

Enlightenment
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Editorial

We regret that it has taken so long to produce this number. It is hoped that the following number will come out in the next six months so that we shall, to a degree, catch up on the years.

It is a great pleasure to welcome to the editorial advisory board Dr. Pamela Clemit, Reader in English Studies, University of Durham. A contributor to *Enlightenment and Dissent*, she is an expert on the literature of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century and author of *The Godwinian Novel* (Oxford, 1993, repr. 2001), numerous articles and editor of the literary works of William Godwin, Mary Shelley and Elizabeth Inchbald. She will bring a new dimension of expertise to the advisory board.

We are very sorry to report the death of Maurice E Ogborn. He was formerly General Manager and Actuary of the Equitable Life Assurance Society. He had a particular interest in the early development of the society, in which Richard Price played a key role. A member of the Editorial Advisory Board since the inception of our journal, we are grateful for his support over the years.

M H F

J D

**DAVID HARTLEY'S NEW WORDS FOR ACTION:
'AUTOMATIC' AND 'DECOMPLEX'**

Richard C Allen

'Theorists have been so preoccupied with the task of investigating the nature, the source, and the credentials of the theories that we adopt that they have for the most part ignored the question what it is for someone to know how to perform tasks. In ordinary life, on the contrary, as well as in the special business of teaching, we are much more concerned with people's competencies than with their cognitive repertoires, with the operations than with the truths that they learn' Gilbert Ryle, *The concept of mind* ([1949] 1963, 28–29).

When David Hartley's *Observations on man* appeared in early 1749, a reader would have been struck by the range of topics in it. There were the discussions of theoretical questions – concerning the forces of attraction and repulsion that Newton had proposed, the architecture of matter, the nature of neural transmissions, and recent developments in the theory of probability – which all required an understanding of the latest developments in science, mathematics, and medicine to appreciate. Equally striking, to the attentive reader, would have been the many unusual aspects of human nature observed. Scattered throughout the text are, for example, brief discussions of phantom limbs (prop. 5, cor. 3),¹ number maps (prop. 61),² artificial memory (prop. 70), eidetic memory in idiots savants (prop. 90), and mental calculators (prop. 93). Similarly, there are comments about the experiences and

¹ Citations of the *Observations* refer to the proposition in which a passage occurs, rather than to the page number of a particular edition. The first edition is: David Hartley, *Observations on man, his frame, his duty, and his expectations* (Bath and London, 1749). In preparing this article, I have used the 1791 quarto edition (London, 1791) and a paperback reprint of the 1834 edition.

² For more on mental calculators and number maps, see Oliver Sacks, 'The Twins', *The man who mistook his wife for a hat* (New York, 1987).

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mental development of the blind and the deaf (props. 34, 69, 78, 80, 93).³ Hartley was working toward a general science of human nature – a science with a resemblance to what today goes by the name of ‘neuropsychology’.⁴ Hence both the application of the latest ideas in physics, chemistry, mathematics, and medicine – and also the inclusiveness of the observations. When explored with an appropriate set of concepts, the excesses and deficits of certain individuals become more than curiosities and reveal much about human nature.

Also notable were the new words. Three words, according to the *OED*, appear in the *Observations* for the first time: ‘automatic’, ‘decomplex’, and ‘theopathy’. The first has become so common that it is difficult to think that there was a time when the word was not. The latter two have not survived. Hartley’s use of ‘theopathy’ is a topic for another occasion. ‘Decomplex’, however, is closely linked with ‘automatic’; the two words provide the key vocabulary for Hartley’s analysis of human competencies – of, that is, the many skilled actions we learn how to perform.

Automatic

Hartley introduces the adjective ‘automatic’ in the Introduction to the *Observations*, where he differentiates between automatic and voluntary motions: ‘The *automatic* motions are those which arise from the mechanism of the body in an evident manner. They are called *automatic* from their resemblance to the motions of *automata*, or machines, whose principle of motion is within

³ Hartley’s teacher at Cambridge, the remarkable Nicholas Saunderson, Lucasian Professor of Mathematics, was blind from infancy, as was Hartley’s wife’s grandfather, Sir Henry Winchcombe, Bart. The second French translation of the *Observations* (1802) was by the abbé Roch-Ambroise Sicard, director of the National Institution for Deaf-Mutes in Paris, founding member of the Society of Observers of Man, and author of the ground-breaking *Cours d’instruction d’un sourd-muet de naissance* (1800).

⁴ For discussion of Hartley in this context, see John Sutton, *Philosophy and memory traces: Descartes to connectionism* (Cambridge, 1998). And for further discussion of the topics in this article, see Richard C Allen, *David Hartley on human nature* (Albany, N.Y., 1999).

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themselves. Of this kind are the motions of the heart, and the peristaltic motion of the bowels'. Prior to Hartley's *Observations*, readers of books in English would have encountered the noun 'automaton', or 'automata'. The *OED* cites works by Sir Kenelm Digby (1645), Henry More (1660), Ralph Cudworth (1678), Robert Boyle (1686), and John Ray (1691).⁵ Hartley thus formed the adjective from an existing noun.

The distance from a noun to an adjective may seem slight, but in this instance the change of grammatical form represents a significant conceptual shift. Hartley's definition, referring to 'the motions of *automata*, or machines, whose principle of motion is within themselves', conveys two of the meanings available to users of 'automaton'. On the one hand, to call something an automaton is simply to say that its 'principle of motion' is 'within itself', that it is self-moving. The *OED* cites Digby: 'we call the intire thing automatum, or se movens, or living creature'. If this were the only meaning the word bore, 'automaton' would have troubled no one, for it would have been neutral with regard to theories as to how living beings moved themselves. But this mild meaning is here set beside another: 'the motions of *automata*, or machines'. This second meaning does put forward a theory: to call a living being an automaton is to say it is a machine. Descartes describes such an automaton in *L'Homme* (1664): it is an earthly machine whose

⁵ Digby uses 'automaton' to refer to a living being that moves itself: 'Because these parts [the mover and the moved] are parts of one whole, we call the intire thing automatum, or se movens, or living creature' (*Two treatises, in the one of which, the nature of bodies, in the other the nature of mans soule, is looked into* [(1645) 1658, 259]). Similarly, Boyle refers to 'these living Automata, Human bodies' (*A free inquiry into the vulgarly receiv'd notion of nature* [1686, 305]). But 'automaton' could also, according to the *OED*, refer to 'a piece of mechanism having its motive power so concealed that it appears to move spontaneously.... In 17–18th c. applied to clocks, watches, etc., and *transf.* to the Universe and World; now usually to figures which simulate the action of living beings, as clock-work mice, images which strike the hour, etc.' Henry More is cited: 'God will not let the great Automaton of the Universe be so imperfect' (*An explanation of the grand mystery of Godliness* [1660, ii, iii, 37]). Finally, the notion that living beings are the equivalents of clock-work mice is one that Cudworth and Ray rejected.

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functions – ranging from digestion to ‘the passions and impressions found in the memory’ – ‘follow from the mere arrangement of the machine’s organs every bit as naturally as the movements of a clock or other automaton follow from the arrangement of its counter-weights and wheels’.⁶ Descartes thought that in a human being this machine was joined to a rational soul. However, the imagined mechanical man with which La Mettrie begins his *L’Homme machine* of 1748 is just such an automaton and no more.

To Digby, More, Cudworth, and Ray, this second meaning was bitter, and the theory it epitomized, false. Ray wrote that ‘Nor can it well consist with [God’s] veracity to have stocked the earth with divers sets of automata’.⁷ Similarly, Hartley’s affirmation that the human ‘frame’ is a ‘mechanism’ was the target of criticism, by Reid and Coleridge among others. Because it challenged the cherished notion of free will, and hence of the conviction that people are responsible for their actions, the idea that people could be described as automata or machines was both a threat to morality and a contradiction of our experience of making choices.

In the attack on the ‘absurdity’ of Hartley’s theory by thinkers such as Reid,⁸ an important feature of Hartley’s thinking seems to have passed unnoticed. Hartley does not use the noun ‘automaton’ but rather creates a new adjective, ‘automatic’. For Hartley, it is to

⁶ René Descartes, *The philosophical works of Descartes*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge, 1985), 1:108. John Sutton asks, ‘how pure or strict can Cartesian mechanism ever have been?’ For discussion, see *Philosophy and memory traces*, ch. 3; the question is on page 90.

⁷ *OED*, citing John Ray, *The wisdom of God manifested in the works of creation* ([1691], 1 (1777), 165). Similarly, in the passage from Cudworth’s *True intellectual system of the universe* that the *OED* cites, on ‘The physiology of the ancients’, Cudworth writes that the ancient philosophers ‘would have concluded it, the greatest Impudence or Madness, for men to assert that Animals also consisted of mere Mechanism; or, that Life and Sense Reason and Understanding were Really nothing but Local Motions and consequently that themselves were but Machins and Automata’ (1678, 1, i, sect. 41, 50).

⁸ Thomas Reid, *Essay on the intellectual powers of man* (Edinburgh, 1785), 84–85.

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the *actions* of living beings, both animal and human, that the word ‘automatic’ can be ascribed, not to the beings themselves.

In prop. 19, Hartley discusses ‘ordinary’ or ‘originally automatic’ motions such as the beating of the heart, respiration, the peristaltic motion of the intestines, and the dilation and contraction of the iris. This discussion follows Hartley’s differentiation, in prop. 18, of the routes by which ‘vibrations’, deriving from sensory stimuli, pass into the ‘motory nerves’ and thence to the muscles. Hartley is basically saying that every muscular contraction is a response to a stimulus (a vibration) travelling down a nerve.⁹ But he recognizes that where the vibration is coming from is variable, and he distinguishes between five classes of ‘motory vibrations’, depending on the source of the vibration. The purpose of this fivefold classification is to provide the basis of an explanation of how the ‘clocks’ in living beings differ from mechanical ones. For example, in a healthy organism, the heart beats with a regular rhythm. However, the pulse speeds up in response to physical exertion, or a frightening sight (a snarling dog, a snake), or the anticipation of a stressful situation. On the one hand, Hartley wants to explain the fact that a frog’s heart continues to beat for a time, when cut out of the body – and also how a person’s heart beats faster, at the prospect of cutting the heart out of a living frog. A continuous alternation of contraction and relaxation is both maintained and modified in response to the needs and experiences of the organism. A living being’s ‘originally automatic’ motions manifest both regularity and responsiveness.

The discussion of ‘originally automatic’ actions is followed by proposition 20, which contains an important ‘theorem’: ‘If any sensation A, idea B, or motion C, be associated ... with any other sensation D, idea E, or muscular motion F, it will, at last, excite, the simple idea belonging to sensation D, the very idea E, or the very muscular motion F’. Through association, any sensation, idea,

⁹ As support for the idea of that all reception of stimuli and responses thereto involve the nerves and brain, Hartley offers a clinical observation concerning ‘funguses of the brain’ (prop. 37) – presumably cases in which the brain has extruded outward through an opening in the skull. Direct stimulation of the brain, Hartley notes, can cause the subject to experience a sensory perception, specifically a taste.

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or muscular motion can become the stimulus that excites any other idea or muscular motion. The consequence is that novel actions (stimulus/response linkages) can be established, perfected, and made automatic. And the scope for novelty is virtually unlimited. Unlike clocks or old dogs, we are capable of learning any number of new tricks.

Hartley's theorem in proposition 20 provides the basis for a distinctive definition of voluntary action in proposition 21. We already know that any muscular contraction is a response to a stimulus, i.e., a 'vibration' travelling down a nerve. From the theorem in 20 we know that the origin of the stimulus must be some sensation, idea, or other muscular motion. Thus, what must distinguish a 'voluntary' or a 'semi-voluntary' action from an involuntary one must be the nature of the stimulus: 'If [an action] follow that idea, or state of mind ... which we term the will, directly, and without our perceiving the intervention of any other idea, or of any sensation or motion, it may be called voluntary'. An action is voluntary when its stimulus is an idea or mental state we call 'will'. Now, if one is used to thinking of the will as a 'faculty' of the mind – indeed, as *the* faculty that distinguishes humans as morally autonomous agents – then calling the will an 'idea' may seem odd. Nonetheless, Hartley has good reason for doing so. As we know from proposition 18, any muscular motion must follow from a stimulus. In turn, that stimulus must come either from the environment or from within the body itself. In Hartley's account of action, there is no recourse to a stimulus arriving from 'outside' the body/environment matrix – from, that is, a 'ghost in the machine'. But a response to an environmental stimulus cannot be called voluntary. The stimulus that 'excites' a voluntary action must be a sensation, idea, or motion within the organism. But here again, we do not characterize all responses to internal, bodily stimuli as voluntary – the sensation of an empty stomach prompts food-seeking behaviour, and an obsessive thought can force one to recheck the lock on the door. It is only a set of very special, even odd and elusive, ideas – the ones we term 'the will to...' – that can serve as the stimuli for voluntary actions.

What kind ideas are these? Ideas of the form 'the will to...' are refinements of actions that are originally automatic. The examples

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Hartley gives of the development of such ideas illustrate how a child gains motor control over parts of her body – her hands, tongue and larynx, bladder and bowel. Following the theorem in proposition 20, motions that are ‘originally automatic’ are brought under control through a series of substitutions of the initiating stimulus. An infant grasps the finger placed in her palm, and then the toy she sees, and then grasps at ‘the sound of the words *grasp, take hold, &c.*, the sight of the nurse’s hand, in that state, the idea of a hand, and particularly the child’s own hand’. These and ‘innumerable other associated circumstances ... will put the child upon grasping, till, at last, that idea, or state of mind which we may call the will to grasp, is generated and sufficiently associated with the action to produce it instantaneously’. The idea of the ‘will to grasp’ is thus itself a derivative from ‘innumerable’ other ideas – involving notably, in the case of a sighted child, the visual perception of hands, most importantly her own. Presumably, a child born blind would have to discover her hands, and develop the ‘will to grasp’, in a different way.

As an instance of the thoroughness with which Hartley thought through the topics in the *Observations*, we should note that he recognized that making actions voluntary is a matter of being able to let go as well as to take hold. In his discussion of the ‘suspension of an action’ in proposition 77, he observes that children find stopping harder than starting. Here he brings in one of his fascinating observations of children: ‘Thus we may observe, that children cannot let their heads or eyelids fall from their mere weight, nor stop themselves in running or striking, till a considerable time after they can raise the head, or bend it, open the eyes, or shut them, run or strike, by a voluntary power’. But when do children gain the ability to voluntarily relax muscular tonus, so as to allow their heads or eyelids to drop ‘from their mere weight’? Comments such as this suggest that Hartley was engaged in very careful observations of children – presumably beginning with his own.

The theorem in proposition 20 calls our attention to the plasticity of behaviour of living beings, to the capacity animals and humans have for taking an original stimulus/response linkage and substituting new stimuli for the original stimulus. Sequences of such

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substitutions can transform originally automatic actions into voluntary ones, as an infant human (or animal) develops ideas of the type 'the will to ...' and gains motor control over its own body. However – and this is an instance of his genius – Hartley recognizes that the process does not stop with voluntary actions. Rather, it continues, so that voluntary actions become what he terms 'secondarily automatic':

After the actions, which are most perfectly voluntary, have been rendered so by one set of associations, they may, by another, be made to depend upon the most diminutive sensations, ideas, and motions, such as the mind scarce regards, or is conscious of; and which it can therefore scarce recollect the moment after the action is over. Hence it follows that association not only converts automatic actions into voluntary, but voluntary ones into automatic. For these actions, of which the mind is scarce conscious, and which follow mechanically, as it were, some precedent diminutive sensation, idea, or motion, and without any effort of the mind, are rather to be ascribed to the body than the mind, *i.e.* are to be referred to the head of automatic motions. I shall call them automatic motions of the secondary kind, to distinguish them from those which are originally automatic, and from the voluntary ones; and shall now give a few instances of this double transmutation of motions, *viz.* of automatic into voluntary, and voluntary into automatic (prop. 21).

The examples mentioned above, of a child gaining motor control over her hands, tongue and larynx, bladder and bowel, follow this statement and are thus more precisely instances of the 'double transmutation of motions' rather than simply examples of the achievement of voluntary action. An infant learns first to gain voluntary control over 'originally automatic' actions such as the grasping reflex, and then turns voluntary actions (requiring an 'express act of will') into 'secondarily automatic' competencies.

Accomplishing this double transmutation is a precondition for living a human life. An infant who could not do so would be unable to feed itself, or crawl toward a favourite toy, or choose to let its eyelids fall from their mere weight. Moreover, the 'higher'

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activities that people carry out require, in addition to our ability to initiate voluntary actions, the perfection of repertoires of secondarily automatic actions. One example Hartley discusses is learning to play the harpsichord. Another example is speaking a language – a primary instance of the performance of secondarily automatic actions that ‘depend upon the most diminutive sensations, ideas, and motions, such as the mind scarce regards, or is conscious of’. If I were to learn Chinese, I would have to gain voluntary control over, among other things, the recognition and articulation of the different tones. Hearing and saying them would be at first halting, laborious, and slow. But I would undertake the labour in the hope that, through practice, hearing and saying a tone would eventually ‘follow mechanically, as it were, some precedent diminutive sensation, idea, or motion, and without any effort of the mind’. The ‘double transmutation’ of motions issues into effortless fluency.

To his critics, Hartley’s affirmation of the ‘mechanism of the mind’ impeached the ‘freedom of the will’ – the self’s executive control over its thoughts and actions. But in Hartley’s philosophical anthropology, the ‘mechanistic’ quality of secondarily automatic actions is an achievement, not a given. Although the ideas of the form the ‘will to...’ play an important role in what we do, they do not control performance, and it is a good thing that they do not have to. To the extent that the performance of a repertoire of actions remains dependent on ideas of the ‘will to...’, it is impossible to become fluent in that repertoire: one’s speech remains halting, and one’s hands cannot maintain the correct tempo on the keyboard.

At the same time, although speaking a language and playing a harpsichord involve repertoires of secondarily automatic actions, they are not in themselves purely automatic routines—that is, pre-specified programs that, once initiated, run through without any possibility of innovation or interruption. People play and sing a great many songs; they often add flourishes as they go along; and they find stopping at any moment as easy as letting their heads or eyelids fall from their mere weight. Some expert performers improvise at the keyboard, and virtually all people can improvise

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effortlessly in their native tongues. When they do so, the actions they perform are what Hartley calls 'decomplex'.

Decomplex

Readers of the *Observations* would have already been familiar with the sequence 'simple', 'compound', and 'decompound'. As a verb and adjective, the word 'compound' had been part of English since the time of Chaucer, and 'decompound' had come into English early in the seventeenth century, along with its twin, 'decomposite'. According to the *OED*, the two words are derived from the late Latin *decompositus*, which itself is a rendering of the Greek *parasyntetos*. The Greek and Latin words, and their English derivatives, all signify 'repeatedly compound: compounded of parts which are themselves compound'. Philosophical readers would have also encountered a more recent introduction of the mid-seventeenth century, the word 'complex' (from the Latin, *complexus*). The word, close in meaning to 'compound', made its definitive appearance in 1690, in John Locke's *Essay concerning human understanding*: 'Ideas thus made up of several simple ones put together, I call *Complex*; such as are *Beauty, Gratitude, a Man, an Army, the Universe*'.¹⁰

Let us reflect, for a moment, on contingency. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, words such as 'decompound', 'decomposite', and 'decontract', in which the *de-* prefix signified 'further', existed alongside words in which the prefix signified 'to undo': 'deconstruct', 'decompose'. The situation was unstable: when 'decomposite' means 'further compounded out of composites' and 'decompose' means 'to rot', one or the other has to go. In our universe, it was the uses of *de-* to signify 'further' that decontracted until they ceased. Perhaps this was inevitable in any possible world, given the many words in which *de-* signified tearing down or falling apart. But, in another world, would 'complex' have become common coin, indispensable for the exchange of thoughts, if in that world Locke had chosen to contrast 'compound ideas' to simple ones?

¹⁰ John Locke, *An essay concerning human understanding*, ed. Peter H Nidditch (Oxford, 1975), 2.12.1.

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Hartley, writing his book in the 1730s and 1740s, had available to him both Locke's distinction between 'simple' and 'complex', and also instances in which the *de-* prefix meant 'further'. On the analogy of 'compound' to 'decompound', he wrote of ideas and actions being either 'complex' or 'decomplex'. In his discussion of playing the harpsichord in proposition 21, for example, he writes: 'For an expert performer will play from notes, or ideas laid up in the memory, or from the connexion of the several complex parts of the decomplex motions, some or all; and, at the same time, carry on a quite different train of thoughts in his mind, or even hold a conversation with another'.

This new idea adds a further level of complexity – a decomplexity – to Hartley's discussion of human action. Not only can an action be characterized as automatic, voluntary, or secondarily automatic, it can also be described as simple, complex, or decomplex. But what do the latter words differentiate? In his Latin précis of the *Observations*, the *Conjecturae quaedam de sensu, motu, & idearum generatione* of 1746, Hartley states that complex movements involve the 'synchronous' associations of 'motory vibratiuncles' with other sensations, ideas, or movements, while decomplex movements involve 'successive' associations between motory vibratiuncles and further sensations, ideas, and especially movements.¹¹ Thus the associations in a complex action or idea are synchronic, while the associations in a decomplex action or idea are diachronic. In Hartley's harpsichord example, hitting the D key at the sight of the printed note D is a complex movement, while playing a composition consisting of a series of notes is an instance of a decomplex action.

The elements of a complex action or idea are often tightly fused; a touch typist, for example, hits the keys for 'this' as one motion, when seeing the written word. In contrast, Hartley notes (prop. 12, cor. 4) that the elements in a decomplex action or idea are usually more loosely associated; this looseness makes it possible for the typist to type 'this' in any number of sentences. He also observes in

¹¹ David Hartley, *Various conjectures on the perception, motion, and generation of ideas*, trans. Robert E A Palmer, with intro. and notes by Martin Kallich (Los Angeles, 1959), 42.

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props. 10 and 11 that decomplex actions and ideas are asymmetrical with regard to direction; people find it impossible to enact a sequence – i.e., to say a sentence, or play a tune – backward.

Spoken language provides the paradigmatic example of simple, complex, and decomplex actions and ideas (prop. 12). The phonemes are simple motions; these fuse into morphemes and words; and these combine into well-formed utterances. It is important to note here that for Hartley complex and decomplex actions and ideas are wholes, gestalts that are greater than the sums of their parts. Often, a complex action or idea will not appear ‘to bear any relation to these its compounding parts’ (prop. 12, cor. 1); to people who cannot read or write, ‘it does not at all appear ... that the great variety of complex words of languages can be analyzed up to a few simple sounds’ (i.e., the stock of phonemes). Similarly, children and illiterate adults find it difficult to ‘separate sentences into the several words which compound them’ (prop. 80). This is consistent with the fact that ‘both children and adults learn the ideas belonging to whole sentences many times in a summary way, and not by adding together the ideas of the several words in the sentence’. Finally, Hartley recognizes that the meaning of a sentence is a property of the whole: ‘the decomplex idea belonging to any sentence is not compounded merely of the complex ideas belonging to the words in it’ (prop. 12, cor. 10). The same could be said of any tune; the decomplex idea that is ‘Blue Skies’ is something beyond the compounding of the notes.

