite alla memoria, si smette di seguirle e si tralascia il ragionamento prima che giunga all'ultima conclusione. Se non lo avete sperimentato, non potete immaginare la differenza che c'è tra lo studiare con e senza una penna in mano. Le vostre idee, se prendete nota delle connessioni che avete rintracciato tra di esse in modo da poterle considerare di nuovo con facilità, senza la fatica di recuperarle nella vostra memoria, vi condurranno più lontano di quanto potete aspettarvi. Fate la prova, e poi mi direte se non è così. Non dico questo quasi che non fossi contento di conversare con voi su qualsivoglia soggetto tenga impegnati i vostri pensieri. Dite liberamente ciò che avete in mente e non sospettate che ciò interferirà con le mie occupazioni.

## Reviews



Ruth Boeker, *Catharine Trotter Cockburn*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2023, 75 pp.

Il recente *Catharine Trotter Cockburn* di Ruth Boeker, uscito nel 2023 nella collana “Elements on Women in the History of Philosophy” della Cambridge University Press, presenta un’accurata indagine su una pensatrice versatile e acuta, capace di sviluppare un’ampia riflessione filosofica, che rivela tratti di evidente originalità, pur ispirandosi esplicitamente a tradizioni di pensiero forti nell’Inghilterra di età moderna, quali l’epistemologia empirista di John Locke e la metafisica platonico-anglicana di Samuel Clarke. L’agile volume di Boeker, che è la prima monografia in lingua inglese dedicata integralmente al pensiero di Catharine Cockburn, è organizzato in cinque sezioni e offre un’analisi dettagliata del contributo della filosofa ai dibattiti coevi su epistemologia, metafisica, morale e religione.

La sezione 1 “Catharine Trotter Cockburn’s Life and Works” (pp. 1-8) ne presenta le coordinate biografiche essenziali, ripercorrendo il testo del *Life*, scritto da Thomas Birch e inserito in apertura dell’edizione in due volumi dei *Works of Mrs. Catharine Cockburn* (London, 1751), che enfatizza le doti di autodidatta dell’autrice e la sua precocità nella scrittura drammaturgica. Interessante, nella ricostruzione di Boeker, l’indicazione della possibile data di nascita, il 16 agosto 1679, ritenuta la più probabile in base all’epigrafe sulla lapide della tomba di Cockburn e in considerazione di una lettera privata del 1738, indirizzata ad Alexander Pope, nella quale ella si descrive come vicina ai sessant’anni (p. 1 nota). Su questo punto Boeker è in disaccordo con la retrodatazione al 29 agosto 1674 proposta da Anne Kelley (*Catharine Trotter. An Early Modern Writer in the Vanguard of Feminism*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2002) sulla base di una voce di registro battesimale della Chiesa di St. Andrew a Holborn.

La sezione ripercorre anche le tappe salienti dell'attività teatrale di Cockburn, sottolinea la caratura filosofica dell'epistolario, che include corrispondenti illustri, tra i quali Shaftesbury, Sharp e Law, ed è completata dalle schede di presentazione delle opere filosofiche principali, come la *Defence of Mr. Locke's Essay* (1702), i *Remarks upon Some Writers* (1743) e i *Remarks upon the Principles and Reasonings of Dr. Rutherford's Essay* (1747), alle quali Boeker aggiunge opportunamente anche *A Letter to Dr. Holdsworth* (1727) e *A Vindication of Mr. Locke's Christian Principles* rimasta inedita fino all'edizione postuma delle opere (1751).

La sezione 2 "Epistemology and Metaphysics" (pp. 8-28) entra nel merito dell'analisi del pensiero filosofico di Cockburn, in particolare in materia di epistemologia e metafisica. Sin dalla *Defence of Mr. Locke's Essay* appare evidente un'adesione di Cockburn ai principi dell'epistemologia lockiana, secondo cui le idee si formano a partire da sensazione e riflessione. Questi non solo individuano gli strumenti fondamentali della conoscenza, ma segnano anche i limiti delle capacità intellettuali dell'essere umano. Alla luce di tali presupposti gnosologici, consapevole che alcune verità travalicano il perimetro dell'umana conoscenza e, per questo, sono inintelligibili e meri oggetti di fede, Cockburn affronta alcuni interessanti temi di natura metafisica, come la questione dell'identità personale, il dibattito sulla natura dell'anima e la controversia in merito all'ontologia dello spazio. Boeker ricostruisce sapientemente la riflessione di Cockburn su questi aspetti, componendo in modo raffinato le riflessioni sviluppate in età giovanile con quelle affidate alle opere della maturità.