How, then, do the characteristics of being automatic, voluntary, or secondarily automatic relate to an action’s being simple, complex, or decomplex? Simple motions are by definition automatic. Complex actions, when one is learning them, are voluntary; once they are learned, they are secondarily automatic in performance. A practiced piano accompanist, for example, can with her left hand play a G major chord automatically, when prompted by the melody she is accompanying. Playing something less common, say an A-flat diminished seventh, may require recourse to voluntary action.

The manner in which decomplex actions are automatic or voluntary involves two factors. First, some decomplex actions follow a script, while others are improvised. Examples of scripted

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actions would be reciting lines from a play, playing a tune from a printed score, or dancing a choreographed sequence of steps. Improvised decomplex actions, such as occur in jazz performance or in conversational speech, follow a grammar.

Second, decomplex actions draw on different kinds of complex actions. The complex actions in a given repertoire involve the association of movements with perceptions in one or more sensory modalities: at the sight of the notes on the staff, the pianist hits the keys. If able to play by ear, he will do so at the sound of the tones. As a person becomes proficient at a type of decomplex action, the guiding sensory modality can change from sight (or hearing) to proprioception. When learning to dance, Hartley observes, at first 'the scholar desires to look at his feet and legs, in order to judge by seeing when they are in a proper position', but 'by degrees he learns to judge of this by feeling' (prop. 77). Similarly, a practiced musician plays the harpsichord not from the printed notes or even from the 'ideas laid up in the memory' but rather from 'the connexion of the several complex parts of the decomplex motions' (prop. 21). One's hands 'know' the tune.

Putting the two factors together, we can make the following observations. First, sight-reading an unfamiliar 'script' requires repeated interventions of 'the will to...' to keep on track, even when the invoked complex actions are all secondarily automatic.¹² The process of performance is, in a sense, intermittently voluntary. Second, a scripted decomplex action can become secondarily automatic, especially when it is guided, not by visual or auditory cues, but by 'the connexion of the several complex parts of the decomplex motions'; such is the experience of reciting, or playing, a well-loved composition from memory. Third, an improvised decomplex action must be guided by the grammar that specifies the possible 'connexion[s] of the several complex parts'. If such an action depended for its continuance on visual or auditory cues, it would not be an improvisation; if it took leave of the relevant grammar, it would not be a coherent decomplex action. Fourth, the

¹² If the decomplex action requires at some point a complex action that has not become secondarily automatic, such as playing an unfamiliar chord, the performer will either have to slow down or stop the decomplex action or skip the complex one.

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fact of performing the action remains voluntary in the sense that one decides to start, and one can, like a child who has discovered how to let his eyelids drop from their weight, also decide to leave off.

In learning a second language, for example, one begins by practicing the scripted sentences in a book and/or on an audio recording. With practice, repeating the scripted sentences becomes secondarily automatic. It is only when one can dispense with the book or tape – i.e., when drawing on the grammar and lexicon has become secondarily automatic – that one can begin to improvise new sentences in the language. The fluid, self-sustaining performance of such improvised decomplex actions is, to extend Hartley's terminology, secondarily voluntary.

'Decomplex' and 'decompound' are two words that did not survive. That may seem to be a historical curiosity of little consequence. After all, there are a great many words in the *OED* that have fallen out of use. However, lacking these two words, we are at a loss for a word that conveys their meaning. We know that some things are compounds, as in chemistry, and that everything – especially life – is complex; these are automatic habits of thought. But, in everyday speech at least, we have no way of saying that something is decompounded, and we lack the verbal resource for differentiating between a decomplex action and its complex components. We are poorer for the lack.

That 'decomplex' has come to mean nothing also contributes to the poverty of the associations we have with the word, 'Hartley'. In his *Philosophical investigations*, Wittgenstein said: 'If a lion could speak, we would not understand him'. By this he meant that the lion's 'form of life' would be so different from ours that there would be no common ground, and hence no basis for communication. Hartley suffers, to an extent, from the same difficulty as Wittgenstein's lion. Hartley lived amid profound developments in mathematics and the sciences – developments that employed unfamiliar words such as 'infinitesimal' and 'electric', which introduced people to counterintuitive (to some, illogical) concepts and scarcely understood forces. Similarly, Hartley improvised with language in order to articulate a new and original understanding of human action. One of his words became so much

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a part of our world that we have a hard time imagining a world without it: thinking with it has become automatic. Another of his words we do not understand; a person picking up the *Observations* could find the discussion of decomplex actions reason to desist – to conclude that his writing is uncommunicative, obscure, full of knots and tangles, and far from the elegant easy familiarity characteristic of other philosophers of the eighteenth century, notably Hume.

To this, I would respond that in his description of action as automatic, voluntary, and secondarily automatic, and also as simple, complex, and decomplex, Hartley created a powerful and subtle way of thinking about human actions. Hartley's theory illuminates what goes on when a person learns to perform any of the decomplex actions that are essential to, and characteristic of, human life. It provides a set of concepts for understanding language. And in general, it draws attention to the dependency of our capacities for innovation, flexibility, and intentionality in our 'secondarily voluntary' decomplex actions upon the repertoires of complex (and sometimes decomplex) actions that we have made secondarily automatic. Hartley's theory thus centres upon a key insight: 'All our voluntary powers are of the nature of memory' (prop. 90). Playing scales, or spending hours in the language lab, eventually bring their reward: the more mechanistic one's complex motions, the greater the fluency in decomplex actions such as playing the harpsichord or speaking Chinese.

Unfortunately, for many Hartley merits only a footnote in the histories of philosophy and psychology. Hartley is remembered (to the extent that he *is* remembered!) as a modest hedgehog – the one who explained all mental phenomena in terms of his one 'big' idea, borrowed from Locke, of 'the association of ideas'. As I write this, I have checked two Internet encyclopedias – Britannica.com, Encarta.com – to see what they say about Hartley. They inform us that Hartley believed the mind to be a *tabula rasa* and that he further proposed that 'association' is the mechanism by which discrete ideas are inscribed on it and then linked together. This interpretation is so partial as to be fallacious. It portrays Hartley as concerned with the association of *thoughts*, with how ideational atoms form and combine; it passes over his observations

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concerning skilled bodily *actions*. To use Ryle's distinction, it pictures Hartley as offering a confused and uninteresting account of 'knowing that'; it does not hear what Hartley is saying about 'knowing how'. It views Hartley as much more concerned with people's cognitive repertoires than with their competencies.¹³

In Hartley's account, at birth we are not blank mental slates (or, in a modern image, hard drives with all the bytes free) nor mindless automatons on the model of clockwork mice. Rather, when we enter the world our bodies are already performing any number of 'originally automatic' actions. These actions are self-regulating and homeostatic, and yet they are responsive to bodily feedback and to stimuli coming to us from our surroundings – or our thoughts. Over time, with proper development, our hearts leap up when we behold a rainbow in the sky – and recall the words to that effect. In our everyday activities, ranging from performing basic bodily functions to playing Bach, we learn to carry out decomplex actions that draw on secondarily automatic components. Performing certain such actions becomes secondarily automatic, although we do often experience 'the will to...' as an intermittent, flickering presence. Association, in Hartley's psychology, is thus not simply the process by which one item of thought elicits another; rather, the paradigm of an associative process is the continuous, flowing, self-sustaining, more or less voluntary (or secondarily voluntary) cascade of a decomplex action. It is what takes place, when one begins to speak,

¹³ Hartley was, of course, attentive to thinking. However, his focus was on exploring what Ryle calls 'efficient practice' (*Concept of mind*, 31) rather than on developing a theory of knowledge. He was, for example, interested in 'factitious sagacity' (prop. 87) – the nonformalizable capacity experienced practitioners develop for the guesswork central to medical diagnosis, scientific research, and the solution of problems in mathematics and cryptography. Compare Ryle's comment, in the lines that continue the passage quoted in the epigraph: 'Indeed even when we are concerned with [people's] intellectual excellences and deficiencies, we are interested less in the stocks of truths they acquire and retain than in their capacities to find out truths themselves and their ability to organize and exploit them, when discovered' (*Concept of mind*, 29). Such capacities were crucial to Hartley, as a practicing physician and medical researcher.

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and when skilled hands touch the keys of harpsichord – or computer keyboard.

A New and Most Extensive Science

In his 1774 critique of Reid, Beattie, and Oswald, Joseph Priestley praised Hartley's *Observations* as 'contain[ing] a new and most extensive science'. The study of it, he added, 'will be like entering upon a *new world*'.¹⁴ To what extent did people follow Priestley's recommendation, practice the science, and thereby enter into this new world?

In his 'Preface' to his father's *Analysis of the phenomena of the human mind*, John Stuart Mill wrote that Hartley's 'book made scarcely any impression on the thought of his age'. In addition to being encumbered by a 'premature hypothesis respecting the physical mechanism of sensation and thought' and by a cryptic 'mode of exposition', Mill notes that 'it was another great disadvantage of Hartley's theory, that its publication so nearly coincided with the commencement of the reaction against the Experience psychology, provoked by the hardy scepticism of Hume'.¹⁵ In light of this comment, the 1869 edition of James Mill's *Analysis*, edited with notes by Alexander Bain, Andrew Findlater, and George Grote as well as John Stuart Mill, is itself illustrative. Although its editors present it as the completion of the work Hartley began, the *Analysis* is thoroughly mentalistic – its subject is 'the phenomena of the human mind'. James Mill disavows saying anything about the 'physical mechanism' underlying mental states at the outset.¹⁶ And perhaps most telling, the topic of human action is taken up only at the very end of the second volume, in the second last chapter of the book, on 'The Will'. It is in a long note (no. 63, starting on page 354) in this chapter that the editors summarize Hartley's discussion of the transit of actions from automatic to voluntary to secondarily automatic. They say nothing about complex and decomplex actions.

¹⁴ Joseph Priestley, *An examination of Dr. Reid's Inquiry ... Dr. Beattie's Essay ... and Dr. Oswald's Appeal...* (London, 1774), xix.

¹⁵ James Mill, *Analysis of the phenomena of the human mind*, edited by John Stuart Mill, 2 vols. (London, 1869), 1: xi–xii.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:11.

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Why is the subject of human action, which the reader encounters very near the beginning of Hartley's *Observations*, relegated to the end of Mill's *Analysis*? On the one hand, this may be a symptom of the inhibiting effect of Hume's 'hardy scepticism'. One can, without getting physical, talk at length about 'mental phenomena'. But try to say something about how bodies move, and learn to move in highly skilled, decomplex ways, without getting physical. Respect the rule against getting physical, and one can say nothing; transgress the rule, and one commits a philosophical solecism.¹⁷ One's contribution to the conversation will be met, not with the engagement of a reasoned rebuttal, but with the disengagement of silence. The hardy sceptic turns his back.¹⁸

On the other hand, the change of position from first to last may represent the avoidance of another, fiercer controversy. Hartley's theory of action offers a new way of thinking about how humans learn to initiate and control their actions. In doing so, the theory

¹⁷ Like James Mill, the three canonical representatives of 'British empiricism' have a great deal to say about human 'understanding', but what do they say about human doing? And upon reflection, which should puzzle us more: that Hartley proposed an account of action, and invented new words to do so, or that those we take as the mainstream of British philosophy had little to say about this? Are we to assume that one can say philosophically significant things about thinking while saying little about doing?

¹⁸ Whether or not Hartley and Hume were familiar each other's work is an open question. Although there are no references to Hume in Hartley, Hartley had a copy of Hume's *Treatise of human nature* (1739) in his library, and he would have had available to him the 1739 review of the anonymously published *Treatise* in the *History of the works of the learned* – his role in the controversy over Joanna Stephens's medicine for the stone was the subject of attack and defence in the pages of the *History* in 1738. There is no reference to Hartley that I know of in any of Hume's writings. However, one of the footnotes in Hume's *Second Enquiry* (1751) is directed against the project Hartley attempted. In the note Hume asserts that 'it is needless to push our researches so far as to ask, why we have humanity or a fellow-feeling with others'. But this is precisely one of the fundamental questions Hartley did seek to answer in his 'researches'. See Hume, *Enquiry concerning the principles of morals* (Oxford and New York, 1998), 109, n. 19.

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challenges the oppositional dualism of body and mind. Automatic actions, Hartley writes, 'are rather to be ascribed to the body than the mind' (prop. 21). We can gloss this by saying that, as an action becomes voluntary, 'mind' takes over from 'body', and that as the action becomes secondarily automatic, 'body' again takes over from 'mind'. Secondarily automatic actions are those that 'mind' has turned over to 'body'. But it is thanks to our perfecting of repertoires of secondarily automatic actions that we are able to perform the 'higher' decomplex actions that are so constitutive of human life. The process of turning over control to 'body' is necessary, if one is to play a harpsichord, or drive a car down a highway – or speak to oneself the thoughts that become a poem, story, or essay. In each instance, doing something attentively, intentionally, depends upon other things happening below the thresholds of attention and intention. A skilled musician attends to playing the composition, not to hitting the right notes.

The challenge is a profoundly radical one: Hartley does not simply accept the dichotomy of mind and body, of active spiritual substance and passive material substance, and then argue reductively for the conventionally inferior side of the dichotomy. Rather, his 'new science' provides a way of speaking of the secondarily automatic and decomplex acts of the human body-mind. In the light of this new way of thinking, a sharp distinction between management and labour, between mind and body, turns out to be not of much use, and difficult to sustain.

The person who understood Hartley's new view of human nature and who attempted to further this 'new science' was, of course, Joseph Priestley. But when he discussed these matters in his 1774 *Examination* and 1775 abridged edition of Hartley's *Observations*, and especially in two works of 1777, *The disquisitions relating to matter and spirit* and *The doctrine of philosophical necessity illustrated*, Priestley was met, not with silence, but with an uproar. 'I expressed some doubt', he later wrote, 'about the immateriality of the sentient principle in man; and the outcry ... can hardly be imagined. In all the newspapers, and most of the periodical publications, I was represented as an unbeliever in revelation, and

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no better than an Atheist'.¹⁹ Given the religious commitment to the idea of the soul's immortality, separate from body, and given the religious and moral commitment to the notion of an executive mind, freely directing the body's actions, Priestley's key ideas – that the body-mind is 'one uniform composition'²⁰ and that matter is active, 'making a nearer approach to the nature of spiritual and immaterial beings'²¹ – were not understood, or ignored, or shouted down.²² The habit of thought which split mind and body, and the religious and moral reasons for insisting upon the split, possessed the stability of a cultural gyroscope. The innovation worked out by Hartley and Priestley had to be understood in terms of the split the innovation sought to overturn; and in terms of that split, what Hartley and Priestley proposed was no innovation – only a stale materialism.

It would seem that James Mill had good reason for leaving the topic of human action for the very end of his *Analysis*. To bring it up early, to make it a prominent part of his account of human nature, would have risked the scorn of the hardy sceptics and the harangues of the defenders of morality and religion. Viewed in this light, it would seem reasonable to assume that Hartley's and Priestley's 'new science' went nowhere; it would seem reasonable to accept at face value John Stuart Mill's comment that Hartley's *Observations* 'made scarcely any impression on the thought of his age'.

¹⁹ Joseph Priestley, *Autobiography of Joseph Priestley*, intro. by Jack Lindsay (Bath, [1806] 1970), 113.

²⁰ Joseph Priestley, *Hartley's theory of the human mind* (London, 1775), xx.

²¹ Joseph Priestley, *Disquisitions relating to matter and spirit* (London, 1777), 17.

²² The resistance to Priestley was not entirely a reaction to its anticipated religious and political consequences. Richard Price, a friendly interlocutor, could not accept Priestley's proposition for what seemed to him sound philosophical reasons. To Priestley's understanding of mind-brain identity, Price objected: 'We are sure the mind cannot be the brain, because the brain is an assemblage of beings. The mind is *one* being.' Joseph Priestley and Richard Price, *A free discussion of the doctrines of materialism and philosophical necessity, in a correspondence between Dr. Price and Dr. Priestley* (London, 1778), 90.

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And yet ... When one fails to register an impression, the failure may be attributable to the fact that the phenomenon does not exist; alternatively, it may indicate that the observer has not been looking in the right places. Where was Mill looking? In his 'Preface' to James Mill's *Analysis*, the son also adds: 'From these various causes, though the philosophy of Hartley never died out, having been kept alive by Priestley, the elder Darwin, and their pupils, it has been generally neglected, until at length the author of the present work gave it an importance that it can never again lose'.²³ What about 'Priestley, the elder Darwin, and their pupils' – the ones who kept Hartley's philosophy alive? In his article on Hartley for this journal, R. K. Webb draws our attention to a number of people for whom Hartley's thought (and example) remained alive.²⁴ And Edward S. Reed, in *From soul to mind*, suggests a new way of looking at, in the words of his subtitle, 'the emergence of psychology from Erasmus Darwin to William James'. Reed writes: 'If the argument I present in this book is correct, we do not yet have a clear picture of public thinking about the soul after 1800'.²⁵ A key reason, according to Reed, why we do not have a clear picture concerns the occlusion of the new science of Hartley, Priestley, Erasmus Darwin, and 'their pupils' by the advocates of what he calls 'traditional metaphysics' – the 'established doctrine in pulpits and professorial chairs all across Europe between 1815 and 1848' (27). Reading the works produced by the occupants of pulpits and chairs, Reed remarks, one would think that Erasmus Darwin, for example, made scarcely any impression on the thought of his age. The impression is false. It is only when one realizes that the professors and divines were regularly criticizing Darwin – *without identifying their target by name* – that one can begin to sense the pressure of his thought.²⁶

To create a new way of speaking of learned, skilled action, Hartley fashioned two new words, 'automatic' and 'decomplex'.

²³ John Stuart Mill, 'Preface', to James Mill, *Analysis*, 1:xii.

²⁴ R. K. Webb, 'Perspectives on David Hartley', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 17 (1998), 17–47.

²⁵ Edward S. Reed, *From soul to mind: the emergence of psychology from Erasmus Darwin to William James* (New Haven, 1997), 222.

²⁶ For Reed's discussion of Darwin, see *From soul to mind*, 39–43.

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The one became so integral to our mental ‘operating system’ that we forget that it had an origin. The other, it appears, failed to establish itself. As a consequence of the diffusion of the one and the absence of the other, Hartley’s account of human action is not something we automatically grasp; it is rather a decomposite we have to reconstruct.

At the beginning of this essay, I said that ‘automatic’ and ‘decomplex’ provide the key vocabulary for Hartley’s analysis of human competencies. That analysis is, I have hoped to show, conceptually rich – both powerful and subtle. Decomplex actions *are* a central feature of human life. The analysis also appears to have been unusual, simply by virtue of its subject matter. But was it? What other analyses were there? If there were others, which have been left out, then we lack a clear, complete picture of public thinking about human nature before 1800 – and after. If Hartley’s is the only account, that fact should itself help us see how strange, how constrained, public thinking was.

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**JOSEPH PRIESTLEY AND
'THE PROPER DOCTRINE OF PHILOSOPHICAL
NECESSITY'**

James A Harris

... [A]lthough Aristotle taught the World long ago, that necessary Truths are onely known by Demonstration or by shewing the contrary to be impossible, and the World was so silly as to believe him, yet Dr Priestly discovered a few months ago, that the proper Proof of necessary Truths is by Induction: And the evidence that any two things or Properties are necessarily United is the constant observation of their Union. This was a great Discovery.¹

Joseph Priestley styles himself a philosopher of the Lockean tradition. Like most eighteenth-century philosophers, he thinks that Locke's *Essay concerning human understanding* was the first step towards a properly scientific account of the human mind. What was of particular importance in the *Essay*, according to Priestley, was its critique of innate ideas. The principle that all our ideas come from 'certain impressions, made upon the organs of sense' is 'the corner stone of all just and rational knowledge of ourselves'.² 'This solid foundation, however,' he says,

has lately been attempted to be overturned by a set of pretended philosophers, of whom the most conspicuous is Dr. Reid, Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Glasgow, who, in order to combat Bishop Berkeley, and the scepticism of Mr. Hume, has himself introduced almost universal scepticism and confusion; denying all the connexions which has before been supposed to subsist between the several phenomena, powers and operations of

¹ Thomas Reid, 'Miscellaneous Reflections on Priestley's Account of Hartley's Theory of the Human Mind', in Paul Wood ed., *Thomas Reid on the animate creation* (Edinburgh, 1995), 133.

² Joseph Priestley, *An examination of Dr. Reid's Inquiry into the human mind, Dr. Beattie's Essay on the nature and immutability of truth, and Dr. Oswald's Appeal to common sense* (London, 1774), 4.

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the mind, and substituting such a number of *independent, arbitrary, instinctive principles*, that the very enumeration of them is really tiresome.³

Priestley’s whole-hearted acceptance of Lockean empiricism serves to distinguish his approach to the mind from that of the common sense philosophers, and also from that of Hutcheson, and of Shaftesbury. Priestley, in fact, thinks that Locke fails to take his anti-innatism far enough, and that Locke goes wrong in his distinction between ideas of sensation and ideas of reflection and in his (related) underestimation of the role played by the association of ideas. Locke’s project has been brought close to its completion by David Hartley, who ‘has thrown more useful light upon the theory of the mind than Newton did upon the theory of the natural world’.⁴ For Priestley, as for Hartley, the philosophy of mind is above all *analytical*. Priestley can thus be seen as a step on the way from the first formulations of associationalism to its full flowering in the writings of Bain and James Mill.

The purpose of this paper is to draw attention to the fact that, despite being in this respect a precursor of an important current in nineteenth-century philosophy, Priestley is also a curiously reactionary figure in the history of eighteenth-century ideas. For, despite the fact that he believes strongly in the need to adopt in the philosophy of mind what Hume had called ‘the experimental method of reasoning’, Priestley thinks that the goal of philosophy is the establishment of *necessary* truths. This peculiar position is especially obvious in his writings on the question of liberty and necessity. While insisting on the need to take only Newton’s *regulae philosophandi* as one’s guide in this matter, Priestley takes the result of correct application of Newton’s rules to be proof ‘that no event could have been otherwise than it *has been, is, or is to be*’.⁵ Priestley is a self-confessed admirer of the necessitarian arguments of Hobbes and Anthony Collins, and his conception of

³ Priestley, *Examination*, 5-6.

⁴ Priestley, *Examination*, 2.

⁵ Joseph Priestley, *The doctrine of philosophical necessity illustrated*, being the ‘appendix’ to and second volume of *Disquisitions relating to matter and spirit* (2nd edn., Birmingham, 1782), 9.

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the nature of the doctrine of necessity is strikingly reminiscent of the one shared by those two philosophers. But Hobbes, in particular, is aware that purely inductive reasoning is unable to show that it is impossible that things happen otherwise than they do. He writes in Chapter IV of *Human Nature* that ‘though a man hath always seen the day and night to follow one another hitherto; yet he can he not thence conclude that they shall do so, or that they have done so eternally. Experience concludeth nothing universally’.⁶ Certainty and knowledge, according to Hobbes, are derived not from ‘taking signs from experience’, but from demonstrations which rest on correct definitions of terms; and the Hobbesian argument for the doctrine of necessity, later adopted by Collins, proceeds from a definition of the term ‘cause’.⁷ The argument is thus purely *a priori* in character. Priestley, then, wants Hobbes’s conclusion, but without Hobbes’s way of arguing for it. And it is not obvious that he can have one without the other. This paper will explain why Priestley thinks he can. Sections II and III will give an account of the ‘philosophical’ argument for necessitarianism presented in Priestley’s *The doctrine of philosophical necessity illustrated*; Sections IV will describe his reply to Hume’s sceptical account of induction; and Section V will make a suggestion as to why Priestley is so confident of the capacities of the experimental method of reasoning.

II

In the Conclusion to Part I of the *Observations on man*, Hartley seeks to show that ‘the mechanism or necessity of human actions’ follows from his doctrine of association. ‘By the mechanism of human actions’, he explains,

I mean, that each action results from the previous circumstances of body and mind, in the same manner, and with the same certainty, as other effects do from their mechanical causes; so that a person cannot do indifferently either of the

⁶ Thomas Hobbes, *Human nature and De corpore politico*, ed. J C A Gaskin (Oxford, 1994), 33.

⁷ See, e.g., §31 of Hobbes’s *Of liberty and necessity*: Vere Chappell ed., *Hobbes and Bramhall on liberty and necessity* (Cambridge, 1999), 38.

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action *A*, and its contrary *a*, while the previous circumstances are the same; but is under an absolute necessity of doing one of them, and that only.⁸

This is what Priestley, too, understands to be the content of the doctrine of necessity. At the beginning of *The doctrine of philosophical necessity illustrated*, he defines his own position as follows:

All the *liberty*, or rather *power*, that I say a man has not, is that of *doing several things when all the previous circumstances* (including the *state of his mind*, and his *views of things*) are precisely the same. What I contend for is, that, with the same state of mind (the same strength of any particular passion, for example) and the same views of things (as any particular object appearing equally desirable) he would always, voluntarily, make the same choice, and come to the same determination. For instance, if I make any particular choice to-day, I should have done the same yesterday, and shall do the same to-morrow, provided there be no change in the state of my mind respecting of the choice.

In other words, I maintain, that there is some *fixed law of nature respecting the will*, as well as the other powers of the mind, and everything else in the constitution of nature; and, consequently, that it is never determined without some real or apparent *cause*, foreign to itself, i. e. without some *motive of choice*, or that motives influence us in some definite and invariable manner: so that every volition or choice, is constantly regulated and determined by what precedes it. And this *constant* determination of the mind, according to the motives presented to it, is all that I mean by its *necessary determination*. This being admitted to be the fact, there will be a necessary connexion between all things past, present and to come, in the way of proper *cause and effect*, as much in the intellectual, as in the natural world; so that, how little soever the bulk of mankind may be apprehensive of it, or

⁸ David Hartley, *Observations on man, his frame, his duty, and his expectations* (5th edn., Bath, 1810), 514-15.

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staggered by it, according to the established laws of nature, no event could have been otherwise than it *has been, is, or is to be*, and therefore all things past, present and to come, are precisely what the Author of nature really intended them to be, and has made provision for.⁹

One who believes in Hartleian ‘mechanism’ will be referred to as a ‘necessarian’ in what follows. A ‘libertarian’, on the other hand, will be one who believes, in Hartley’s words, in ‘a power of doing either the action A, or its contrary *a*; while the circumstances remain the same’.¹⁰

Priestley believes he can establish the truth of necessarianism simply by means of ‘the consideration of cause and effect’. In Section II of *The doctrine of philosophical necessity*, he seeks to show that the libertarian must commit himself to there being events without causes. A cause, Priestley says,

can not be defined to be any thing, but *such previous circumstances as are constantly followed by a certain effect*; the *constancy* of the result making us conclude, that there must a *sufficient reason* in the nature of things, why it should be produced in those circumstances.¹¹

Let us put to one side the psychological aspect of this definition of ‘cause’; it will be returned to in Section IV below. For the moment, what is to be noted is Priestley’s definition of ‘cause’ in terms of perfect regularity in the succession of types of event. The cause of an event is what always immediately precedes that type of event in certain determinate circumstances. If, then, that type of event were to happen in those circumstances without its usual precedent, it would be an event without a cause. Obviously, this argument is a completely general one. It follows Hobbes in seeking to derive the doctrine of necessity simply from a definition of ‘cause’. But where Hobbes’s definition of ‘cause’ makes no reference to the constant succession of ‘previous circumstances’ and ‘effect’, Priestley’s definition is designed to identify him as a philosopher whose terms are taken from the practice of inductive science.

⁹ Priestley, *Doctrine of philosophical necessity*, 7-9.

¹⁰ Hartley, *Observations on man*, 515.

¹¹ Priestley, *Doctrine of philosophical necessity*, 11.

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Another way of understanding Priestley’s case for necessity is in terms of laws of nature. In so far as it is true that types of human action are constantly preceded by determinate types of ‘previous circumstance’, human actions fall under general laws. It follows that in order for it to be possible for an action to be performed without its usual precedent, with surrounding circumstances held constant, there must be a violation of a law of nature. And the libertarian, according to Priestley, is saying something more than that the laws of nature can change, or that there can at any time be instituted new regular pairings of types of event. The libertarian is saying that there are no laws of nature at all that apply to human actions. In *any* situation, it is possible for something quite unprecedented to take place. Moreover, the libertarian is not going to restrict himself to asserting mere possibilities. He will say that human freedom is constantly manifesting itself in behaviour that does not fall under laws. For when it comes to the facts of the matter, either human behaviour is predictable, or it is not. If it is, Priestley has all he needs for his argument for necessity. Therefore it is going to matter to the libertarian, so Priestley is insinuating, to show that human behaviour is irregular, unpredictable, and under-determined by what motivates it.

As Priestley was well aware, this was an insinuation at which many eighteenth-century libertarians were liable to bridle. Those who write in criticism of Priestley’s necessarian argument are content to grant that human behaviour is regular, law-like, and therefore predictable. They do not follow, for example, William King and Isaac Watts in placing emphasis on the importance of the arbitrariness of at least some choices to a complete understanding of human freedom.¹² What they contest is the claim that necessitation of choice by motive follows straightforwardly from regularity and certainty. Quite generally, they argue, even if consequence *B* has always been preceded by circumstance *A*, there

¹² See William King, *An essay on the origin of evil*, translated and edited by Edmund Law (Cambridge, 1731), esp. Chapter V, Section I (‘Concerning the Nature of Election’); and Isaac Watts, *On the freedom of will in God and in creatures*, in D Jennings and P Doddridge eds., *The works of Isaac Watts* (6 vols., London, 1753), vol. VI, *passim*. Both argue that the will’s indifference is essential to moral responsibility.

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is no valid inference that nothing but *B could* follow *A*. Jacob Bryant speaks for all of Priestley's opponents when he says:

granting that people in the same circumstances would always act uniformly in the same manner: yet in respect to the mind and the freedom of choice, I do not see how they are at all affected. If I had full liberty to choose in one instance, I should have the same in another; and even if I were to repeat it an hundred times. You insist, that the repetition of the same act must be the effect of necessity. But if that, which I do, be the result of forecast and reason, it will at all times be an instance of my freedom in respect to election.¹³

The question is not whether my choices are influenced by motives in such a way that, given the same circumstances and motives, I always act in the same way. The question is what the nature of the influence of motives is. Do motives necessitate the will, or do they leave it at liberty?

Priestley's critics, in other words, counter his argument with the distinction between 'moral' and 'physical' necessity that is central to, for example, Bishop Bramhall's response to Hobbes and to Samuel Clarke's criticisms of Collins.¹⁴ Addressing Priestley, Bryant complains that,

you throughout make no distinction between inducement, and necessity; between inclination and force. Whenever we hesitate, deliberate, and choose, you think, we are impelled

¹³ Jacob Bryant, *An address to Dr. Priestly* [sic], *upon his doctrine of philosophical necessity illustrated* (London, 1780), 21.

¹⁴ See, e.g., Chappell ed., *Hobbes and Bramhall on liberty and necessity*, 48 ('the will is determined morally, when some object is proposed to it with persuasive reasons and arguments to induce it to will. Where the determination is natural, the liberty to suspend its act is taken away from the will, but not so where the determination is moral'); and Samuel Clarke, *A demonstration of the being and attributes of God*, ed. Ezio Vailati (Cambridge, 1998), 136-7 ('by 'moral necessity' consistent writers never mean any thing than to express in a figurative manner the certainty of such an event as may in reason be fully depended upon, though literally and in philosophical strictness of truth, there be *no necessity at all* of the event').

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past all resistance: and from this freedom of election would infer a total want of liberty.¹⁵

When necessarians represent the influence of motives 'as arising from a physical necessity, the very same with that which excites and governs the motions of the inanimate creation,' Samuel Horsley writes, 'here they confound Nature's distinctions':

A moral motive and a mechanical force are both indeed causes, and equally certain causes each of its proper effect; but they are causes in very different senses of the word, and derive their energy from the most opposite principles. Force is only another name for an *efficient* cause; it is that which impresses motion upon body, the passive recipient of a foreign impulse. A moral motive is what is more significantly called the *final* cause, and can have no influence but with a being that proposes to itself an end, chooses means, and thus *puts itself* into action.¹⁶

This is a theme developed by both John Palmer and Richard Price. Moral necessity, the former insists, 'arises from the influence of motives, which, as they are not physical beings, or substances, cannot possibly act as one physical being does upon another'.¹⁷ Price goes so far as to claim that while '[t]he views or ideas of beings may be the *account* or *occasions* of their acting; ... it is a

¹⁵ Bryant, *Address to Dr. Priestly*, 21-2.

¹⁶ Samuel Horsley, *Sermons* (3 vols, Dundee, 1811), vol. II, 137. Horsley's criticism of Priestley's necessitarianism was originally published in 1778 with the title 'Providence and Free Agency'; it had been a Good Friday sermon. A reviewer for the *London Review* describes it as '[a]nother ingenious and fruitless attempt, among the many that have been made of late years, to reconcile divinity and philosophy, the wisdom of this world with that of the next' (*London Review*, VII (1779), 122-3).

¹⁷ John Palmer, *Observations in defence of the liberty of man as a moral agent* (London, 1779), 45. As this quotation suggests, Palmer believes that Priestley's necessitarianism depends on his materialism. Priestley strenuously denies that this is so: see *A letter to the Rev. Mr. John Palmer in defence of the Illustrations of philosophical necessity* (Bath, 1779), 11-20.

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contradiction to make them the *mechanical efficients* of their actions'.¹⁸

Priestley accuses Price of ignorance of how it is that a 'philosopher' reasons:

Suppose a philosopher to be entirely ignorant of the constitution of the human mind, but to see, as Dr. Price, acknowledges, that men do, in fact, act ... according to *motives*, would he not, as in a case of the doctrine of chances, immediately infer that there must be a *fixed cause* for this coincidence of motives and actions? Would he not say that, though he could not see into the man, the connexion was *natural* and *necessary*, because *constant*? And since the motives, in all cases, *precede* the actions, would he not naturally, i. e. according to the custom of philosophers in similar cases, say that the motive was the *cause* of the action?¹⁹

Writing in reply to Joseph Berington's criticisms of Hartley's identical argument for necessity, Priestley says that the distinction between moral and physical causes is 'merely *verbal*'.²⁰ He elaborates in a response to Price's claim that what 'informs and directs' the action is not the motive, but rather the mind that perceives the reasons the motive gives:

if the determination of the mind, which follows upon [the perception of reasons], be invariably *according to* that perception, I must conclude that the nature of the mind is such, as that it *could not* act otherwise, and therefore that it has no self-determination properly so called. A power manifested by no effects, must be considered as merely imaginary, it being from *effects* alone that we arrive at the knowledge of causes.²¹

The libertarian who admits that actions follow motives in a regular manner is *already* a necessarian, according to Priestley. He tells

¹⁸ Richard Price and Joseph Priestley, *A free discussion of the doctrines of materialism and philosophical necessity* (London, 1778), 138.

¹⁹ Priestley, *Doctrine of philosophical necessity*, 64-5.

²⁰ Priestley, *Doctrine of philosophical necessity*, 18.

²¹ Price and Priestley, *Free discussion*, 147.

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several of his critics that they are necessarians without knowing it.²² They themselves, he says, give no ‘philosophical’ reasons for us to think the will free. Their Clarkeian insistence that motives, by their very nature, are unable to be causes, Priestley simply ignores. After all, the ‘philosopher’ forms his conclusions about the causes of phenomena solely on the basis of his observation of effects; and there is nothing to the observation of human behaviour to suggest that motives cannot be its cause.

III

In his writings on liberty and necessity, then, Priestley presents himself as one who is bringing the clarity of purely ‘philosophical’ reasoning to a question hitherto bedeviled by the imaginary distinctions of *a priori* metaphysics. The philosopher, he insists, reasons from observed effects to their causes, rather than in the other direction, from postulated causes to observed effects. His business is attention to experience, and he pays no attention to definitions and axioms forged in the dust and shadows of the schools. At the beginning of his *Disquisitions on matter and spirit*, Priestley claims that what distinguishes a *philosophical* treatment of a subject is a willingness to be guided in one’s investigations by rules of reasoning ‘such as are laid down by Sir Isaac Newton at the beginning of his third book of *Principia*’.²³ These rules are two in number.²⁴ The first is ‘that we are to *admit no more causes of things than are sufficient to explain appearances*; and the second is, that *to the same effects we must, as far as possible, assign the same causes*’.²⁵ When it comes, then, to the question of the nature of the liberty bestowed upon a person in virtue of his possession of a

²² See, with respect to Berington and Horsley, Priestley, *Doctrine of philosophical necessity*, 208-9 and 280-2; with respect to Price, Price and Priestley, *Free discussion*, 392-3; and with respect to Bryant, Joseph Priestley, *A letter to Jacob Bryant, Esq. in defence of philosophical necessity* (London, 1780), 19-20.

²³ Priestley, *Disquisitions*, vol. I, 7.

²⁴ In the final version of the *Principia* there are four ‘Rules of reasoning in philosophy’. But there were only two in the first edition.

²⁵ Priestley, *Disquisitions*, vol. I, 8.

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faculty of will, inquiry is to be directed by these two rules. Whether or not human agents are subject to necessitation in their acts of volition is an empirical matter, to be resolved by the same style of reasoning as is used by the natural philosopher, the astronomer, and the anatomist.

Priestley's argument for necessity, however, draws attention to the fact that his interpretation of Newtonian reasoning is an idiosyncratic one. The idiosyncrasy is visible already in his translation of the first rule. Newton wrote: 'Causas rerum naturalium non plures admitti debere, quam quae *et verae sint* et earum phaenomenis explicandis sufficient';²⁶ and Motte translates as follows: 'We are to admit no more causes of natural things, than such as are both true and sufficient to explain their appearances'.²⁷ There is no reference to Newton's truth-condition in Priestley's translation. For Priestley, it seems, it goes without saying that what is sufficient to explain a phenomenon is that phenomenon's cause. There is no question as to whether what explains has the *power* or *ability* to cause the phenomenon in question. Now, his critic John Palmer points out that Ockham's Razor might be thought to cut both ways with respect to the question of liberty and necessity. Given his emphasis on Newton's first rule, he writes, Priestley

will then not think it improper in an advocate of liberty just to remind him, that the admission of that one principle of freedom in the human mind ... will sufficiently account for all their actions, and that to seek after other causes, must, therefore, be wholly unnecessary.²⁸

It does not follow from the fact that actions are not caused by motives that they have no causes at all, for a 'principle of freedom in the human mind' can account for actions just as well as motives can. 'Does it follow that because I am *myself* the cause, there is no cause?', asks Price.²⁹ Priestley says that to deny necessity is to admit events without causes. The libertarian says that the agent

²⁶ Isaac Newton, *Philosophiae naturalis principia mathematica* (3rd edn., London, 1726), 387; my emphasis.

²⁷ Isaac Newton, *The mathematical principles of natural philosophy*, translated by Andrew Motte (2 vols., London, 1729), vol. II, 202.

²⁸ Palmer, *Observations*, 36.

²⁹ Price and Priestley, *Free discussion*, 136.

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himself is the cause of action. In Berington's words: 'The truth ... is, not that motives ... impel or determine a man to act, but that a man from the view of the motives presented to his mind, *determines himself* to act, by the free exertion of his own innate powers.'³⁰

The libertarian admits that neither the agent nor his self-determining power can explain why a particular action was chosen rather than another one. It is motives that do that kind of explanatory work. But motives are, precisely, not *agents*: they are not possessors of power, and so, the libertarian insists, they cannot be regarded as causes. Priestley's response is that the mind, considered independently of its motives, cannot be the cause of action because, considered as such, it is unable to *explain* why one determination was made rather than another.

If I ask the cause of what is called *wind*, it is a sufficient answer to say, in the first instance, that it is caused by the motion of the air, and this by its partial rarefaction, &c. &c. &c.; but if I ask why it blows *north* rather than *south*, will it be sufficient to say that *this* is caused by the motion of the air? The motion of the air being equally concerned in north and south winds, and can never be deemed an adequate cause of one of them in preference to the other.

In like manner, the self-determining power ... can never be a sufficient cause one particular determination, in preference to another. Supposing, therefore, two determinations to be possible, and there be nothing but the mere self-determining power to decide between them, the disposition of mind and motives being all exactly equal, one of them must want a proper cause, just as much as the north or the south wind would be without a proper cause, if nothing could be assigned but the motion of the air in general, without something to determine why it should move this way rather than that.³¹

³⁰ Joseph Berington, *Letters on materialism and Hartley's theory of the human mind* (London, 1776), 166.

³¹ Priestley, *Letter to Palmer*, 9-10.

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All that concerns the philosopher is what explains why *this* action was chosen rather than *that* one. There is no further question, Priestley believes, as to whether what explains an event is in fact the event's true cause. In this way Priestley's economical translation of Newton's first rule allows him to move directly from the question of explanation to the identification of causes.

To the philosopher of today, there is probably little that seems idiosyncratic in Priestley's procedure here. But the libertarian reaction to his use of Newton reminds us that in eighteenth-century philosophy of science it is usual for there to be a distinction drawn between *physical* causes, on the one hand, and *efficient* causes, on the other. The scientist's business is to identify the physical causes of natural phenomena, and he does so by means of the canons of inductive reasoning. Yet physical causes are understood not to have powers of their own. While common sense may tell us that stones have the power to break windows and acids have the power to corrode metals, the truth is that all physical substances are entirely passive, and have their 'effects' on each other only by virtue of laws set up by God. The concern of the scientist is, then, the discovery of regularities in the succession of observable events, and the goal is an improved capacity on the part of human beings to predict what will succeed what in the future. What the scientist is *not* concerned with is, precisely, causal power, or efficiency. The question of why nature appears to us as it does, and whether the laws of nature might have been different from how they are, is a question for the metaphysician and the theologian.³² The nature of divine power is beyond the purview of the natural philosopher; and so is the nature of the power bestowed by God upon human beings. Hutcheson, for example, gives a minute examination of the passions that determine human choices and actions, but leaves

³² A particularly clear account of the distinction is provided by Dugald Stewart in his *Short statement of some important facts relative to the late election of a mathematical professor in the University of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1805). In endorsing Hume's claim that only constant conjunctions are *observable*, Stewart argues, John Leslie was only saying what many pious men have said, both before Hume (Stewart cites Barrow, Clarke, Butler, Berkeley, and Peter Browne), and since (Stewart cites Price, Reid, Waring, Ferguson, and Robison).

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unanswered, and indeed unasked, the question of whether we have the capacity to choose and act otherwise than we do.³³ In this he is followed by Smith, and also, despite appearances to the contrary, by Hume.³⁴ Newton himself insists that his science of nature leaves space for the traditional libertarian conception of freedom.³⁵ Priestley, therefore, makes a radical move when he simply elides physical or explanatory with efficient or ‘metaphysical’ causes. Although he does not announce the fact, and may have been unaware of it himself, in this he effects a break with tradition. Indeed, his deafness to the usual distinction between physical and efficient causes anticipates strikingly the positivism of the nineteenth century.

IV

There remains, however, a crucial difference between Priestley and a positivist such as John Stuart Mill. For, instead of refusing to say anything at all about the metaphysics of causation, Priestley appears to believe that just in so far as one identifies the physical cause of a phenomenon, one entitles oneself to assert that it is *impossible* that such a cause be followed by anything other than the effect in question. This is particularly remarkable because it is exactly what Hume had denied. Hume had distinguished between, on the one hand, the psychological process responsible for, in Priestley’s words, ‘making us conclude, that there must be a *sufficient reason* in the nature of things, why [the effect] should be

³³ In Section V of the *Illustrations of the moral sense*, Hutcheson writes that ‘the intricate Debates about human *Liberty* do not affect what is here alledged, concerning our *moral Sense* of Affections and Actions, any more than any other Schemes’: *An essay on the nature and conduct of the passions* (London, 1728), 299.

³⁴ Hume is careful to argue only against a liberty of indifference of the kind propounded by King and Watts. His necessity is only of the ‘moral’ sort: see my ‘Hume’s reconciling project and ‘the common distinction betwixt *moral* and *physical* necessity’’, forthcoming in the *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*.

³⁵ See Isaac Newton, ‘An account of the book entituled *Commercium epistolicum*’, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, XXIX, 222-4.

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produced in those circumstances'; and, on the other, what might *justify* the claim that there *is* in the nature of things such a sufficient reason. Hume had denied that *a priori* reasoning can prove that what we have observed in the past is a reliable indicator of how things have to be; and Priestley would have no problem with that. But Hume had also denied that reasoning from experience can supply such grounds. For he argues that what has been can tell us nothing about how things *have* to be in the future. Experimental reasoning is unable to show that, as Priestley puts it, 'no event could have been otherwise than it *has been, is, or is to be*'. So why does Priestley think that Hume is wrong, and that, on the contrary, experimental reasoning *can* prove necessities?