Un altro importante nucleo tematico della filosofia di Cockburn è quello relativo alla morale, che Boeker (sezione 3 "Moral Philosophy") analizza distinguendo tra metafisica della morale (pp. 29-40) e pratica della morale (pp. 40-45). La prima concerne il primo fondamento della morale, che Cockburn individua nella natura umana, costituita da sensibilità, razionalità e socievolezza. Su questo aspetto Boeker si distanzia da altri studiosi che sembrano tenere conto solo di razionalità e socievolezza, trascurando l'importanza della sensibilità nella riflessione morale di Cockburn. Nella combinazione di questi tre elementi, unita all'appropriatezza (*fitness*) dei comportamenti di ogni essere alla propria natura, la pensatrice individua il fondamento dell'obbligo morale. A questo punto Boeker propone un'interessante incursione nel dibattito sul possibile naturalismo morale di Cockburn, sostenuto principalmente da Patricia Sheridan ("On Catharine Cockburn's Metaphysics of Morality", in Thomas, Emily (ed.), *Early Modern Women on Metaphysics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2018, pp. 247-65), che ascrive alla pensatrice "una

versione del naturalismo morale, che comprende sia la teologia naturale sia l'enfasi eudemonistica delle virtù etiche tradizionali", all'interno del quale "la virtù consiste nel seguire la natura". Secondo Sheridan, la posizione di Cockburn sarebbe vicina al naturalismo stoico, per il quale seguire la propria natura non significa abbandonarsi ai propri istinti, bensì agire secondo ragione in vista dell'autorealizzazione. Tale visione si opporrebbe alla versione riduzionista del naturalismo morale (Hobbes e Mandeville) secondo cui tutto ciò che concerne la morale si riconduce a fatti non morali inerenti la fisio-psicologia umana. Pertanto, alla base dei comportamenti umani non vi sono motivazioni morali, ma finalità egoistiche e, dunque, amorali. Ciò implica che la forza normativa della morale derivi da una fonte esterna alla natura umana, e in particolare dalle convenzioni e dalle strutture di autorità civile. Secondo Sheridan, dunque, Cockburn, che invece individua nella natura umana il primo fondamento della morale, prenderebbe le distanze dalla posizione riduzionista.

Boeker nota che l'interpretazione di Sheridan apre ad una serie di considerazioni di natura meta-etica, che animano i dibattiti contemporanei, ma complicano la comprensione della filosofia morale di Cockburn. Innanzitutto, non necessariamente le due versioni antagoniste di naturalismo morale individuate da Sheridan sono reciprocamente esclusive. Infatti, gli elementi che Cockburn individua come costitutivi della natura umana, sensibilità, razionalità e socievolezza, che peraltro sono i fondamenti della morale, potrebbero però essere considerati in sé come non morali, e, dunque, la posizione di Cockburn potrebbe essere ricondotta nell'alveo del riduzionismo (p. 39). Inoltre, esiste un'altra prospettiva meta-etica applicabile alla riflessione di Cockburn, ossia il realismo morale, che prevede che i fatti morali oggettivi siano indipendenti dall'opinione umana, e in effetti sensibilità, razionalità e socievolezza sembrano esserlo (Ibid.).

Già Karen Green ("A Moral Philosophy of Their Own? The Moral and Political Thought of Eighteenth-Century British Women", in *The Monist* 98 (2015), 1, pp. 89-101) prima di Boeker, ha contestato l'interpretazione di Sheridan, ritenendo quella di Cockburn una teoria "non profondamente naturalista", perché ricorre alla fede in un Dio buono, che ci ha creati socievoli e etici e ci garantisce che i comportamenti virtuosi saranno ricompensati con la felicità eterna.