A first clue is provided by Priestley's response in the *Examination* of common sense philosophy to Reid's conception of the basis of inductive reasoning. In Section XXIV of the *Inquiry into the human mind*, Reid had allowed that Hume is correct in his argument that experience does not provide reason to believe that what appear to be causal connections are *necessary* connections. But do we not learn from experience that, for example, the freezing of ice always follows a certain degree of cold? 'True, experience informs us that they have been conjoined in time *past*;' Reid says, 'but no man ever had any experience of time *future*; and this is the very question to be resolved, How we come to believe that the *future* will be like the *past*?'³⁶ According to Reid, there is no need for repeated experience, or Humean habit, to account for this belief, 'for children and idiots have [it] as soon as they know that fire will burn them. It must, therefore, be the result of instinct, not of reason.'³⁷

Priestley counters this with the claim that 'experience does a great deal more Dr. Reid here supposes': experience, not only informs us that cold and freezing have been conjoined in time *past*, but also that what is now time *past*, was once time *future*; and, therefore, that there is no more reason to suspect that cold will not freeze water now, than

³⁶ Sir William Hamilton ed., *The works of Thomas Reid, D.D.* (6th edn., Edinburgh, 1863), 198.

³⁷ *The works of Thomas Reid*, 198.

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there was to doubt yesterday that it would freeze it to-day. It is only puzzling the question to consider time as *past* or *future* in this case. We also find by experience that we have not hitherto been deceived in our expectation that the future will be like the past in former instances, and therefore cannot have any suspicion of being deceived in a similar expectation in other instances. It is really astonishing that any man should ask the question that Dr. Reid does here, ‘How came we to believe that the future will be like the past?’ It is certainly sufficient to say, in answer to this, Have we not always found it to be so; and, therefore, how can we expect the contrary? Though no man has had any experience of what *is* future, every man has had experience of what *was* future.³⁸

Priestley is right to point out that a philosopher’s doubts about the basis of induction do not affect the confidence we all have in our predictions. But this is a purely psychological fact, which leaves intact Hume’s point about the impossibility of proving that the laws of nature will not change at some point in the future. From the Humean point of view, it doesn’t matter how much experiential confirmation there is for putative laws of nature. While we lack some kind of *a priori* warrant for the belief that the laws of nature are immutable – and Priestley should agree, as a good Lockean, that no such thing is obtainable – there is nothing past experience can do to justify the belief that things will continue to happen as they have done so far. Past experience can explain the confidence we repose in our predictions, but not in such a way as to justify the claim that any other eventuality is impossible. The force of Hume’s argument seems to escape Priestley completely.

Remarks made by Priestley in the *Examination*’s ‘Introductory observations on the nature of judgment and reasoning’ make it plain that he is relying in his reply to Reid on a quite general understanding of how necessary connections are proven:

The *evidence*, that any two things or properties are necessarily united, is the constant observation of their union. It having always been observed, for instance, that the milk of animals is white, the idea of *white* becomes a necessary part,

³⁸ Priestley, *Examination*, 85-6.

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or attendant of the idea of *milk*. In other words, we call it an *essential property* of milk. This, however, only respects the milk of those animals with which we are acquainted. But since the milk of the animals with which we are acquainted, or of which we have heard, is white, we can have no reason to suspect that the milk of any new and strange animal is of any other colour. Also, since wherever there has been the specific gravity, ductility, and other properties of *gold*, the colour has always been *yellow*, we conclude that those circumstances are necessarily united, though by some unknown bond of union, and that they will always go together.

The proper *proof*, therefore, of universal propositions, such as the above, that milk is white, that gold is yellow, or that a certain degree of cold will freeze water, consists in what is called an *induction of particular facts*, of precisely the same nature. Having found, by much and various experience, that the same events never fail to take place in the same circumstances, the *expectation* of the same consequences is necessarily generated in our minds, and we can have no more suspicion of a different event, than we can separate the idea of *whiteness* from that of the other properties of *milk*.³⁹

Thus Priestley advertises what looks for all the world like a straightforward confusion of psychological and logical considerations. Somehow facts about the phenomenological character of our beliefs are supposed to provide support for claims about connections between the objects of those beliefs. Nevertheless, and despite appearances, it is in fact not the case that Priestley is simply ignoring the problem Hume had identified. He has a sort of reply to Hume, and presents it in his *Letters to a philosophical unbeliever*.

In Letter XIV, Priestley shows that he understands perfectly well the nature of Hume's sceptical challenge:

Mr. Hume says, that all we can pretend to know concerning the connexion of cause and effect, is their constant *conjunction*; by the observation of which the mind is necessarily led from the one to the other. From this the

³⁹ Priestley, *Examination*, xxxix-xli.

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friends of religion have supposed that, if this representation be just, the connexion is merely *arbitrary*, and, therefore, that such things as we have usually called *effects* may take place without any thing that we have usually observed to correspond to them, as their *causes*.⁴⁰

Priestley’s first move is to deny that the right response to Hume is to follow the common sense philosophers and Price in looking elsewhere for the source of the idea of power. The idea can be derived from observation, so long as it is seen as an *abstract* idea.⁴¹ But this is not where the weight of his reply to Hume’s scepticism lies. For, he says, ‘in whatever manner we come by the idea of power or causation, it is an idea that all men have, and corresponds to something *real* in the relation of the things that suggest it’.⁴² ‘It is true,’ he continues,

that all we properly *see* of a magnet, and a *piece of iron*, is that, at certain distances they approach to one another, and of a *stone*, that, in certain circumstances, it invariably tends towards the earth; and we cannot give any proper, or satisfactory *reason* why either of these effects should take place in these circumstances. Yet we have always found that, in a similar constant conjunction of appearances, we have never failed to discover, wherever we have been able to make any discovery at all, that the event could not have been otherwise. And though, in these cases, we have only discovered a *nearer*, and never *the ultimate* cause of any appearance, yet there is an invariable presumption in favour of *some* real and sufficient cause in all such conjunctions.⁴³

In Letter XV Priestley sees that at the heart of Hume’s sceptical account of causal reasoning is his conclusion that it is on the basis of habit or custom alone that we infer events from causes. ‘Leaving the question in this state,’ Priestley writes, ‘[Hume] may with some

⁴⁰ Joseph Priestley, *Letters to a philosophical unbeliever, Part I* (2nd edn., Birmingham, 1787), 196-7.

⁴¹ In this connection, Priestley refers the reader to the third of the ‘Introductory Essays’ prefixed to his edition of *Hartley’s theory of the human mind* (London, 1775), see esp. xxxvi-vii.

⁴² Priestley, *Letters*, 198.

⁴³ Priestley, *Letters*, 198-9.

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superficial readers, have weakened the foundation of our reasoning from effects to causes, as if it was properly no *reasoning* at all ... but only an arbitrary, and perhaps ill-founded, association of ideas.⁴⁴ So, we want to know, how does Priestley hope to establish the rationality of induction? What is it, to ‘discover’ that an event ‘could not have been otherwise’?

The key to Priestley’s reply to Hume and Reid appears to be the concept of a law of nature. ‘When we say that two events, or appearances, are *necessarily connected*’, Priestley says, ‘all that we can mean is, that some more general law of nature must be violated before those events can be separated’.⁴⁵ Experimental reasoning tells us what the laws of nature are; and the more we know about them, the more right we have to say that there is a reason in the things as they are in themselves it is impossible for things to happen otherwise than they do. All we have is repeated experience to justify, for example, the claim that respiration is necessary to animal life. But now we know much more about why animals cannot live without being able to breathe; and in time we will know still more. Every increase in knowledge of the composition of air, and of what takes place in the lungs, provides an additional justification for the claim that it is not just a coincidence that animal life and respiration have always gone together. The common belief that there is a necessary connection here is, in this way, shown not to be a matter of ‘an arbitrary, and perhaps ill-founded, association of ideas’.

V

The problem with this as a reply to Hume is that Hume never denies that there are laws of nature, nor that empirical science can tell us a great deal about why observable conjunctions obtain. Hume would accept that it is extremely implausible to claim that there is *no* reason why the world reveals itself to observation in the way that it does. What he denies is that we can know what that the reason is. The conviction we have that the future will resemble the past – that the laws of nature will remain constant – cannot, he says,

⁴⁴ Priestley, *Letters*, 208.

⁴⁵ Priestley, *Letters*, 209.

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have experimental foundation. It must be, then, that Priestley means something different by 'law of nature' than a mere observed regularity. And it is hard to resist the thought that a Priestleyan law of nature can be assumed to be immutable because it is an expression of the unchanging will of God. At any rate, nothing else can protect Priestley from the charge of simply assuming the truth of what Hume called into question. However, if this is at the heart of Priestley's reply to Hume, then he appears not to be the Lockean experimental philosopher that he claims to be. He seems to be only a dogmatist looking to clothe his dogmas in the language of Newtonian philosophy.

Priestley makes no secret of the fact that it is for religious reasons that the doctrine of necessity is so important to him. In the dedication to the *Doctrine of philosophical necessity illustrated*, he writes that in necessarianism alone 'do we find a perfect coincidence between *true religion* and *philosophy*'.⁴⁶ In the book's preface, he approvingly quotes Hobbes's claim that 'did not [God's] will assure the necessity of man's will, and consequently of all that on which man's will dependeth, the liberty of man would be a contradiction and impediment to the omnipotence and liberty of God'.⁴⁷ Priestley's endorsement of Hobbes is important because it draws attention to the fact that his understanding of necessity is quite different from the Calvinist's. On several occasions, Priestley calls Calvinism a 'gloomy' religion, because, as he sees it, it presents salvation as depending wholly upon an arbitrary decree of God's will. Under the Calvinist dispensation, men are completely passive in their regeneration. According to the 'philosophical' scheme, on the other hand, while all our designs and actions are subject to divine guidance, they are nevertheless at the same time parts of the natural order. God does not act on the natural order from without in unpredictable and mysterious ways, but acts from within, by means of the laws which give the natural order its character. Because every human choice and action is part of the natural chain of events, there is no tendency to fatalism in

⁴⁶ Priestley, *Doctrine of philosophical necessity*, xii-xiii.

⁴⁷ Priestley, *Doctrine of philosophical necessity*, xxv-vi; the passage is from Chapter XXI of *Leviathan*.

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philosophical necessitarianism. What we choose to do will affect what happens later, so it matters what decisions we make. The doctrine of philosophical necessity, therefore, provides the means of reconciling human freedom and divine government.

It is, of course, an eighteenth-century commonplace that the laws of nature were framed by God. But this is usually asserted together with the distinction between physical and efficient causes that we have seen Priestley ignore. Usually, then, God retains the capacity to change the laws, should he so wish; and while this is so, induction must remain unable to establish necessary truths. But Priestley's definition of cause in terms of regularity presumably applies to God's causal power as well as to that of men. God is therefore the cause of natural events just in so far as there is regularity in the succession of exercises of his power and their effects. Now, for most eighteenth-century philosophers, God is not merely a first cause, whose work is done once the universe has started running. It is a part of the common sense of the age that every natural event is a direct result of God's causal power. God is both creator and sustainer of the universe.⁴⁸ And this item of received wisdom, when combined with Priestley's definition of cause, permits the conclusion that the laws of nature are immutable. Priestley is not surreptitiously slipping in a theological premise to back up his conception of what philosophical reasoning can prove. Given his definition of cause, it is unintelligible the idea that the laws of nature might change. For to entertain that idea would be to

⁴⁸ Priestley, of course, was not a philosopher willing to give much credit to the common sense of his age. He has an argument to show that God must be the cause of all events, whether natural or 'moral': for he holds that God's causal responsibility for all that happens follows directly from the fact that he foresees everything. See, e.g., Priestley, *Doctrine of philosophical necessity*, Section III ('Of the Arguments for Necessity from Divine Prescience'). Most of Priestley's peers were unwilling to allow that necessitarianism follows straightforwardly from the fact of divine prescience. Price, however, is willing to admit that 'The foreknowledge of a *contingent* event carrying the appearance of a contradiction, is indeed a difficulty; and I do not pretend to be capable of removing it' (Price and Priestley, *Free discussion*, 175-6).

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allow that God is not, in fact, permanently and intimately involved in the workings of nature.

But does it not remain true that Priestley's assumption of divine government of all events mean that his doctrine of necessity is not, after all, properly 'philosophical'? For does not the argument for theism itself rely on the experimental reasoning that God turns out to be underwriting? Perhaps the best thing to do on Priestley's behalf here is to point out that the argument for the existence of God is distinct from the argument for necessity. Priestley's natural theology rests on the standard Butlerian argument from analogy, and as such appeals to *past* experience only, without needing to make assumptions about the future. The success of the design argument is not our concern here; but it can at least be said that Priestley is not caught in a circle in his argument for necessity. The necessities he seeks to prove by experimental means are not, it is true, of the kind negation of which produces a contradiction; but their negation would entail that there is no divine government of nature; and that, for Priestley as for most of his contemporaries, was so close to being unthinkable as to be indistinguishable from a contradiction.⁴⁹

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⁴⁹ I am grateful to John Stephens, Galen Strawson and a referee for this journal for comments on earlier drafts of this material.

**JOSEPH PRIESTLEY ON MORALS AND ECONOMICS:
RECONCILING THE QUEST FOR VIRTUE WITH THE
PURSUIT OF WEALTH**

*Vilem Mudroch**

The perennial conflict between moral or spiritual values, on the one hand, and material well being on the other, seems to have become especially acute in the eighteenth century. It is unclear whether this was caused by the rise in the standard of living, by the development of the new discipline of political economics, which brought such issues into focus, or by other factors. At any rate, a significantly large number of writers came to deal with diverse aspects of this conflict, attempting to arrive at some sort of a reconciliation (Section I). In the work of Joseph Priestley the conflict is reflected largely in the fact that he developed two different concepts of virtue. The first one essentially fits into the broad framework of the Christian moral tradition, the other is basically geared toward accommodating economic activity (Section II). How these two concepts of virtue are related is not obvious and this question will receive much of our attention (Section III). In much of the literature on Priestley each of these notions has been stressed at the cost of the other, and Priestley has been read either as a basically traditional Christian moralist or as a proponent of the concept of what has recently been labelled 'economic virtue'. In the present paper I will attempt to show that an important part of the conflict between moral and economic values was not successfully resolved by any of the writers in the eighteenth century, and that Priestley fared no better than his contemporaries. Mainly for this reason I do not think it imperative or even wise to attempt to restrict any of the eighteenth century philosophers, including Priestley, to either of the two categories just mentioned. Since the conflict between morals and economics is apparently not resolvable regardless of the historical circumstances or the intellectual setting, living with the tension and thus accepting awkward and complicated solutions is preferable to seeking out tidy but ultimately unsatisfactory answers.

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I

Historical Background

To understand Priestley's views of the conflict between luxury and virtue it will be helpful to provide a brief sketch of the historical context within which he dealt with economic issues.¹ I will largely avoid dealing with the civic humanist (republican) tradition, for which there indeed was a sharp conflict between wealth and virtue, mainly because Priestley himself did not belong to it. Much of the debate over the conflict in Britain in the eighteenth century takes Mandeville as its point of departure. Mandeville's *Fable of the bees* (1714)² is famous (or infamous) for presenting the paradox that in wealthy commercial societies individual economic activity is based on egotistic motives (private vice) which, by stimulating the production and consumption of luxury goods, result in publicly beneficial economic growth.³ By inverting the customary expressions 'private vice, public corruption' or 'private virtue, public benefit' Mandeville rejected the values of the civic humanist tradition going back to Machiavelli, and involving in the seventeenth century the de la Courts in Holland, Harrington in England, and, in the eighteenth century, most prominently, Rousseau.⁴ This tradition identified luxury with corruption, advocated keeping the passions under control and conceived the realization of virtue to be possible only in a republic, in the form of civic virtue. In addition Mandeville seemingly attacked many conventions that had always been thought necessary to the survival of a society. Thus he appears to suggest that burglars stimulate the

¹ In the following I do not make much of a distinction between luxury on the one hand and economic growth or the pursuit of wealth on the other. In doing so I would be assured of the concurrence of a number of eighteenth century thinkers, among them Mandeville, Hume, and Priestley, though not necessarily that of present day economists or of ordinary language usage.

² *The fable of the bees: or, private vices, publick benefits*, modern edn. by FB Kaye (Oxford, 1928, repr. 1988).

³ *Ibid.*, Remarks F and L.

⁴ Viz. Edward Hundert: *The Enlightenment's fable: Bernard Mandeville and the discovery of society* (Cambridge, 1994), 23-30.

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economy, for instance by increasing the demand for locks or that there is public benefit to be derived from the murder of a miser who hoards his gold and thus prevents it from circulating in the economy.⁵ This was frequently attacked by his critics, as was his contention that alcohol consumption or even natural calamities would stimulate the economy.⁶ His exposition of the positive role

⁵ Mandeville was, however, well aware of the importance of law and order as a precondition for a well functioning society, since he makes it plain that the thief who murders the miser must be hanged, regardless of the short term economic benefit of his action (*Fable*, 87). That the security of property was paramount to a society's well being seems to have been generally recognized in early modern Europe. Thus Hobbes emphasizes that in the state of nature 'there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain' (*Leviathan*, Library of Liberal Arts, 1958, 107), and Locke argues that 'it is a law of nature that every man should be allowed to keep his own property, or, if you like, that no one may take away and keep for himself what is another's property' (*Essays on the laws of nature*, ed. and trans. by W von Leyden, Oxford, 1954, 201). Hume discusses a case strongly reminiscent of Mandeville of a 'man of merit' who restores a fortune to a miser, and is thus responsible for withdrawing the miser's gold from circulation; in spite of the immediate economic drawbacks, Hume nevertheless finds the man's action laudable as it contributes to the stability of the legal system (*Treatise of human nature*, ed. Selby-Bigge, Nidditch, Oxford, 1978, 497). For the French Physiocrats security was, in a similar fashion as for Locke, a basic right decreed by God (Dupont de Nemours, 'De l'origine et des progrès d'une science nouvelle' (1768), *Physiocrates*, ed. Eugène Daire, Paris, 1846, § V, 346). As we will see Priestley also regarded law and order as more fundamental to the well being of a society than short term economic benefits. A consideration of the trade-off between the benefits of theft on the one hand and law and order on the other was not even an issue for him.

⁶ Remark G, 91-3; 'A Search into the Nature of Society', 359ff. Just as Mandeville did not really endorse crime, so he also saw limits to the benefits procured by calamities. Thus he states that 'should any of my readers draw Conclusions *in infinitum* from my Assertions that Goods sunk or burnt are as beneficial to the Poor as if they had been well sold and put to their proper Uses, I would count him a Caviller and not worth answering' (364). However, in the debate that ensued, Mandeville's caveats were in general totally disregarded. Perhaps Mandeville's sensationalistic style of writing helped to provoke the extreme reactions.

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played by vanity, a very plastic, highly plausible presentation based on everyday life occurrences as well as his critique of traditional virtues such as frugality⁷ also struck many of his readers as scandalous. In general it was Mandeville's extremely unflattering picture of human nature that attracted criticism. He presents humans as thoroughly egotistical and as requiring a long process of socialization to enable them to get along with others. However, one reason why Mandeville is able to portray humans in such a negative light has to do with his highly rigorous definition of virtue: he classifies human behaviour as virtuous only if it is 1) rational, i.e. not motivated by any passions, and 2) altruistic.⁸ Thus, for example, helping someone out of a feeling of pity does not, for Mandeville, fulfil the criteria of virtuous behaviour, since pity is a passion. Consistent with this extreme view is Mandeville's claim that 'every Want [is] an evil'⁹ as well as his further contention that luxury is everything 'that is not immediately necessary to make Man subsist', from which he deduces that luxury is to be found everywhere, 'even among the naked Savages'.¹⁰ As a consequence humans always come up short when measured against this kind of a standard.

Not content with accepting Mandeville's conclusion that there is no public benefit without private vice, a number of writers in the eighteenth century attempted to reconcile economic growth with morality. Almost no one followed Mandeville in his extreme embrace of the benefits of luxury nor of his apparent advocacy of the contribution of wastefulness, crime, and alcohol consumption to the economy. On the other hand, neither were there many

⁷ *Fable*, Remark K.

⁸ *Fable*, 48-9.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 'A Vindication of the Book', 402-3. It is interesting to contrast this with Rousseau's almost identically sounding claim that 'everything beyond the physically necessary is a source of evil', *Oeuvres complètes*, 5 vols. (Paris 1959-95), vol. 3, 95. The major difference is that while Mandeville was very willing to accept such 'evil' as the basis of what he perceived to be positive developments, Rousseau took the term literally and used this idea as a foundation of his criticism of progress and of the commercial society.

¹⁰ *Fable*, Remark L, 107-8.

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prominent writers in the eighteenth century who advocated poverty. Among those in Britain who attempted a reconciliation between luxury and virtue before Priestley were Francis Hutcheson, George Berkeley, David Hume, John Brown, Adam Ferguson, and Adam Smith. Notable contributions to the debate were also made by writers outside of Britain such as Claude-Adrien Helvétius or Isaak Iselin.¹¹ These authors basically employed three different strategies, which they often combined in various ways.

An obvious path to follow was to question Mandeville's definitions of virtue and vice. The first to have adopted this strategy was Hutcheson, who devoted much of his writing over a period of forty years beginning in 1724 to refuting Mandeville. In his *Observations on the Fable of the Bees*¹² he criticizes Mandeville's definition of virtue for being too rigorous and offers far more moderate formulations, claiming that 'virtue consists in love, gratitude, and submission to the Deity, and in kind affections towards our fellows, and study of their greatest good'.¹³ A more thoroughly worked out attempt at redefining Mandeville's moral language was presented by Hume. Hume's views on luxury bear important similarities to Mandeville, so that it does seem that the main difference between the two concerns terminology rather than recommendations for action.¹⁴ Hume is obviously unhappy with Mandeville's paradox of private vice, public benefit, and points out

¹¹ A full scale examination of the conflict between virtue and economic growth in the eighteenth century would require a large volume to be written. The selection of authors and of their works in the following brief sketch is to some extent arbitrary. A recent substantial work on the economic views prior to Smith is Terence Hutchison, *Before Adam Smith. The emergence of political economy 1662-1776* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988). Also useful is David Spadafora, *The idea of progress in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New Haven, London, 1990). Neither work, however, specifically takes up the issue of the conflict between virtue and economic growth.

¹² First published in the *London Journal* (1724) and in the *Dublin Journal* (1726), the work went through numerous editions. Here quoted from the Glasgow edition, 1758, Thoemmes reprint 1989.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁴ Keeping in mind that Mandeville too condemned wastefulness, alcohol consumption etc., though he called them foolish rather than vicious.

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that on any system of morality it is 'little less than a contradiction in terms, to talk of a vice, which is in general beneficial to society'. He thinks he can escape Mandeville's conclusion that vice is advantageous by objecting that Mandeville's argument concerns only the elimination of one part of the vices, namely vicious luxury, rather than banning all vices, including, notably, sloth and indifference to others. He is willing to concede that 'two opposite vices in a state may be more advantageous than either of them alone', though the crucial fact remains that ultimately he does not differ from Mandeville's underlying contention that the pursuit of luxury will serve to minimize sloth.¹⁵ Another writer who objected to Mandeville's definitions was John Brown, who addresses the present issue in his *Essay on the Characteristics of the Earl of Shaftesbury* of 1751.¹⁶ He rejects Mandeville's equating the natural gratification of the appetites with vice, as this, for example, unjustifiably stigmatizes the desire of being esteemed by others with the vice of pride.¹⁷

Since part of the reason Mandeville was able to paint such an unflattering portrait of human nature lay with his definitions, revising them also allowed his critics to present humans in more favourable terms. This did not, however, always result in a more generous picture of human motivation. Hume, for instance, admits, in keeping with his motto that reason is the slave of passion, that in the economic sphere humans do not exert themselves for rational considerations: 'our passions are the only causes of labour'. Men must be motivated 'with a spirit of avarice and industry, art and luxury'.¹⁸ However, what at least partially redeems the moral qualities of *homo oeconomicus* is work, which even helps to make life meaningful. Thus Hume is able to come up with a positive assessment of his own times in part because of his psychological theory that human happiness requires 'action, pleasure, and indolence' and that it is in modern commercial society that these

¹⁵ *Political essays*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge, 1994), 114.

¹⁶ Essay II (On the Motives of Virtue), Sect. IV-V. Reprint with an introduction and a bibliography by Donald D Eddy, Hildesheim, New York, 1969.

¹⁷ *Essays*, 148.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 99, 100.

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are mixed in the best proportions; in earlier societies action was usually deficient.¹⁹ A similar view is voiced by Helvétius who considers the lives of the rich to be miserable, because, lacking meaningful activity, they are bored.²⁰ This crucial theme was taken up by Priestley as well.

A second strategy for meeting the challenge presented by Mandeville's paradox, especially promising if it could be combined with the first, was to admit that luxury did indeed provide a necessary stimulus to the economy and possibly even to other desirable kinds of human endeavour. This approach, arguing that a life of luxury, in spite of its possible shortcomings, was preferable to any possible alternatives, took the form of praise of commercial society. A major prerequisite for economic advance was the division of labour and this was in fact accepted as necessary by all the writers presented here, starting with Hutcheson,²¹ and even including Ferguson, who admitted that the division of labour was indispensable for any kind of progress.²² The general desirability of some wealth is the one point on which the authors discussed here agreed with Mandeville. Thus Hutcheson, for example, saw the power of a nation dependant on its wealth and he rejected, as a consequence, both the ideal of a society surviving on subsistence farming as well as the ideal of an inactive golden age.²³ It was further agreed that the pleasures of 'the conveniences and

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 106-7.

²⁰ *De l'homme, de ses facultés intellectuelles, et de son éducation*, sect. VIII, chap. III.

²¹ *Observations*, 72, 75.

²² Adam Ferguson: *An essay on the history of civil society* (1767), introduction by Louis Schneider (New Brunswick, London, 1980), Part IV, Section I, 180: 'a people can make no great progress in cultivating the arts of life, until they have separated, and committed to different persons, the several tasks, which require a peculiar skill and attention'. As Schumpeter points out such views on the division of labour were 'common currency at that time', so that it is not surprising that they can be found in writers as diverse as Ferguson and Adam Smith (Joseph A Schumpeter, *History of economic analysis*, ed. Elizabeth Boody Schumpeter, New York, 1954, 184.)

²³ *Observations*, 69, 72.

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elegancies of life' are preferable to the pleasures of sloth,²⁴ with Hume going even farther by claiming in accordance with his high regard for work that even excessive luxury is generally preferable to 'sloth and idleness'.²⁵

Hume was perhaps the most influential proponent of this strategy.²⁶ He had possibly an even higher regard for the achievements of the eighteenth century than Mandeville. Significant for our purposes is his thesis that economic progress was more or less automatically accompanied by social, political and even moral and aesthetic improvement. In his economics *Essays* of 1752 and 1758 he presents an extensive list of advantages the commercial society enjoys over its predecessors. Along with the refinement of the mechanical arts comes a refinement of the liberal ones, men become 'more sociable' and more humane.²⁷ Improving 'laws, order, police, discipline' is contingent on a refinement of commerce and manufacture, and political progress leads to moderation, revolutions become less tragical, 'authority less severe', 'seditions less frequent', 'foreign wars abate of their cruelty' while martial spirit and courage remain intact.²⁸ Progress in manufacturing 'is rather favourable to liberty, and has a natural tendency to preserve, if not produce a free government'.²⁹ 'Nor are

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 71.

²⁵ *Essays*, 114.

²⁶ A positive evaluation of modern commercial societies was advanced by a number of thinkers outside Britain as well. Especially interesting is the Swiss author Isaak Iselin, who developed a rigorous definition of virtue based on the philosophy of Christian Wolff, but then concluded that this high ideal was unattainable, and embraced commercial virtue as the next best alternative. A number of his views bear resemblance to those of Priestley, though it is certain that the two authors were unaware of each other (*Über die Geschichte der Menschheit*, Basel, 1786. The first edition appeared in 1764 bearing the title *Philosophische Mutmaßungen über die Geschichte der Menschheit*). Also noteworthy is Helvétius, who was willing to accept luxury as long as it was evenly distributed (*De l'homme*, sect. VI, chap. V).

²⁷ *Essays*, 107.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 109.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 111.

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these advantages attended with disadvantages, that bear any proportion to them'.³⁰

We should note, however, that there was significant dissent, other than Rousseau's, from the thesis that the commercial society was a great achievement. One prominent critic of economic growth was John Brown, who in his days was best known for his indictment of luxury presented in his highly successful publication *An estimate of the manners and principles of the times*.³¹ There he argues against commerce on the grounds that it necessarily undergoes a 'dangerous and fatal' development, first providing necessities, then conveniences, and, in the end, luxuries. 'It brings in Superfluity and vast Wealth; begets Avarice, gross Luxury, or effeminate Refinement among the higher Ranks, together with general Loss of Principle.'³²

Somewhat less critical of commercial society and the wealth created by it than Brown or Rousseau was Adam Ferguson. One point on which Ferguson refused to attack the commercial society was in regard to the often made claim that such a society necessarily suffers from a lack of readiness for war. Ferguson replied that men in commercial societies tend to be well nourished and thus capable of enduring hardship.³³ As will soon be seen Ferguson's argument on this score is similar to Priestley's, though the readiness of a nation for war played a far more important role for the former than it did for the latter. But in general, Ferguson tended to emphasize what he judged to be the disadvantages of

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 108.

³¹ 2 vols., London, 1757-58. This work as well as some of the early replies to it, both positive and negative, are discussed in Spadafora, *op. cit.*, 214-21, 227, 240. The book proved very popular, going through at least four editions by 1760; *ibid.*, 216.

³² Quoted in Spadafora, *op. cit.*, 215.

³³ *An essay*, Part V, Section IV, 228: 'That weakness and effeminacy of which polished nations are sometimes accused, has its place probably in the mind alone. The strength of animals, and that of man in particular, depends on his feeding, and the kind of labour to which he is used. Wholesome food, and hard labour, the portion of many in every polished and commercial nation, secure to the public a number of men endued with bodily strength, and inured to hardship and toil.'

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commercial societies. For one thing, in spite of its ‘pretension to equal rights’, he claims that commercial society inevitably leads to the creation of social classes of unequal standing, resulting in deplorable developments for both the lower and the upper classes. The poor are corrupted, not so much because they are maintained in ignorance, but because they become servile and envious and thus form a habit of a perpetual desire for profit.³⁴ The ruling classes devote their attention to amassing fortunes, and can hardly be entrusted ‘with the conduct of nations’. In language strongly reminiscent of the civic humanist tradition Ferguson laments that ‘such men, when admitted to deliberate on matters of state, bring to its councils confusion and tumult, or servility and corruption; and seldom suffer it to repose from ruinous factions, or the effect of resolutions ill formed or ill conducted’.³⁵ In general, he strongly condemned luxury as ‘ruinous to the human character’, though, like Mandeville, he was well aware of the fact that this was a relative term, very much dependent on the technological stage attained by a given society. He did not object to material conveniences as such, as long as they did not come to be considered ‘the principal objects of human life’. In this context he again resorts to civic humanist language, stressing the need ‘to preserve the heart entire for the public, and to occupy men in cultivating their own nature, not in accumulating wealth, and external conveniences’.³⁶

A third strategy for combatting Mandeville consisted of downplaying the more offensive connotations of luxury, either by stressing the value of moderation or by redefining luxury, by denying that anything that is not strictly necessary to survival is a luxury and thus possibly a vice. Hutcheson does both. He defines the kind of luxury that ought to be condemned as ‘using more curious and expensive habitation, dress, table, equipage, than the person’s wealth will bear, so as to discharge his duty to his family, his friends, his country, or the indigent’.³⁷ But he also finds it ‘ridiculous to say that using any thing above the bare necessities of

³⁴ *Ibid.*, Part IV, Section II, 186.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 187.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Part VI, Section II, 247-8.

³⁷ *Observations*, 81.

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life is intemperance, pride, or luxury'.³⁸ Rejecting Mandeville's inversion of values allows him to argue that the vices that Mandeville considered to be indispensable to the economic well-being of a country (pride, luxury, and, allegedly, even theft) are, in fact, not necessary at all, and that living within one's means will in the long run stimulate the economy more than overspending, just as a temperate lifestyle will lead to greater overall consumption than alcohol abuse.³⁹

Hume too stresses the need for moderation, and thus rejects not only extreme definitions but also patterns of extreme behaviour. He contends that imagining 'that the gratifying of any sense, or the indulging of any delicacy in meat, drink, or apparel, is of itself a vice, can never enter into a head, that is not disordered by the frenzies of enthusiasm'.⁴⁰ Although, judging from the context, Hume has ascetics in mind, the remark could just as well be taken as a critique of Mandeville's rigorous definitions of virtue and luxury. Indulging in sensual pleasure is for Hume not a vice as long

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 82. This was also strongly argued for by John Brown (*Essay on the Characteristics*, 149-50).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 90-1. Much the same argument is advanced by George Berkeley in his answer to Mandeville in the second dialogue of his *Alciphron* (*The works ...*, ed. A A Luce, T E Jessop, vol. 3, Edinburgh, London, 1948-57, reprint Nendeln, Liechtenstein, 1979, 71-3) as well as in his *Querist* (*Bishop Berkeley's Querist in perspective*, ed. Joseph Johnston, Dundalgan Press, 1970, Query 306, 380).

⁴⁰ *Essays*, 105. There are a number of places in Hume's other works where he addresses issues raised by Mandeville, without, however, mentioning any names. At one such place Hume takes up the claim, made by Mandeville, that all friendship and humanity resolve into self-love (*Fable*, e.g. 340-1, 358). Hume answers that admitting a 'disinterested benevolence' makes for a simpler and more natural explanation of human sociability, since the pleasure we derive from it is only secondary, just as is the pleasure we derive from eating and drinking when we are hungry or thirsty; Hume claims that it would be inappropriate to say that we eat and drink for the pleasure of it rather than to appease our hunger or thirst. By analogy we act as social beings out of disinterested benevolence rather than for the sake of self-love (*Enquiries concerning human understanding and concerning the principles of morals*, ed. Selby-Bigge, Nidditch, Oxford, 1975, 301).

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as it is not ‘pursued at the expense of some virtue, as liberality or charity’.⁴¹ Hume defends the golden mean, criticising, on the one hand, Mandeville (presumably as one of the ‘men of libertine principles’) for praising even vicious luxury and representing it as ‘highly advantageous to society’, and, on the other hand, those ‘men of severe morals’ who ‘blame even the most innocent luxury, and represent it as the source of all the corruptions, disorders, and factions, incident to civil government’.⁴² Like Hutcheson, Hume thought that there was a set standard for each person’s consumption of goods determined by the person’s social and economic standing: ‘a gratification is only vicious’ when it impinges on ‘acts of duty and generosity as are required [by a person’s] situation and fortune’.⁴³

In reply to the calls for moderation, Mandeville would very possibly have pointed out that its proponents were indulging in over-simplification, given that luxury is notoriously difficult to define: ‘if once we depart from calling every thing Luxury that is not absolutely necessary to keep a Man alive, ... then there is no luxury’.⁴⁴ Hutcheson or Hume would have been at pains to show exactly what it means to discharge one’s duty to family, friends and country. Obviously habit is one guide to what is considered excessive and what is not, but in an expanding economy, habits do and indeed must change.⁴⁵ Mandeville may have objected that, in modern terms, his critics completely missed the dynamic role of demand in the economy, since it is precisely wanting more than one can afford that acts as a stimulus to one’s efforts.

A combination of the three strategies was followed by Adam Smith, whose writings demonstrate that the spectre of the paradox of ‘private vice, public benefit’ was not exorcised even half a

⁴¹ *Essays*, 105.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 106.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁴⁴ *Fable*, Remark L, 108.

⁴⁵ Especially in Hume’s case the danger looms large that resorting to such a concept of a static pattern of income would have contradicted his insistence in ‘Of Money’ (115-25) and ‘Of the Balance of Trade’ (136-49) on the need for a steady growth of the money supply, and thus by implication, of the economy.

century after Mandeville's *Fable* had first appeared. Smith explained the concern with Mandeville by claiming that Mandeville's system 'could never have imposed upon so great a number of persons, nor have occasioned so general an alarm among those who are the friends of better principles, had it not in some respects bordered upon the truth'.⁴⁶ Smith himself answered Mandeville along the lines followed by Hutcheson and Hume: he returned the terms 'luxury' and 'virtue' to their ordinary language meanings. Within the context of his moral philosophy this was possible by appealing to the natural qualities of objects and actions, qualities which are determined by the judgement of the impartial observer. The reason why Smith found Mandeville's usage unacceptable had to do with the fact that it was founded on 'some popular ascetic doctrines which had been current before his time'.⁴⁷ This explains why Smith objects to Mandeville's definition of luxury as including whatever exceeds items 'absolutely necessary for the support of human nature'; he thinks it absurd to maintain that a clean shirt or a convenient habitation should count as luxuries.⁴⁸ To refute Mandeville's claim that vanity is the driving force behind all human actions, even virtuous ones, Smith points out that Mandeville's use of the concept of vanity is too encompassing. He thinks it necessary to distinguish between motives that are 1) worthy of esteem when no desire for recognition is present, so that an act of virtue is carried out for its own sake; 2) worthy of esteem though the desire for recognition is present; 3) not worthy of esteem, but the desire for praise or at least for excessive praise is present. Smith labels the first two types of motivation 'love of virtue' and 'love of true glory' respectively, and maintains that only the third one is properly called 'vanity'.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ *The theory of moral sentiments*, ed. D D Raphael, A L Macfie (Oxford, 1976) VII.ii.4.14.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, VII.ii.4.12.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, VII.ii.4.11. The clean shirt example was used previously by John Brown (*Essay on the Characteristics*, 149-50).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, VII.ii.4.8. Smith's resort to the distinction between acting for virtuous reasons and acting for selfish reasons was anticipated by William Law, who argued in his *Remarks upon a late book, entitled, The Fable of the Bees* (London, 1724, 2nd edn. 1725, repr. Routledge/Thoemmes, 1992)

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The grain of truth that Smith finds in Mandeville's conception is that there is an 'affinity between vanity and the love of true glory, as both these passions aim at acquiring esteem and approbation'.⁵⁰ In keeping with his rejection of Mandeville's extreme definitions Smith also objects to Mandeville's claim that virtue is the total suppression of a passion, maintaining instead that it consists in its moderation.⁵¹ Only because Mandeville fallaciously presents every passion as vicious can he establish the phrase 'private vice, public benefit'.⁵²

However, Smith himself was unable to totally resolve the tension between a morally desirable life and the exigencies of economic growth. Although this is evident at a number of places in his writings, perhaps the most telling is his account of the workings of the invisible hand in *The theory of moral sentiments*, as it is here that the conflict surfaces in two different forms. For one thing Smith admits that vanity is indeed the driving force behind the human effort to improve our material condition. A crucial role is played by 'that love of distinction so natural to man', which leads to our constantly paying 'more regard to the sentiments of the spectator, than to those of the person principally concerned, and consider[ing] rather how his situation will appear to other people'.⁵³ Smith discusses the case of a poor, but ambitious young man, who desires wealth since he imagines that the rich possess greater 'means of happiness'. The young man toils all his life. He pays a high price in the form of servility for attempting to climb the social scale, and recognizes in his old age the vanity and emptiness of social distinctions. 'Power and riches appear then to be, what they

that an action may be virtuous (performed because agreeable to reason or for the love of goodness) and yet be accompanied by pleasure. The delight which we take in acting virtuously does not, according to Law, detract from the positive assessment of the action (2nd edn., 30ff.). I have omitted dealing with Law's work, which seems to have been the first major response to Mandeville, as there is nothing in it concerning the problem of luxury or economic growth.

⁵⁰ *Theory*, VII.ii.4.9.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, VII.ii.4.11.

⁵² *Ibid.*, VII.ii.4.12.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, IV.1.8.

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are, enormous and operose machines contrived to produce a few trifling conveniences to the body'; they merely 'keep off the summer shower, not the winter storm, but leave him always as much, and sometimes more exposed than before, to anxiety, to fear, and to sorrow; to diseases, to danger, and to death'.⁵⁴ Smith explains that what prevents us from realizing that wealth is 'contemptible and trifling' is the fact that we rarely view it in an 'abstract and philosophical light' and that 'we naturally confound it in our imagination with the order, the regular and harmonious movement of the system, the machine or oeconomy by means of which it is produced.'⁵⁵ Yet Smith makes clear that thanks to a 'cosmic harmony'⁵⁶ our ignorance ends up leading to public benefit: 'it is well that nature imposes upon us in this manner. It is this deception which rouses and keeps in continual motion the industry of mankind.' He mentions in this connection the workings of the invisible hand, which in a second step also lead to a fairly even distribution of those basic goods that are essential for *real* happiness, given that the rich cannot consume a significantly greater amount of such goods than the poor can.⁵⁷ On this score Smith ends up being a lot closer to Mandeville than he himself realized or than he would have liked: not only does he admit that vanity is an important driving force, he also thinks in very Mandevillian fashion that in the end all works out for the best. In the *Wealth of nations* the role played by self-interest (Mandeville

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, IV.1.8.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, IV.1.9.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, editors' Introduction, 7. Raphael and Macfie attribute the origin of Smith's idea of a cosmic harmony to his admiration of the Stoics. However, the notion that all turns out for the best is also strongly present in Mandeville's *Fable*.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, IV.1.10. Smith's concern with balancing the needs of the poor with the needs of the rich has been stressed by Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff in 'Needs and Justice in the *Wealth of Nations*', *Wealth and virtue: the shaping of political economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. Hont/Ignatieff (Cambridge, 1983), 1-44. More specifically the authors point to the role the disciplining constraints of free competition play in ensuring that the seemingly egotistical pursuit of self-interest leads to general wealth (9-12).

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would have used the term ‘vice’) is even more prominent than in the *Theory of moral sentiments*. This is apparent not only from Smith’s often quoted statement from the preface that ‘it is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest’.⁵⁸ In fact, much of Smith’s economic theory in the *Wealth of nations* is based on the premise that humans act primarily for egotistic reasons. The second form in which the conflict between moral issues and economic progress emerges in the *Theory* concerns the question of the sense of economic endeavour. While neither Mandeville nor most of the other authors I have discussed here have raised this issue, Smith confronts it, but without presenting a satisfactory answer.⁵⁹ The case of the young man who unwisely laboured to improve his social standing is answered only from the point of view of society at large, but not on an individual level.

Another area of conflict between the demands of a prosperous economy and moral values arises from the consequences of the division of labour. Although Smith had no doubt that the division of labour was something basically positive,⁶⁰ he did see, along with Ferguson, some of the dangers involved in economies based on it, and he devoted a good part of Book V of his *Wealth of nations* to discussing the means and ways of counteracting the negative

⁵⁸ *An Inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations*, ed. R H Campbell, A S Skinner, W B Todd (Oxford, 1976), I.ii.2. A case has been made for linking this kind of self-interest to prudence, thus assigning it a more positive value than Mandeville did. Viz. Charles L Griswold, *Adam Smith and the virtues of Enlightenment* (Cambridge 1999), 225. Although this proposal does somewhat reduce the tension between morals and wealth, it still leaves the basic conflict between self-interest and a truly positive virtue such as benevolence unresolved.

⁵⁹ Griswold, *op. cit.*, 222 terms the situation of the permanently dissatisfied members of society ‘comic irony’, suggesting that Smith would have thought that the best mankind can do is to seek the mean between the tranquillity of the Stoic and the ‘ordinary and lowly pursuit of happiness’ (227).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, I.i-iii.

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tendencies. One notable strategy he recommended was universal education.⁶¹

II

Priestley's Two Concepts of Virtue

The more immediately evident of Priestley's notions of virtue could be labelled 'Christian virtue'. It is actor rather than action oriented, meaning that it is based on the person's moral disposition, which guarantees that the person acts in a virtuous manner. What Priestley specifically means by this concept of virtue could be summed up by his expression the 'social principle', defined as a disposition to love and help others.⁶² The precepts following from this concept of virtue are evidently his four rules of human conduct, the first two of which he considers to be basic: obedience to the will of God, and regard to our own happiness. The third rule, a regard to the good of others, is claimed to coincide with the first one, while the fourth rule, regard to the dictates of conscience, is supposed to be a substitute for the other rules, one which applies in emergencies when there is no time for reasoning. Priestley sees no conflict between the rules, 'because we are so made, as social beings, that every man provides the most effectually for his own happiness, when he cultivates those sentiments, and pursues that conduct, which, at the same time, most eminently conduce to the welfare of these with whom he is connected'.⁶³ Needless to say, this is a rather traditional approach to morality, as is further evidenced by Priestley's regards for humility, in contradistinction to Hume's downgrading of humility within the context of his naturalist ethics.⁶⁴ The fact that Priestley regarded himself as a *rational Dissenter* could be taken as an indication that he was a rationalist, but this is of limited application to his ethics. Thus

⁶¹ Viz. especially *ibid.*, V.i.f.46-61. The topic of the dehumanization of workers in a commercial society has, of course, received a great deal of attention. For a recent discussion viz. Griswold, *op. cit.*, 292-301.

⁶² *The theological and miscellaneous works*, ed. J T Rutt, 25 vols. (London, 1817-1832; repr. New York, 1972; Bristol, 1999), vol. 2, 43.

⁶³ *Works*, vol. 2, 25-27.

⁶⁴ *Works*, vol. 2, 41. Hume, *Treatise*, Book III, Part III, Section II, 598.