Boeker non prende posizione nel dibattito, ma ne rileva gli aspetti più problematici e si limita a osservare che Cockburn, sostenendo che l'essere umano sia naturalmente socievole e benevolo, si distanzia dall'egoismo imputabile a Hobbes e Mandeville (p. 40). In più, mostra come la questione della

motivazione morale in Cockburn sia complessa e non si esaurisca alla *fitness*, ma ricorra alla volontà divina come motivazione addizionale esterna. Questo aspetto, secondo la studiosa, rientra nell'ambito della pratica della morale, la conoscenza dei fondamenti della quale non è sufficiente per la sua applicabilità. Sballottati dalle passioni, infatti, non tutti gli uomini riconoscono la cogenza dell'agire in accordo con la propria natura, ecco perché Cockburn, ispirandosi a Warburton, individua tre principi che intervengono a rafforzare la motivazione morale e a conferirle forza di legge. Questi sono: le appropriate relazioni tra le cose (*fitnesses of things*); la coscienza o senso morale; la volontà di Dio. Tra questi principi, Cockburn attribuisce al primo uno statuto speciale rispetto agli altri due, perché non svolge soltanto un ruolo motivazionale, ma costituisce anche un fondamento della morale (pp. 41-43). La coscienza o senso morale non è un istinto cieco, ma opera su di noi spingendoci e non determinandoci ad agire in accordo con i nostri obblighi morali (pp. 43-44). La volontà divina e la prospettiva di una ricompensa nella vita eterna offrono una motivazione molto forte per evitare le devianze morali legate alle passioni, ma non istituiscono un ulteriore obbligo morale rispetto a quelli legati a natura umana e *fitness of things* (pp. 44-45). A questo punto Boeker fa una breve incursione nella controversia tra volontarismo e intellettualismo (pp. 45-48) – ossia se ciò che è moralmente buono lo è perché Dio vuole così, oppure se Dio crea ciò che è buono, perché sa che è così – mostrando come la riflessione di Cockburn sia risolutamente anti-volontarista, posizione peraltro condivisa anche dalla maggior parte degli studiosi.

In conclusione di capitolo, Boeker ritorna sulla riflessione di Cockburn sull'origine delle azioni benevole, contestualizzandola all'interno del dibattito moralista britannico di età moderna (pp. 48-53). La studiosa mostra che, rifiutando l'idea che la benevolenza sia riconducibile in ultima analisi ad interessi egoistici e felicità privata, attribuibile a Gay, Johnson e Rutherford, Cockburn piuttosto sostiene che l'amor di sé non sia egoismo, ma nasce dall'approvazione dei nostri stessi comportamenti altruistici e benevoli, e in questo senso motiva l'azione morale e rafforza la naturale benevolenza dell'essere umano.

La sezione 4 "Religion" (pp. 53-60) analizza l'importanza della religione cristiana nella filosofia morale di Cockburn. Boeker ricostruisce la questione intrecciando in modo efficace le riflessioni che la pensatrice sviluppa nei testi editi della maturità, in scritti privati che troveranno pubblicazione solo postumi nell'edizione dei *Works* e nel carteggio con la nipote Ann Arbuthnot. La studiosa mostra che, secondo Cockburn, la morale si fonda su principi indipendenti dalla religione (come visto, natura umana e appropriate relazioni tra

le cose), tanto che anche gli atei possono riconoscere i loro obblighi morali ed essere virtuosi. Cionondimeno, le pratiche religiose, specie quelle cristiane, la conoscenza di Dio e la fede nella sua volontà offrono ulteriori forti motivazioni morali. Ella giudica pericoloso e nocivo l'entusiasmo religioso, che è quindi da evitare, ma ritiene altresì importante che religione e morale non siano separate.

Chiude il libro la breve sezione 5 "Cockburn's Significance" (pp. 63-65), dedicata alla rilevanza intellettuale di Cockburn nel suo tempo – attestata dalla stima espressale da eminenti pensatori coevi, quali Locke, Tyrrell, Leibniz e Toland. Le sue opere circolano anche negli ambienti *Bluestocking*; le sue riflessioni intercettano i temi centrali nelle discussioni dei moralisti britannici, come Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Butler e Clarke. "La sua filosofia morale – chiude Boeker – ci invita a ripensare le narrazioni della filosofia morale britannica e ci aiuta anche a recuperare gli scritti e i network di altri filosofi e intellettuali negletti" (p. 65).

La monografia di Ruth Boeker su Catharine Trotter Cockburn è molto ben costruita: accurata nella ricostruzione storica e nella presentazione dei contesti intellettuali, in cui si colloca la sua riflessione; precisa nell'analisi filologica e approfondita nell'esame della letteratura primaria; convincente nell'interpretazione filosofica. Per questo, nonostante qualche divergenza su alcune interpretazioni puntuali, che approfondirò in altra sede, ritengo che il lavoro di Boeker sia imprescindibile per chiunque voglia dedicarsi allo studio del pensiero di Cockburn.

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