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human beneficence aims first at those around us, and at strangers only when our own personal interests and those of family or country have been taken care of. In present day parlance, this kind of ethics is labelled agent-relative. It is characterized by the belief that duties are relative to the agent and dependent on his or her personal relationships to others. An alternative based solely on rational considerations, called today universalistic or impartiality ethics, which omits any reference to feelings and personal relationships, was propounded in the eighteenth century by Priestley's contemporary William Godwin, whose paradigmatic example of the agent being morally obligated to save from a burning building a person of recognized merit rather than one's own relative, is still used in today's ethical discussions. Priestley thought that such systems, which hold that duties are independent of the agent's relationships, are impossible to realize and worse than useless even when held only as ideals.⁶⁵

Priestley did not accept radically ascetic moral demands. He would have rejected Mandeville's extreme definitions of virtue and vice and embraced Hutcheson's and even Hume's advocacy of moderation. Although he does not specifically mention the earlier debate, and does not explicitly call for moderation when it comes to defining virtue and vice, his remarks on sensual pleasure make it plain that he wished to avoid extreme views. Thus he sees the capacity to enjoy the pleasures of sense as given to us by God, so that there cannot be anything wrong with gratifying such desires as long as the indulgence is not so excessive 'as to interfere with the greater good of ourselves and others'.⁶⁶

Priestley comes close to declaring that seeking Christian virtue is the true purpose of life.⁶⁷ He mentions such virtue at the beginning of several of his publications, setting it as the goal of whatever

⁶⁵ *Works*, vol. 2, 46.

⁶⁶ *Works*, vol. 2, 32. Aesthetic pleasure receives similar treatment, viz. vol. 2, 46-7.

⁶⁷ Possibly the final pinnacle is reached by the insight into the workings of the theodicy connected with the idea that humans are a necessary part of that divine order. This enables us to attain the state that Hartley labelled annihilation. Priestley discusses this within the context of his defence of necessitarianism (*Works*, vol. 3, 507-20).

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activity that particular book has as its topic. Thus in his *Institutes of natural and revealed religion* he states that ‘true philosophy’ is that which will make a good man virtuous and happy,⁶⁸ in his work on education he claims that ‘the most important object of education is to form the minds of youth to virtue’,⁶⁹ and in his work on history he claims that history strengthens the sentiment of virtue, since ‘in history vice never appears tempting’.⁷⁰ It is sometimes within this context that the conflict between moral values and wealth is at least strongly implied; it is here invariably resolved by placing virtue above material gain. The study of history is thus said to promote virtue thanks to the fact that we realize the limited value of riches, given that distinguished people lived in poverty.⁷¹ And the goal of education is affirmed by Priestley to be not to advance in the world, but,

to inculcate such principles and lead to such habits as will enable men to pass with integrity and real honour through life, and to be inflexibly just, benevolent, and good, notwithstanding all the temptations to the contrary from the example of the age we live in.⁷²

A similar preference for Christian moral values over economic ones is expressed in his *Miscellaneous Observations relating to Education*, where he ranks different professions according to, *inter alia*, their influence on a person’s moral character. Not surprisingly, Priestley classifies theology as the highest, followed by medicine and law. While commenting on the ‘inferior arts of life’ he remarks that merchandising requires constant small gains and thus leads to mean tricks.⁷³ However, as we will soon see, the

⁶⁸ *Works*, vol. 2, xxi.

⁶⁹ *Works*, vol. 24, 5.

⁷⁰ *Works*, vol. 24, 36-8.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Works*, vol. 25, 6.

⁷³ *Works*, vol. 25, 20-4. Priestley’s criticism of merchants applies mainly to the ‘petty traders’, not to large scale ones, to whom he attests generosity and frequent involvement in publicly benevolent undertakings. This distinction is discussed in Margaret Canovan, ‘Paternalistic Liberalism: Joseph Priestley on Rank and Inequality’, *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 2

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fact that trade occasionally results in dishonest business practices did not turn him against commerce. Why was this so? Why Priestley did not for instance advocate government intervention in such cases, will become apparent later on.

Priestley thought that knowledge of virtue was largely derived from revelation, which dictated the necessity of divine intervention. In this he radically differed from a Mandeville or a Hume, both of whom thought that moral values developed in the course of a natural process. Mandeville describes the emergence of morality in an early part of his *Fable of the Bees* entitled 'An Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue', arguing that skilful politicians, themselves acting for selfish reasons, induce people to suppress their own unsociable appetites and to respect others. Hume drops the fiction of the skilful politician and presents a completely naturalistic account of the development of morality.⁷⁴ Priestley deemed such natural processes to be insufficient, not just for arriving at virtue, but for all religious and moral guidance. Thus he thought that although natural religion could be demonstrated by natural reason, it could not be discovered by it without the help of revelation, defined as the 'interposition of a competent authority',⁷⁵ when God communicated a few 'fundamental truths' to men, on the basis of which we can expect 'sound knowledge, virtue and happiness' to prevail. Priestley did not think that without revelation people would have formed no 'just principles of religion', but he did stress that the process would have taken much longer and that some truths would never have been acquired at all.⁷⁶

The case I have just made for placing Priestley squarely within the broad stream of traditional Christianity needs to be qualified. Priestley did not accept the Christian tradition blindly, but emphasized, in accordance with his Socinian beliefs, the need for a rational interpretation of revelation. He considered reason to be a gift of God and, since it proceeded from the same source as the Scriptures, the two could not be contrary to each other, 'but must

(1983), 23-37, viz. esp. 26-7. For the purposes of my argument, the distinction is not relevant.

⁷⁴ *Treatise*, III.ii.2; viz. Hundert, *op. cit.*, 84-5.

⁷⁵ *Works*, vol. 2, 2, 107.

⁷⁶ *Works*, vol. 3, 385, viz. also vol. 2, 104-5.

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mutually illustrate and enforce one another'.⁷⁷ And it was such a rational interpretation of the Bible that liberated Priestley from the constraints of a literal understanding and made him free to read it so as to make its moral precepts fit into the eighteenth century debate on economics.⁷⁸

Priestley develops his second concept of virtue, which could be labelled 'commercial' or 'economic virtue',⁷⁹ in a rather unexpected place, namely in a sermon entitled 'The duty of not living to ourselves. Romans xiv.7. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.'⁸⁰ What one would expect from a sermon bearing such a title by an eighteenth century minister of a Christian church of any denomination would be mainly exhortations to engage in altruistic behaviour, but certainly not a defence of the division of labour and an advocacy of economic

⁷⁷ *Works*, vol. 2, xvi, 384. Priestley makes the same point at a number of other places and within different contexts in his writings. Thus he speaks of 'a perfect consonancy between the doctrines of revelation and the dictates of natural reason' and asserts that natural phenomena favour the same conclusion about the nature of man as revelation does (*Works*, vol. 3, 387). The rationality of revelation becomes plain in statements such as: 'Christianity will be no obstruction to any thing that is truly rational, and becoming a man, with respect to either; and whatever is not rational, ought to be abandoned on principles that are even not Christian' (*Works*, vol. 4, 446).

⁷⁸ Priestley interprets the Bible to suit his own requirements on other occasions as well, using it for instance to support his materialism (*Disquisitions relating to matter and spirit*, Introduction, *Works*, vol. 3, 218-20 and Sections 14-15, 304-23) and his necessitarianism (*The doctrine of philosophical necessity illustrated*, Section 12, *Works*, vol. 3, 524-32).

⁷⁹ The expression 'commercial virtue' is used by Alan Tapper, 'Priestley on Politics, Progress and Moral Theology', *Enlightenment and religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge, 1996), 272-86, viz. esp. 285-6.

⁸⁰ This important piece of writing has received almost no attention in the literature on Priestley. The only exception that I am aware of is John Ruskin Clark, *Joseph Priestley: 'A Comet in the System'* (Northumberland, Penn., 1994), 77-8. Although Clark quotes at length from the sermon, he does not seem to think that there is anything out of the ordinary about it.

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activity. This, however, is basically how Priestley interprets Paul's maxim. Priestley apparently put a high value on the message of this sermon, because he commenced it by claiming that this maxim is the great end of human life, negatively expressed.⁸¹ Not surprisingly, he views human interrelationships to be essential to our well being, but, perhaps less predictably, he considers them to be dependent on our needs: 'the more various and extensive are our powers, either for action or enjoyment, on that very account, the more multiplied and extensive are our wants; so that, at the same time that they are marks of our superiority to, they are bonds of our connexion with, and signs of our dependence upon the various parts of the world around us, and of our subservience to one another.'⁸² From this praise of the multiplication of wants, Priestley draws the by now familiar conclusion that the commercial society of his day, with its division of labour, superior modes of production, and greater output of goods, ranks higher than other kinds of society:

In general, nothing can be more obvious than the mutual dependence of men on one another. We see it in the most barbarous countries, where the connexions of mankind are the fewest and the slightest. This dependence is more sensible, indeed, in a state of infancy, when the least remission of the care of others would be fatal to us; but it is as real and necessary, and vastly more extensive, though less striking, when we are more advanced in life, especially in civilized countries. And the more perfect is the state of civil society, the more various and extended are the connexions which man has with man, and the less able is he to subsist comfortably without the help of others. The business of human life, where it is enjoyed in perfection, is subdivided into so many parts, (each of which is executed by different hands) that a person who would reap the benefit of all the arts of life in perfection, must employ, and consequently be dependent upon thousand; he must even be under obligations to numbers of whom he has not the least knowledge. These connexions of man with man are every day growing more

⁸¹ *Works*, vol. 15, 122.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 125.

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extensive. The most distant parts of the earth are now connected: every part is every day growing still more necessary to every other part; and the nearer advances we make to general happiness, and the more commodious our circumstances in this world are made for us, the more intimately and extensively we become connected with, and the more closely we are dependent upon one another.⁸³

It should be noted that Priestley does not question the nature of this dependency (dependency is not usually judged to be something positive), nor the consequences to which it can lead (e.g. exploitation, alienation). In fact he stresses the positive value of wants at other places in his writings as well, crediting the insatiable human longing for material advancement for leading to the rise of commerce.⁸⁴

After affirming that human nature is essentially of a social character,⁸⁵ Priestley takes up the other key theme of the sermon, namely the idea that activity is indispensable to human well being. He presents a largely psychological argument, based on the premise that concern for the self is a source of anxiety, and, if noticed by others, a cause of ridicule. It is imperative to escape this situation, which, when unhindered, results in the person perpetually becoming preoccupied with themselves, growing distressed and ill, 'till, these mental and bodily disorders mutually increasing one another, his condition is at length the most wretched and distressing that can be conceived.'⁸⁶ The only way to prevent this deterioration is to engage in 'constant labour, either of body or mind', to 'exert our faculties upon some object foreign to ourselves'.⁸⁷ That Priestley really has, in these remarks, basically work in mind, becomes evident when he offers the observation we have seen Helvétius make, that it is in the 'higher ranks of life' that we see more of this kind of unhappiness. He is not, to be sure, totally

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 125-6.

⁸⁴ *Works*, vol. 24, 316.

⁸⁵ *Works*, vol. 15, 127-8.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 130-2. Priestley was quite concerned with the physical distress caused by inaction, for he returns to it again in his summary, speaking of 'hypocondriacal disorders' (140).

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 131, 133, viz. also 140.

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indifferent to the kind of activity one engages in, preferring the pursuit of the 'nobler pleasures of our nature' to 'sensual pleasure', but the primary stress here is on the pursuit of something external to ourselves and only secondarily on the object of that pursuit.⁸⁸

Priestley, incidentally, takes up the idea that some kind of economic activity is essential to human well being at a number of other points in his writing as well. He holds that there is 'much more happiness in the middle classes of life, who are above the fear of want, and yet have a sufficient motive for a constant exertion of their faculties; and who have always some other object besides amusement'.⁸⁹ And he advises the wealthy to have 'a constant motive for exercise and employment, without which it is not in the constitution of our natures that any person should enjoy good health or spirits'.⁹⁰

This explains why he values wants, placing himself in opposition to the negative evaluation of desire pseudo-accepted by Mandeville and accepted at face value by Rousseau. For Priestley it is,

a great mark of the wisdom and goodness of Divine Providence, that men's minds are so constituted, that though they be in easy circumstances, they are never completely

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁸⁹ *Works*, vol. 1/I, 205. A similarly approving view of the middle class is expressed in vol. 24, 244, where Priestley finds that political representatives best be drawn from the middle class, as they are better educated, have fewer artificial wants and are more independent than the rich. In vol. 25, 58 Priestley again declares that the prospects of the nobility are poor, saying that 'upon the whole, the chance that the wealthy have of being really happy in life, and of spending their time in a manner most agreeable to themselves, is considerably less than that of persons in middling circumstances.' Priestley's abhorrence of idleness is stressed in Tapper, *op. cit.*, 278-9.

⁹⁰ *Works*, vol. 25, 15. Priestley echoes Hume's emphasis that leisure can be enjoyed only if preceded by a sufficient amount of activity in vol. 25, 61: 'The chief resources of the wealthy are sensual gratifications and amusements; but labour is necessary to give them a proper relish. It is serious business only that makes amusement pleasant; and the labourer only knows the sweets of rest, as the hungry and thirsty alone can taste the genuine pleasures of eating and drinking'. Priestley's relationship with 'persons of rank' is also discussed in Canovan, *op. cit.*, 25-6.

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satisfied. The passions of most men are still engaging them in a variety of pursuits, in which they are as eager, and which they prosecute with as much alacrity and earnestness, as if necessity compelled them to it.⁹¹

Desires are what forces us to keep busy, and thus to avoid becoming preoccupied with ourselves.

The incompatibility between Priestley's recipe for human happiness in this sermon and traditional Christian ethics is obvious. Although he does introduce here the notion of 'Christian annihilation', and although he does stress the need of benevolence and the perniciousness of pride, these comments are rather marginal. His idea of a 'social character' and of the interconnectedness with others does not by any means imply the conscious performance of altruistic acts. That Christian revelation only plays a secondary role in this sermon is evidenced by the fact that it is only after a lengthy discussion of his psychological theory and its ramifications that Priestley finally turns toward the Bible, and this he limits to a corroborating role, declaring that he would like to 'see what considerations, drawn from the Holy Scriptures, will farther confirm and illustrate this maxim of human conduct'.⁹² Even if Priestley's theory does not, in a strict sense, contradict the Bible, it also does not owe its inspiration to it, but draws rather on mainstream eighteenth century economic theory, much more on Hume than on the Apostle Paul. His enthusiasm in embracing the advantages of the commercial society is striking. This is shown by his belief that on the basis of his theory of human happiness, he would cure *all* mental and physical ills by preventing people from becoming preoccupied with themselves, as if there were not other ample sources of unhappiness. Priestley perhaps somewhat naïvely thinks that thanks to activity 'all mankind may be equally, mutually, and boundlessly happy'.⁹³ In doing so, he is only being true to a tradition that inspired him a great deal. The tension between Christian morals and economics is, incidentally, not at all diminished by the fact that Priestley does not use the word 'virtue'

⁹¹ *Works*, vol. 15, 133.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 134, 136, 139.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 140.

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in the sermon, nor, of course, the expression ‘commercial virtue’. The fact remains that emphasis is placed on economic activity rather than on altruistic action.

III

Morals and Economics in Conflict and in Accord

The tension between Priestley’s two concepts of virtue emerges at a number of places in his writings, and I will now examine some of them in order to determine how sharp the conflict really is and whether there is not some way of reconciling it. Not surprisingly, a key role is played by Priestley’s remarks on economics.⁹⁴ My contention will be that, although Priestley did not fully abandon his conception of Christian ethics, a large part of his remarks on economics was concerned with economic growth, and thus with what may be called economic virtue, though, just as Smith, he did occupy himself with the problem of justice in the sense of a fair distribution of goods.⁹⁵ Much of what he writes on economics

⁹⁴ Although Priestley discusses economic issues at a number of places in his work, they are mainly concentrated in his *Lectures on history and general policy*. Significantly, Priestley here borrows extensively from other economic writers, chiefly David Hume, Adam Smith, and James Stewart (James Stewart, *An inquiry into the principles of political oeconomy: being an essay on the science of domestic policy in free nations ...*, 2 vols., London, 1767, modern ed. by Andrew Skinner, Edinburgh and London, 1966). Stewart follows his British predecessors in advocating moderation when he comes to deal with the issue of luxury. He criticises excessive luxury which produces adverse effects on the mind, body, fortune, and the state, but accepts luxury in the sense of ‘the moderate gratifications of our natural or rational desires’ (266). Other than that Stewart does not seem to be greatly concerned with the conflict between wealth and virtue. Priestley derives from Stewart some examples and a small amount of theory, but as Chuhei Sugiyama, who has examined the question of Priestley’s sources in his economic writings, has pointed out, nothing of comparable importance to the borrowings from Smith (‘The Economic Thought of Joseph Priestley’, *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 3 (1984), 77-90, viz. esp. 88-9).

⁹⁵ Hont/Ignatieff, *op. cit.*, argue that in his *Wealth of nations* Smith was concerned with justice rather than with civic virtue. The same point is

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leaves the impression that he would have agreed with a good number of the views that were implied by Mandeville's paradox, or at least with a modified version of them, perhaps in the form presented by Hume, so that reconciling them with his Christian ethics would, at times, have been difficult. One such point concerns his observations about human nature. In addition to portraying humans as driven by uncounted desires, as we have seen in the previous Section, he also claims that they are generally averse to labour,⁹⁶ and 'naturally selfish, sensual, haughty, overbearing, and savage'.⁹⁷ Also at least in part Mandevillian is his explanation of how such unsocial beings are capable of living in society. It was one of the main points of the *Fable* that the basically vicious character of humans becomes concealed during the protracted process of socialization thanks to man's desire to please others, thanks to his pressing need to gain their recognition.⁹⁸ Priestley takes up this theme by admitting that society 'can never arrive at perfection till those vices to which men are most prone be either eradicated or disguised, and the opposite virtues either acquired or counterfeited'. As he does not think that it is possible for the bulk of mankind to 'absolutely ... eradicate vices and acquire virtues', he claims that 'the art of preserving the appearance of virtue' must be substituted. This he thinks will suffice as long as the appearance is made 'habitual and uniform'. By introducing the Enlightenment concept of politeness, he gives up, to a considerable extent, on the ideal of attaining Christian virtue in favour of social pretence: 'True politeness is the art of seeming to be habitually influenced by those virtues and good dispositions of mind which most contribute to the ease and the pleasure of those we converse with'. He somewhat mitigates this view by suggesting that being truly virtuous 'would enable a person to contribute to the happiness of

made by Christopher J Berry, 'Adam Smith and the Virtues of Commerce', *Nomos*, 34 (1992), 69-88, viz. esp., 75-6.

⁹⁶ *Works*, vol. 24, 308. Viz also 226: 'in general, men will not submit to labour if they can live without it', and vol. 25, 315: 'Men will always live without labour, or upon the labour of others, if they can.'

⁹⁷ *Works*, vol. 24, 343.

⁹⁸ The process of socialization in the *Fable* is discussed by Hundert, *op. cit.*, e.g. 52-3, 70-3.

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others with far less pain and mortification to himself'.⁹⁹ Although one could attempt to reconcile Priestley's acceptance of politeness with his remarks on Christian virtue by claiming that he would have regarded the 'counterfeited' virtue as a merely temporary measure, nevertheless, a certain residual tension remains, if only because of the hypocrisy inherent in such a notion of politeness. One must also wonder how this view of human nature would ever fit into Priestley's general theodicy. Why would God have made such a man? We should also note, however, that Priestley was not always consistent in his views on politeness. He was far less accepting of it in the course of his critique of Hume's exclusion of humility from among the virtues, as well as in his remark that politeness is unfavourable to the Dissenters, as it leads to a diminished interest in religion.¹⁰⁰ Apparently at times Priestley himself could not decide whether he was a Christian moralist or a proponent of the commercial society.

A second point on which economic virtue takes precedence over Christian virtue is in Priestley's praise of commercial society. Here he is also much closer to Hume or even to Mandeville than to Ferguson, Brown, or Adam Smith. Thus he declares that commerce leads to a greater knowledge of the world, expands the mind, works against hurtful prejudices, and 'excites industry and increases labour' thus procuring conveniences and making life happier; it 'never fails to make a people wealthy, populous, and powerful'. Priestley supports this by claiming that the punctuality required in commercial transactions inculcates in the participants 'the principles of strict justice and honour'.¹⁰¹ Much of Lecture LV as well as some of the immediately preceding parts of his *Lectures on history and general policy* are devoted to a discussion of luxury and virtue. Although Mandeville is not mentioned by name, the issues raised here fit well into the eighteenth century debate that ensued from attempts to deal with the paradox raised by the *Fable*.

⁹⁹ *Works*, vol. 24, 343.

¹⁰⁰ *Works*, vol. 2, 89-90, vol. 22, 378.

¹⁰¹ *Works*, vol. 24, 316-8. The view that punctuality, introduced into society by merchants, contributes to the good life is also expressed by Adam Smith, *Lectures on jurisprudence*, ed. R L Meek, D D Raphael, P G Stein (Indianapolis, 1982), 539.

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Priestley takes a line on luxury that again is strongly reminiscent of Hume or even Mandeville himself. He proclaims luxury to be favourable to liberty, as people who acquire property seek equal laws to secure it.¹⁰² Perhaps even more remarkably, he claims that virtue is to be expected more in wealthy societies than in poor ones, as ‘nothing can restrain a love of money but a sense of honour and virtue, which may reasonably be expected to abound most in an age of luxury and knowledge’.¹⁰³ The examples Priestley cites to support this claim suggest that he had political corruption rather than individual virtue in mind; he mentions Poland as poor but corrupt with England providing his counterexample, where the electors were more corrupt than the elected.¹⁰⁴ However, on a level that is both individual and collective, wealth is decreed to be beneficial as conveniences make people more happy. Even ‘ornament in dress, equipage etc.’ are claimed to be always innocuous to virtue, since they promote industry and circulate wealth. There is the same emphasis on the merit of work as was found in Hume: ‘The vanity of the French makes them industrious, whereas the pride of the Spaniards makes them idle’.¹⁰⁵ Within this context it would not be improper to claim that Priestley is defending ‘commercial virtue’ rather than Christian virtue. It should also be noted that Priestley’s praise of the benefits of the commercial society would have precluded him from being plagued by the kind of doubts about the sense of economic growth that

¹⁰² *Works*, vol. 24, 310. Gregory Claeys, ‘Virtuous Commerce and Free Theology: Political Economy and the Dissenting Academies 1750-1800’, *History of Political Thought*, 20 (1999), 141-172, claims that for Priestley theological freedom served as ‘a general model for all liberty’ (157). Indeed, the demands of the Dissenters for religious toleration would have confirmed Priestley in his high regard of social, political, and economic liberty. But if I am right, the inspiration would have been derived mainly from the economic debate of the time.

¹⁰³ *Works*, vol. 24, 340.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* This last point, including the examples, is taken over almost literally from Hume’s ‘Of the Refinement of the Arts’.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 338. The emphasis on the value of activity is repeated a little later: ‘Idleness is the great inlet to the most destructive vices.’ (340)

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haunted Adam Smith. Priestley's optimistic assessment of his own society placed him squarely within the line taken by Hume.

Next, in Lecture LV, Priestley disputes the opinion that luxury makes men effeminate and cowardly, contending that spirit and courage are to be expected in well nourished people who have something to defend.¹⁰⁶ This view bears similarity to Ferguson's dismissal of such attacks on wealth. Curiously enough, Ferguson and Priestley are, on this point, even more radically pro-luxury than was Mandeville himself who thought that luxury would not diminish military readiness because it was the poor who would do the fighting and the poor were unspoiled by luxury.¹⁰⁷ Priestley further argued that greater riches improve knowledge, and knowledge applied to the defence of the state improves military skill. In addition, 'in a people of the greatest wealth and luxury there is never found that treachery and cruelty which characterize almost all uncivilized and barbarous states'.¹⁰⁸

To be sure, Priestley does make more of an argument against excessive luxury than Hume does. Thus he quotes the case of states in their early period for being remarkable for their frugality and virtue, states which Hume regarded as unattractive in just about every conceivable way.¹⁰⁹ Priestley also presents a stronger case for moderation, taking the line of Hutcheson rather than that of Hume. He occasionally warns against excessive indulgence of the appetites, since he claims that this enfeebles men and shortens their lives.¹¹⁰ And he criticizes 'destructive luxury', which he sees

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 339.

¹⁰⁷ *Fable*, Remark L, 120. Adam Smith too places the military capability of opulent societies above that of poor and barbarous ones, though his extended discussion of this topic is rather more complex; *Wealth of nations*, V.i.a, viz. Berry, *op. cit.*, 82-3.

¹⁰⁸ *Works*, vol. 24, 339.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 340. Claeys, *op. cit.*, 158, claims that the ambiguity in Priestley's attitude toward commercial societies stems from the conflict between virtue in the sense of public spirit and his general acceptance of luxury. While there are indeed places where Priestley does allude to republican virtue (such as the one just cited), the overwhelming majority of relevant passages points to a conflict between Christian and economic virtue.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 338.

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promoted in large capital cities, where the proximity of the rich induces them to imitate each other's extravagance and thus squander large amounts of money.¹¹¹ He also speaks up against gaming, which he regards as especially pernicious, as a man who loses an estate will not think of regaining it by honest means. Interestingly enough, it is only in the context of this last critique, almost as an afterthought, that he again recalls his Christian concept of virtue: 'There is no effectual method of restraining vice of all kinds but by early and deeply inculcating the principles of integrity, honour, and religion, on the minds of youth, in a severe and virtuous education.'¹¹² What these last remarks prove is that Priestley did not completely lose sight of his ideal of Christian virtue, although his argument against excessive luxury is, at least in part, based more on considerations of prudence than on moral regards.

Priestley's views on property are also in potential conflict with Christian ethics, in view of its possible demand to renounce worldly goods or at least to downplay their importance. Like Locke and a number of the eighteenth century writers before him Priestley sees property as a natural right 'founded upon a regard to the general good of the society'.¹¹³ He stresses the fact that both agriculture and manufacturing will thrive only if there is security of property, otherwise land will not be improved and people will limit themselves to surviving on bare subsistence.¹¹⁴ Here again the emphasis is on the desirability of economic growth rather than on virtue, though this does not necessarily represent a contradiction with Priestley's moral philosophy, given his rejection of ascetic standpoints.

Perhaps the most conspicuous feature of Priestley's views on economics, one which turns up at a number of places in his oeuvre is his advocacy of laissez-faire. While he is not in favour of a minimal state in the manner advocated by William Godwin, he does envision the ideal of a government that interferes as little as possible. In the course of doing so, Priestley shows himself to be

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 341.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 341-2.

¹¹³ *Works*, vol. 22, 26, viz. also 167.

¹¹⁴ *Works*, vol. 22, 37-8, vol. 24, 228, 306-7.

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concerned with material benefits as well as with justice, but hardly with his own conception of Christian virtue. One of his main concerns is free international trade; he suggests that the principle that every fair bargain benefits both parties applies not just to individuals, but also to nations.¹¹⁵ Priestley also strongly opposes protectionist measures. He does not think it meaningful for the government to interfere in trade by sheltering merchants or even farmers from risks, arguing that they and their insurers should calculate and deal with the risks themselves. He feels that it is better to abandon a branch of trade rather than to fit out fleets to protect it, since another nation can carry the merchandise, and the capital employed in the carrying trade can be employed better some other way, for example for building roads, bridges, canals, or for clearing land.¹¹⁶ He also opposes taxing foreign goods on the grounds that such taxes only benefit the few.¹¹⁷ And subsidizing exports or limiting imports is deemed to be absurd, since it involves sacrificing the interest of the consumer to that of the manufacturer.¹¹⁸ Unlike some of the more radical advocates of *laissez-faire*, Priestley did think that protecting new branches of manufacturing could be useful, but he does stipulate that such action must be of limited duration. Should such a manufacture fail, he suggests that it be abandoned: 'The situation of the country is such as that the industry of its inhabitants will be better employed some other way'.¹¹⁹ The underlying reason why the government should keep from interfering in the economy of a country has to do with the fact that, for one thing, the individual actors are mature subjects and that, for another, information is more readily available to them than to the government.¹²⁰ Again just like Adam Smith, but also in agreement with today's mainstream economic theory, Priestley considers the governors to be ignorant mainly because of

¹¹⁵ *Works*, vol. 24, 325.

¹¹⁶ *Works*, vol. 24, 259-60; vol. 25, 171-3, 176-7.

¹¹⁷ *Works*, vol. 24, 259-60.

¹¹⁸ *Works*, vol. 24, 306-7; vol. 25, 176-7.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 306-7.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 305.

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the exceeding complexity of the issues involved in making economic decisions.¹²¹

Another area where Priestley is willing to allow some economic activity on the part of the government is in carrying out public works. This he suggests in a passage in the *Letters to Burke*:

If there be a superfluity of public money, it will not be employed to augment the profusion, and increase the undue influence, of individuals, but in works of great public utility, which are always wanted, and which nothing but the enormous expenses of government and of wars, chiefly occasioned by the ambitions of kings and courts, have prevented from being carried into execution. The expense of the late American war only would have converted all the waste grounds of this country into gardens. What canals, bridges, and noble roads, what public buildings, public libraries, and public laboratories, &c. &c. would it not have made for us! If the pride of nations must be gratified, let it be in such things as these, and not in the idle pageantry of a court, calculated only to corrupt and enslave a nation.¹²²

There are two points to be made in regard to this quote. One is that Priestley is not necessarily advocating public works, since he is only making the comparative statement that it would be better for the government to spend money on improving the infrastructure than on wars or pageantry. The beginning of the passage makes one suspect that Priestley is perhaps not in favour of public works at all, given that there never was a superfluity of public money in England in the eighteenth century, so that the whole statement may be read as a hypothetical argument in which the antecedent is always false. Secondly, it is interesting to note that Adam Smith unreservedly advocated the involvement of the government in building up an infrastructure in Book V of his *Wealth of nations* and that Priestley was, at least concerning this point, clearly more in favour of a minimal state than Smith.

The call for a minimal government is summed up in Priestley's sketch of a utopia in his *Letters to Burke* and in his pamphlet

¹²¹ *Ibid.* Adam Smith, *Wealth of nations*, IV.ii.10.

¹²² *Works*, vol. 22, 239.

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'Objects of Academical Education'. He hopes for 'a general release from all such taxes and burdens of every kind, as the public good does not require. In short, to make government as beneficial, and as little expensive and burdensome, as possible'. He also expresses the wish that governments will be 'no more interfering with matters of religion, with men's notions concerning God and a future state, than with philosophy or medicine', concentrating instead on the administration of justice.¹²³

The one area within Priestley's writings on economic theory in which his traditional Christian concept of virtue does play a more prominent role, are his suggestions for the treatment of the poor. As this topic has been dealt with recently,¹²⁴ I will only present a short summary of the main points involved. First it should be noted that Priestley accepted inequality in society, provided it was based on merit and not on heredity: 'A difference in industry and good fortune will introduce a difference in the conditions of men in society, so that in time some will become rich, and others poor.'¹²⁵ While this notion could obviously not be reconciled with some of the more egalitarian Christian moral conceptions, such as those advocated by the mendicant orders, and perhaps also not with the views of a Helvétius, it certainly would have been acceptable to all the other writers presented above, and there is no reason to think it incompatible with Priestley's own moral thought as sketched in Section II. However, his criticism of the Elizabethan Poor Laws and the Poor Laws in America¹²⁶ is not always easy to reconcile with his other remarks on economics. He presents two basic objections, the first one of which is strictly of a moral nature,

¹²³ *Works*, vol. 15, 434; vol. 22, 237, 242.

¹²⁴ Canovan, *op. cit.*

¹²⁵ *Works*, vol. 24, 226. For a wider discussion of this point viz. Canovan, *op. cit.*, 29.

¹²⁶ Commenting on the American situation Priestley remarks that 'the poor laws are the same as in England; and at New York and Philadelphia they already begin to find the same inconvenience from them. In Philadelphia the poor rate amounts to nine thousand pounds.' Quoted in Jenny Graham, *Revolutionary in exile: the emigration of Joseph Priestley to America, 1794-1804*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, Vol. 85, Part 2 (Philadelphia, 1995), 176-7.

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namely that legal maintenance of the poor precludes private charity, given that paying the poor rate is not the same as giving alms and ‘cannot be called Christianity’.¹²⁷ The second objection, that the laws provide a disincentive to self-improvement, is more difficult to classify, as it involves both economic and moral considerations.¹²⁸ For one thing Priestley again argues against excessive government involvement in the area of poor relief, and here he is being consistent not only with his general outlook on the role of the state, but also with his economic theory, where, as we have seen, questions of efficiency predominate: ‘... here will be great danger of [the statesmen] attempting too much, and thereby encumbering themselves without remedying the evil.’ Priestley is worried that ‘the greater ... the provision that is made for the poor, the more poor there will be to avail themselves of it’.¹²⁹ The moral and sociological component of this second criticism is provided by his claim that ‘great numbers ... will be improvident, spending every thing they get in the most extravagant manner’ and that the laws, far ‘from encouraging industry ... encourage idleness’.¹³⁰ Priestley’s complaint is that the laws will lead to unhappiness, because they will give free rein to the human tendency to indulge in idleness¹³¹ and will prevent the poor from engaging in meaningful

¹²⁷ *Works*, vol. 22, 85.

¹²⁸ Canovan, *op. cit.*, 31 comments this twofold criticism of the Old Poor Laws by claiming that it was ‘moral rather than economic, and stemmed as much from traditional paternalism as from progressive liberalism’. While I do not totally wish to dispute this contention, I will be concerned with showing that the full picture is rather complicated, given that Priestley’s concept of virtue was not straight forward and that his economic views stood in an uneasy relation to his moral ones.

¹²⁹ *Works*, vol. 24, 226.

¹³⁰ *Works*, vol. 24, 226; vol. 22, 222-3; viz. also vol. 25, 315.

¹³¹ Canovan, *op. cit.*, 31 claims that Priestley did not attribute the undesirable behaviour of the poor to ‘innate idleness, but to the unnatural situation of the poor Englishman subject to the Poor Law’. However, as we have seen above, Priestley did, certainly in his economic writings, consider humankind to be basically averse to labour. In view of his comments that the Poor Laws would increase the number of the destitute, it seems that what he considered as detrimental was a combination of the innate human laziness and the adverse effects of the Laws.

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activity, which, as we have seen above, is for Priestley, just as for Hume, essential for human well being.¹³²

What complicates the picture is the fact that Priestley did not content himself with advocating the abolition of the old laws without providing a substitute, but that he proposed a kind of insurance for the poor 'by appropriating a certain proportion of their wages to that use'. He thought that the fund should be administered by particular towns, and wished it to 'be regulated so as to enforce greater industry'.¹³³ Apparently Priestley was inspired by the example of already existent clubs, which functioned in a similar fashion, but which he did not consider to be sufficiently reliable. A number of points in connection with this scheme are problematic. First, given his view that humankind is basically averse to labour, it is difficult to see why he thought that his

¹³² The fact that Priestley's theory of human activity helps to explain his opposition to the Poor Laws is underlined by some of his remarks in the sermon we have discussed in Section II. There Priestley endorses a scheme for supporting ministers' widows and orphans, which prompts him to take up the subject of charity in general. He finds fault with giving, again on the grounds that it is bound to obstruct the distressed from 'relieving themselves'. What really bothers him is the fact that indiscriminate charity discourages activity. *Works*, vol. 15, 143-4.

¹³³ *Works*, vol. 24, 227. The fact that Priestley did not advocate leaving the poor unaided shows that a criticism of Priestley made by P O'Brien, *Debate aborted 1789-91: Priestley, Paine, Burke and the Revolution in France* (Edinburgh, Durham, 1996), 185, is essentially inappropriate: 'It may seem strange, at first sight, that Dr. Priestley should be one to decry the poor laws, a provision in which, as he himself indicates, England led the way, but he was a man who always had more than enough to occupy him, and although his income as a minister would be scant, because of his outstanding activities as a scientist and a literary man, from a very early stage, there were always generous patrons willing to fund him. The truth would seem to be that, in his adult life, he had little conception of what real poverty could mean; and that even the most willing individual, when out of work, could not always find alternative employment in the short term, if at all. In fact his attitude is reminiscent of certain politicians and wealthy people in modern times who assume that if people are poor, the problem must, to a large extent, lie with themselves.' In reality, Priestley was far more concerned with reforming a system that he thought caused more harm than good than with blaming the poor themselves.

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scheme would 'encourage men to provide for themselves' and rouse them 'to exert themselves to the utmost, and aspire to that comfortable independence of which, in the present state of things, they can have but little prospect'. He even went so far as to claim that 'having once got a little property, they will daily feel themselves animated to add to it'.¹³⁴ Priestley never explains what would hinder the participants from abusing the funds in the same way people abused the Poor Laws. Another practical problem concerns the abuse of the funds on the part of their managers. Priestley was well aware of the fact that funds of any kind were open to misuse, saying that 'the design ... is liable to be perverted, those who superintend ... not having the same upright views with those who appointed' them.¹³⁵ In fact his reason for advocating the insurance scheme over the already established clubs had to do with the fact that he saw that the clubs were liable to embezzlement.¹³⁶

Much more serious is the problem of reconciling the paternalistic implications of this scheme with Priestley's liberal principles in general and with his *laissez-faire* economics in particular. Priestley himself addresses the question whether forcing people to contribute to the fund would violate their liberty. In view of all that has been said concerning his economic views, his reply is rather surprising. He claims that spending money in whatever way one finds suitable 'is, in fact, a power that no person who acquires property in a state of society ever has; and it always is, and must be taken for granted, that every society has a right to apply whatever property is found or acquired within itself to any purposes which the good of the society at large really requires'. Priestley's stance has elicited different responses in recent literature dealing with the topic. Margaret Canovan claims that in advocating compulsory social insurance Priestley did not see any conflict with his principles of civil liberty. She points out that Priestley's position is contradictory only from a sociological point of view, given that paternalist charity and self-help are indeed hard to reconcile. But she sees his position coherent when one takes his moral and religious point of view into

¹³⁴ *Works*, vol. 25, 316-8.

¹³⁵ *Works*, vol. 24, 224-5.

¹³⁶ *Viz. Canovan, op. cit.*, 32.

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consideration.¹³⁷ However, as we have seen earlier in this section, Priestley certainly was greatly concerned with issues of efficiency, far more so in fact than with questions of Christian virtue. Canovan's further claim that 'Priestley's view of the social structure was intensely paternalistic',¹³⁸ may be consistent with Priestley's defence of Christian virtue, but not with his views on economic theory. I suspect that paternalistic viewpoints, though undoubtedly present in Priestley's *oeuvre*, are only peripheral to his philosophy. At any rate the number of places where Priestley expresses paternalistic views is limited. Even his advocacy of the insurance for the poor seems to be more of an afterthought than a burning concern.

Another outlook on the conflict between liberty and paternalism was presented by Isaac Kramnick, who claims, in distinction to Canovan, that Priestley *was* aware of the tension between his emancipatory and his disciplinary ideas, realizing that the insurance scheme does restrict liberty in not allowing the worker to spend his money as he himself thinks best. Kramnick argues that Priestley would have justified such invasions by pointing to the fact that they are aimed at not yet self-directing individuals and that, unlike the poor laws, their goal is 'to render the poor truly autonomous individuals who internalize the values of a truly free and therefore human person.'¹³⁹ Thus Kramnick claims that the need for discipline would be transitory, ending 'when ... new or reformed institutions had rendered everyone self-reliant and industrious. There was no doubt in Priestley's mind that such a day would dawn.'¹⁴⁰ Although this view does enjoy much initial plausibility, it is not totally unproblematic either. For one thing the textual evidence for it is rather slim. It is true that Priestley was hoping that his insurance scheme would have an educational effect on the poor, and one may indeed take it that he was truly hoping all aid to the poor would cease in the distant future, since he envisioned as

¹³⁷ Canovan, *op. cit.*, 33-4.

¹³⁸ Canovan, *op. cit.*, 30.

¹³⁹ Isaac Kramnick, 'Eighteenth-Century Science and Radical Social Theory: The Case of Joseph Priestley's Scientific Liberalism', *Journal of British Studies*, 25 (1986), 1-30, viz. esp. 27.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

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his utopian ideal the kind of minimal government that would not (need to) support anybody. Nevertheless, to my knowledge, he nowhere explicitly states that such an insurance scheme is only a temporary measure, one that will be abolished in the future. Secondly, Priestley's appeal for a free market economy does not apply only to the future, it is intended to have an immediate effect, perhaps in the form of legislation reducing subsidies, taxes, and customs dues, certainly in the form of a more limited government. His suggestion of a compulsory insurance scheme, which is also meant to be implemented immediately, is inconsistent with this. The principles behind the two are hard to reconcile. How can governors, who are judged by Priestley to be ignorant, know better than the people, even the poor, what their best course of action is?

Much less problematic, incidentally, is Priestley's 'paternalism' when it comes to educating the poor. Although he rejects government proposed educational codes,¹⁴¹ he does advocate that the poor should all be taught to read and write by some public provision. He thinks that this would improve their minds and morals and excite a spirit of industry and 'contribute to make them independent'. He points to parts of the country where the poor are not wholly illiterate and where they have more of a sense of honour and a spirit of industry.¹⁴² The reason these proposals are not as difficult as the suggestion of an insurance scheme lies in the projected use of compulsion; whereas Priestley does not advocate it when it comes to education, he does recommend it in connection with the insurance scheme. Also of interest is the fact that Priestley talked of education in order to counteract the negative consequences of the division of labour: 'Men would be little more than machines without some knowledge of letters'.¹⁴³ Concerning this point, Priestley is, as shown above, in full agreement with Adam Smith, but finds himself in total disagreement with Mandeville, who in his 'Essay on Charity' had argued against educating the poor on the grounds that they would be distracted from labour, would become unproductive at best or criminal at

¹⁴¹ *Works*, vol. 22, 43-7.

¹⁴² *Works*, vol. 25, 319.

¹⁴³ *Works*, vol. 24, 223; viz. also Canovan, *op. cit.*, 32.

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worst, concluding that education is against their best interest, and, of course, against that of society.¹⁴⁴

Conclusion

What our foregoing analysis makes clear is the fact that the tension between moral values and economic growth involves three separate issues. First, there is the problem of the alienation of the worker from his product and of the mechanization of life, both caused by the division of labour. As Adam Smith and Priestley both realized, this can be counteracted, for instance by improving the educational system. Secondly, there is the problem of dubious business practices, but this too would not have been considered to be an insurmountable difficulty, given that it was thought that in a predominantly free market economy such practices do not lead to any great measure of success. Finally, however, we will have noticed that the tension between wealth and virtue is more recalcitrant in the following crucial sense. We are left with the question not just why a philosopher needs to be rich, but whether ever increasing wealth will propel mankind towards more desirable life styles and ever greater happiness. The answers of the eighteenth century to these questions are of interest today, because they cover a wide range of possible responses, beginning with Rousseau's claim of the basic incompatibility between luxury and virtue, leading to the cautious reconciliation attempts of Adam Ferguson or Adam Smith, and ending with Hume's and Priestley's unbounded enthusiasm for economic progress.

As to the conflict between Priestley's concept of Christian virtue and his enthusiasm for economic growth, none of the available approaches seem to be very promising. One possibility, very unkind to Priestley, would be to argue that he basically just adopted an abstract general economic theory without really understanding its full consequences, without appreciating that it was irreconcilable with his moral views. Whatever plausibility such a reading may have would be based on the claim that Priestley on more than one occasion attempted to combine highly disparate conceptions, such as associationist psychology and Socinianism, and that he generally wrote very quickly, and was extremely prolific in his output, thus

¹⁴⁴ *Fable*, 285-322.

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losing sight of his own earlier writings and succumbing to glaring inconsistencies. While I do not wish to present Priestley as a systematic thinker,¹⁴⁵ and while there are indeed numerous and sometimes quite obvious disparities in his writings, such a reading fails to do justice to the fact that other writers in the eighteenth century were also unable to fully resolve the conflict between morals and economics. Moreover, as we have seen, all the writers Priestley drew on in his writings on economics were themselves concerned with moral issues. Priestley was well aware of this and was himself concerned to address some of the moral concerns raised by his advocacy of economic growth.

A second approach would be to argue that the two concepts of virtue are not completely incongruous given the fact that they are both actor oriented. Thus even when Priestley is praising the commercial society he never loses sight of the fact that what is at stake is progress not only on the part of the individual but also of human civilization as a whole. Unlike later economic theory, according to which the satisfaction of wants is a good in itself, Priestley conceives wants as valuable only instrumentally, only as means to the development of the agent and of interpersonal relations. Although there is no denying the validity of this point, it does not appreciably narrow the gap between the two types of virtue.

A third possible way of reconciling the conflict would be to claim that one of the two concepts of virtue is more basic than the other and serves as the other's foundation. As we have seen, one may easily get the impression that Priestley (mis)used the Bible to justify the commercial society. He obviously integrated themes from eighteenth century political economics into his philosophy, and it is on occasion those themes that dictate his way of reading the Bible and his morality. One could, for instance, take the sermon discussed in Section II to be the key to understanding his moral and political philosophy. One consequence of such a decision would be that virtue would end up being interpreted largely in the sense of

¹⁴⁵ The claim that Priestley was a systematic thinker has been made by J G McEvoy, J E McGuire, 'God and Nature: Priestley's Way of Rational Dissent', *Historical Studies in the Physical Sciences*, 6 (1975) 325-404, viz. esp. 326.

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commercial virtue. This has in fact been done by Isaac Kramnick and Alan Tapper, mainly in the process of their argument against interpretations placing Priestley within the civic humanist tradition.¹⁴⁶ However, I think that they have overstated their case, perhaps because they were mainly guided by the goal of demonstrating that Priestley did not adhere to the concept of civic virtue, and in doing so they lost sight of other aspects of Priestley's thought. As has been shown in Section II, Priestley was very much concerned with the traditional Christian conception of virtue, and there are places in his economic theory where this fact surfaces as well, such as in his critique of gambling, in his discussion of the situation of the poor, and at times even in the course of the sermon on 'The duty of not living unto ourselves'.¹⁴⁷ It would be a simplification to omit this aspect of Priestley's thought, especially since the conflict between virtue and luxury, inherent to modern economic thought, would end up being swept under the rug. This same objection, incidentally, could also be raised against

¹⁴⁶ Isaac Kramnick, 'Republican Revisionism Revisited', *The American Historical Review*, 87 (1982), 629-64, claims that for Priestley virtue was marked not by civic activity but by economic activity: 'One's duty was still to contribute to the public good, but this was best done through economic activity, which actually aimed at private gain'. The root notion of Kramnick's interpretation is perhaps the idea that the division of labour became essential to virtue (662-3). In a similar vein Tapper, *op. cit.*, has argued that Priestley's radicalism rests on a different basis than that of the opponents of luxury: 'It derives from his theodicy which links difficulty, effort and character, while rejecting the Spartanism of some of the other radicals. This theodicy denies that material progress must produce its own moral nemesis and thus perpetuate a sequence of historical cycles. It contends for the opposite conclusion, that material progress brings both moral and political benefits.' (283) Against the civic humanist interpretation, Tapper makes the additional valid point that 'by restricting the scope of government Priestley diminished the status of the political virtues' (285).

¹⁴⁷ One could ask what prompted Priestley to mention Christian virtue at these three places. A part of the answer may be that at none of them is efficiency the primary concern. However, the same could be said of his remarks on human nature or luxury, so that other considerations may have played a role as well.

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Canovan's contention, discussed above, that virtue lies above commerce. These two opposing interpretations, representing the extreme ends of the wide spectrum of possible readings of the relationship between ethics and economics in Priestley's philosophy, seem to me to be one-sided. I further think that it would be inappropriate to attempt to assign Priestley to some other pigeonhole. Thus I believe it would be misleading to claim that the key to understanding his philosophy is provided by the fact that he used a rational reading of the Bible as his point of departure. The same could namely be said of the early Socinians of the first half of the seventeenth century, who, too, were intent on a rational interpretation of the Bible, but who would never have written a sermon justifying the division of labour and advocating economic activity as the means of 'not living unto ourselves'. I hope to have shown that Priestley had drawn from so many diverse sources that any attempt to understand his thought from any one particular point of view, be it rational Dissent, economic virtue or traditional Christian virtue must be taken with great reservations. Selecting one text and claiming that it provides the key to reading Priestley would be arbitrary, even if there were nothing in Priestley's other works that would be grossly incompatible with it.

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**SOCINIANISM, HERESY AND JOHN LOCKE'S
REASONABLENESS OF CHRISTIANITY**

Stephen D Snobelen *

Essay review

John Locke, *The reasonableness of Christianity: as delivered in the Scriptures*, ed. John C. Higgins-Biddle. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999, 402pp., hdk, ISBN 0-19-8245254 £60.00 / \$98.95.

Introduction and overview

Locke scholars have waited a long time for this edition. When this reviewer first heard about Higgins-Biddle's forthcoming edition of Locke's *Reasonableness* it was the early 1990s and he was preparing an undergraduate thesis on Socinianism. It was therefore a delight to hold a copy of this attractive and meticulously-produced latest addition to the Clarendon Edition of the Works of John Locke. The result of many years careful research and preparation, this first ever critical edition of Locke's *Reasonableness*¹

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¹ Previous twentieth-century editions include *The reasonableness of Christianity*, ed. and intro. by George W Ewing (Chicago 1965; new ed. with new forward by Harold O J Brown, 1998); *The reasonableness of Christianity with a discourse of miracles and part of a third letter concerning toleration*, ed., intro. and abridg. by I T Ramsey (Stanford 1958); *The reasonableness of Christianity*, ed. and abridg. by A J Ferris (London 1946). Ewing's edition includes a small number of notes on the text. A facsimile publication of the 1794 edition of the *Reasonableness* and Locke's two *Vindications* has appeared recently in *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, ed. and intro. by Victor Nuovo (Bristol, 1997). See also *John Locke and Christianity: contemporary responses to The reasonableness of Christianity*, ed. and intro. by Victor Nuovo (Bristol, 1997), which reproduces extracts from both contemporary attacks on the *Reasonableness* and relevant background texts such as the Socinian

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offers scholars three intellectual commodities: a one-hundred page introduction to the content and context of the *Reasonableness*; an accurate text of the work with a tripartite apparatus containing Locke's additions, the variant readings and an informative commentary; and, lastly, supplementary material including the texts of several ancillary theological manuscripts from the hand of Locke. These three features will be treated separately below, with special attention paid to the question of Locke's engagement with Socinianism and his often-neglected mortalist theology. The concluding sections, in particular, will also serve to illustrate the value of this new edition for shedding new light on Locke's religious outlook. At the same time, this essay will provide an opportunity to touch on some of the other recent scholarship on Locke's heterodox theological views.

Locke, Deism and Hobbism

When Locke composed the *Reasonableness of Christianity, as delivered in the Scriptures*, he sought to reveal through the Bible that the teachings of Christianity are simple and universally comprehensible. One of his principal aims was to answer critics of Christianity who characterized the faith as overly abstruse and even irrational. At the same time, the work opposed those dogmatic theologians who, to Locke's mind, unnecessarily obfuscated true, biblical Christianity and placed onerous burdens on the shoulders of the common believer. The Christianity that Locke preached in the *Reasonableness* was a simple, biblicist faith devoid of the encumbrances of creed and tradition. It also asserted that the essence of Christianity contained only a minimum of doctrines that could be embraced by all Christians – the chief of these being the belief that Jesus is the Messiah. Despite its irenicist aims, the publication of the work did not bring peace. Instead, it was met with a great deal of controversy and even outright hostility. It also brought on Locke the labels of Deist, Socinian and Hobbist. In a

Racovian Catechism. Nuovo's essay review of Higgins-Biddle's edition of the *Reasonableness*, which appeared when my own review was all but complete, should also be consulted (*The Locke Newsletter*, 31 [2000], 159-77).

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lucid and informative introduction, Higgins-Biddle evaluates each of these labels in three separate sections.

Although section A, 'The Book and the Deists' (xv-xlii), could well have been divided into two, as the first part treats the background to the work, Higgins-Biddle's exercise in recovering Locke's intentions for writing the *Reasonableness* itself goes a long way to countering the accusation that Locke's work in some way favoured the Deist cause. The *Reasonableness* has long been seen as a stepping stone in intellectual history to Deism. But this is a gross misrepresentation. Higgins-Biddle begins his rebuttal of this wrong-headed interpretation by asking precisely the right questions: for whom did Locke write and what did Locke himself say about the aims of his book?

The answers are simple. In his first *Vindication* of the *Reasonableness* (1695), Locke stated that he wrote his *Reasonableness* for those who were not committed Christians, that is to say, as Locke put it, 'those who either wholly disbelieved or doubted the truth of the Christian Religion' (xxvii). Locke's own statement of intention forms the foundation of Higgins-Biddle's worthy corrective. But this is not all. In his second *Vindication* (1697), Locke explicitly identifies the Deists as a target of his book. And yet, Higgins-Biddle writes, 'Locke's claim to have written the *Reasonableness* against the Deists has been largely either ignored or disbelieved.' Not only that, Higgins-Biddle goes on, 'the most popular interpretation of his religious thought has been one that links him with the development of English Deism' (xxvii). Although the sources he cites as examples tend to be those of previous generations (xxviii),² this view of Locke's theological work is deeply imbedded in the strata of the historiography and one still occasionally still hears echoes of it. It rests in part on the assumption by some that a retreat from Athanasian Trinitology necessarily degenerates into more radical forms of belief. Higgins-Biddle's uncompromising corrective should help banish any remaining vestiges of this interpretative tradition.

² As Nuovo points out, the research on which the introduction is based was carried out up to three decades ago (Nuovo, *The Locke Newsletter*, 31 [2000], 159-77)

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Locke's statements of intention were, of course, for public consumption. Nevertheless, all the evidence confirms the passion of Locke's biblicist piety and his faith in the validity of prophecy, and it hardly needs saying that no self-respecting Deist adhered to scriptural revelation and Hebrew prophecy. Locke's own status is not in doubt. The claim that Locke's thought in some way opened the door to Deism is more persistent. Because it implicitly attacked the excesses of orthodoxy, it is not surprising that some Deists found in the *Reasonableness* some tools for their own agenda. This does not make the work inherently Deistic. Instead, Locke's irenic aim was to mediate a middle path between doctrinaire Catholicism, Calvinism and Anglicanism on the one hand, and the equally destructive Deism and atheism on the other. It is largely because the Christianity that Locke presented in the pages of his *Reasonableness* appeared so different from that of Anglican or Calvinist orthodoxy, that some contemporary and later observers mistook it for something other than an uncompromising biblicist reading of the teachings of the New Testament. The root cause of the charges of Deism and favouring Deism is a fundamental failure to recognize an alternative Christianity as Christian.³

Bound up with Higgins-Biddle's argument on Deism is a second, related corrective: frequent portrayals to the contrary notwithstanding, Locke was by no means a religious rationalist (xxxiii). Although Locke's use of reason to judge revelation⁴ is often cited as proof of Locke's inherent theological rationalism, Higgins-Biddle rightly reminds us that one of the strongest motifs of Locke's philosophy is the *limitation* of human reason in matters moral and religious. In fact, Locke admitted revelation as a final arbiter over reason when the latter fails to advance beyond probability. In his *Essay* (1690), Locke wrote: 'wherein our natural

³ Some comparisons with Locke's theological interlocutor Isaac Newton would have been helpful here—particularly because the latter's Christianity was also unorthodox and because Newton's legacy has been similarly interpreted.

⁴ For example, in a section headed 'Revelation must be judged of by Reason' in his chapter on Enthusiasm, Locke affirms that 'Reason must be our last Judge and Guide in every Thing' (Locke, *Essay concerning human understanding* [1690], 4.19.14).

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Faculties are able to give a probable Determination, *Revelation*, where God has been pleased to give it, *must carry it, against the probable Conjectures of Reason*' (xxxiv). In the next section of the same work, Locke continues in a similar vein:

For where the Principles of Reason have not evidenced a Proposition to be certainly true or false, there clear *Revelation*, as another Principle of Truth, and Ground of Assent, may determine; and so it may be Matter of *Faith*, and be also above *Reason*. Because *Reason*, in that particular Matter, being able to reach no higher than Probability, *Faith* gave the Determination, where *Reason* came short; and *Revelation* discovered on which side the Truth lay (xxxiv).

Although such statements can be read to imply that revelation should be appealed to only when sound reason fails, and hence that reason is the normal source of knowledge, a further erosion of Locke's confidence in reason appears evident by the time he wrote his *Reasonableness* in 1695. This has been argued by Takashi Kato, who suggests that sometime in 1694, 'Locke, after his acknowledgement of the virtual impossibility of demonstrating morality by "unassisted reason," evidently shifted his major concern to the study of Holy Scripture.' The *Reasonableness*, then, was part of Locke's effort to do what he failed to do in the *Essay*, namely, establish a firm basis for morality.⁵

At the same time, as David Wootton points out, 'Even when prepared to admit that his moral principles originated in revelation, not, as he had long believed, in reason, Locke would not admit that they could not, in the end, be shown to be rational.'⁶ The key here is that Locke believed that the Scriptures and reason were both

⁵ On this, see Takashi Kato, 'The *Reasonableness* in the historical light of the *Essay*,' *Locke Newsletter*, 12 (1981), 55-6. Examples of Locke's derogation of reason can be found in Locke, *Reasonableness*, 142, 144, 148, 149.

⁶ David Wootton, 'John Locke: Socinian or Natural Law Theorist?', in *Religion, secularization and political thought: Thomas Hobbes to JS Mill*, ed. James E Crimmins (London, 1990), 62. Cf. Locke, *Reasonableness*, 149.

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given by God and thus are by their very nature consistent.⁷ Despite the warning cries of heresy-hunters that the use of reason was corrupting religion, Locke's position is hardly a radical deviation from that adopted by many contemporary Anglicans, not to mention the ideals of classic Protestantism (infused as it was with the legacies of Renaissance humanism). The labelling of Locke as a religious rationalist owes in part to a misreading of 'reasonableness' in the short title, and the almost complete neglect of the final phrase in the long title: '*as delivered in the Scriptures.*' This phrase is by no means a gratuitous appendage intended as to cloak a sinister anti-Scriptural agenda. Strict biblicism was central to Locke's theological programme.

Other lines of evidence that reveal Locke's distance from Deism are enumerated by Higgins-Biddle. These include Locke's insistence on the need for a saviour (xxxv), and his contention that Christianity was not above or against reason (xxxvii). Far from being Deist or even proto- or quasi-deist in intent, the *Reasonableness* is anti-deist in tone and argumentation. The title of the work itself serves as a riposte to those Deists who contended that Christianity was too irrational to be believed.

The charge of Hobbism is also tackled by Higgins-Biddle (lxxiv-cxv). This charge was first laid against Locke's *Reasonableness* in 1697,⁸ and Higgins-Biddle traces this interpretation of Locke down to such late twentieth century scholars as C B Macpherson. The superficial similarity between the *Unum Necessarium* (that Jesus is the Christ) of Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651) and Locke's own argument about the fundamental article of faith in the *Reasonableness* has perhaps made comparisons inevitable. As with the charge of Deism, Higgins-Biddle supplies his reader with a series of good reasons to reject the insinuation that Locke was treading in the footsteps of the philosopher from Malmesbury. Two examples will suffice. First, Locke's plea for the toleration of dissent in society, along with his opposition to the intervention of

⁷ Cf. Locke, *Reasonableness*, 14, where Locke writes 'tis [God] that Commands what Reason does', and 169.

⁸ Although the insinuation of Hobbism had been raised earlier against Locke's *Essay* of 1690 (Wootton, 'John Locke: Socinian or Natural Law Theorist?' loc. cit., 40-1)

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magistrates in matters of religious doctrine, stands in stark contract to the authoritarianism and strict Erastianism of Hobbes. The second example is related. While Hobbes averred that there was an exact equivalence between ‘a Church’ and ‘a Civil Commonwealth, consisting of Christian men,’ Locke believed a church to be “‘a free and voluntary society’” within, yet separate from, a civil society.’ As Higgins-Biddle summarises, ‘Hobbes envisaged “a Christian Commonwealth,” while Locke proclaimed that “there is absolutely no such thing under the Gospel as a Christian commonwealth”’ (lxxxviii).⁹ On the other hand, if the core of Hobbism is seen to be the denial of natural law, it is not so easy to distance Locke from Hobbes, and even Higgins-Biddle acknowledges that although Locke was confident ‘that natural law existed and could be known,’ he nevertheless failed or refused to establish it (c-ci).¹⁰

Earlier in his introduction, Higgins-Biddle is careful to correct a common over-simplification of Locke’s belief that the central article of Christianity was that Jesus was the Messiah. This for him was certainly the ‘essence of Christianity,’ but it rested on a pre-existing culture of Jewish and Christian biblical faith. For this reason, Locke felt the need to add to this central article the belief in the ‘one, true God’ in cases when the Gospel was preached to pagans who did not already hold this belief. But Locke also added

⁹ Of course, Locke had no trouble accepting the need for the civil magistrate to intervene when contemporary standards of morality were transgressed. As Mark Goldie has put it, Locke ‘was emphatic about the duty to punish vice’. Goldie also sees what he characterizes as ‘[t]he assymetry in Locke between religious tolerance and moral intolerance’ as a remaining ‘puzzle’ (Goldie, ‘Locke, Proast and religious toleration 1688-1692’, in *From Toleration to Tractarianism: the Church of England c.1689-1833*, ed. John Walsh, Colin Haydon and Stephen Taylor [Cambridge, 1993], 167). Locke’s stance is much less puzzling from a seventeenth-century perspective than it is from a contemporary one, however. His belief in the appropriateness of the civil regulation of morality need not be taken as evidence of a partial acceptance of a Christian Commonwealth, for a universal, trans-sectarian moral code was conceivable in Locke’s day, while a universal religion was not—even within a single nation such as England.

¹⁰ Cf. Wootton, ‘John Locke: Socinian or Natural Law Theorist?’, 40-3.

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to this a tripartite article: the need to believe in the resurrection of Jesus and his 'appointment as the ruler and future judge of the world.' These two additional articles were for Locke necessary 'concomitants' with the belief that Jesus is the Messiah. It should be added that in practical terms these additional requirements have wide-ranging contacts with other doctrines as well. But this was not all. While these articles were all that was required to make a person a Christian, after conversion a believer is obligated to 'believe every truth of divine revelation when he comes to know it as divinely revealed.' What is more, a moral corollary of repentance and obedience was a *sine qua non* for a true Christian (xxiv). Thus, in practice, belief in Jesus as Messiah was not the only *fundamentum*. The notion of many contemporaries and later historians that Locke's Christianity consisted literally and strictly of only one article is a caricature that Higgins-Biddle has rightly quashed.¹¹

Missing from Higgins-Biddle's introduction is a full discussion of the positive legacy of Locke's *Reasonableness*. Arthur W Wainwright includes an account of the reception of Locke's *Paraphrase and notes on the Epistles of St. Paul* in his edition of that work and concludes that while hostility came from the Deist Bolingbroke as well as many orthodox critics, the most favourable response came from dissenters, especially those with Unitarian

¹¹ It is not only Locke's thought that has been misrepresented on this point, but also that of Hobbes. Although the latter in his *Leviathan* states that '[t]he (*Unum Necessarium*) Only Article of Faith, which the Scriptures maketh simply Necessary to Salvation, is ... that JESUS IS THE CHRIST' (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Richard Tuck [Cambridge 1991], 407) he later qualifies this by not only writing that the *Unum Necessarium* is a fundamental article in the sense that other articles are founded on it (409-10), but that articles such as 'that God is Omnipotent; Creator of the world; that Jesus Christ is risen; and that all men else shall rise again from the dead at the last day,' as well as many more, are as necessary to salvation as the *Unum Necessarium* in that they 'are contained in [the *Unum Necessarium*], and may be deduced from it' (411). What is more, Hobbes also contends that obedience, as well as faith, is required for salvation (412). The contemporary opponents of Hobbes and Locke had their reasons for distorting their views; historians today should read more carefully.

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commitments.¹² The *Reasonableness* had a similar legacy. As George Ewing summarized perceptively in 1965, Locke's *Reasonableness* both played a positive role in the development of Unitarian thought and, with 'its rejection of creeds, its affirmation of the sole and plenary authority of the Scriptures, its careful distinction between the covenants, its exhaustive and even tedious juxtapositioning and comparison of related passages, and its insistence upon the rational approach to the Scripture, sets forth a theological view with an intrinsic exegetical method ... [that] later gained wide acceptance in America with the rise of the Disciples of Christ, the Church of Christ, and other 'fundamentalist' groups.'¹³ Just as Locke's political thought played a leading role in the development of early American political thought, so too did both his philosophical and religious thought have an impact on the Restitutionist movement that arose on the Kentucky frontier, along with other incipient Protestant fundamentalist movements such as the Baptists.¹⁴ It is also ironic that Locke's emphasis on the central article of Christianity being Christ's Messiahship is highly reminiscent of the similar stress among evangelical groups today on the prime and defining importance of the confession 'Jesus is Lord.'¹⁵ Finally, Locke's impact on Methodism has also been explored.¹⁶

There is a growing recognition that Locke's religious thought, far from being aligned with rationalism and Deism, not only has strong analogues among the positions of today's Protestant fundamentalists, but may actually have played a formative role in their hermeneutic ideology. That this should be so is not entirely

¹² Arthur W Wainwright ed., Locke, *A paraphrase and notes on the Epistles of St. John* (Oxford, 1987), 59-69.

¹³ Ewing, 'Introduction,' *Reasonableness*, xvi. For most evangelicals, this formula has strong Trinitarian overtones.

¹⁴ See Myron C Noonkester, "'God for its author:' John Locke as a possible source for the New Hampshire Confession,' *New England Quarterly*, 66 (1993), 448-50; C H Lippy, *The Christadelphians in North America* (Lewiston, 1989), 7.

¹⁵ Cf. Ewing, 'Introduction,' *Reasonableness*, xvi.

¹⁶ F Dreyer, 'Faith and experience in the thought of John Wesley,' *American Historical Review*, 88 (1983), 12-30.

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surprising. In the *Reasonableness* Locke articulates both his belief in the sufficiency of scriptural revelation as well as his rejection human authorities – a two-fold position that is a commonplace of nineteenth and twentieth century conservative Protestantism.¹⁷ This is an under-researched, but important, feature of Locke's theological legacy.¹⁸ Considering Locke's status as an icon and herald of the Enlightenment, this particular legacy of Locke is more than a little ironic.

Even without an extended discussion of the long-term legacies of the *Reasonableness*, Higgins-Biddle's correctives on Locke's supposed relations to Deism and Hobbism help point Locke scholarship in what this reviewer believes is the right direction: Locke's theology was heterodox, but certainly not in Deistic or Hobbist ways. One alternative theological tradition that was both conservatively biblicist and radically heterodox was Socinianism, and it is to a discussion of the relationship of Locke's religious thought to the theology of this movement that we will now turn.

The Spectre of Socinianism

Almost immediately after it was published, Locke's *Reasonableness* was met with suspicions of Socinianism –

¹⁷ Cf. Alan Sell's review of Nuovo's *Locke and Christianity*, in *Locke Newsletter*, 29 (1998), 183.

¹⁸ Alan P F Sell has in a full-length study traced the sympathy for Locke's ideas among liberal Anglicans and Dissenters in the eighteenth-century (Sell, *John Locke and the Eighteenth-Century divines* [Cardiff, 1997]). Sell shows that some Baptists, for example, were attracted to Locke's conception of the Church as a voluntary body of believers (p. 178). While side-stepping the difficult matter of Locke's relationship to continental Socinianism and English Unitarianism, M A Stewart recently astutely commented that '[i]t is harder to distinguish [Locke's] views from what Unitarianism became, and became in large part through his posthumous influence on its development' (Stewart, 'Stillingfleet and the Way of Ideas,' *English philosophy in the age of Locke*, ed. M A Stewart [Oxford, 2000], 255 n. 23). On Locke's legacy in fundamentalism, see also Peter A Schouls, 'John Locke and the Rise of Western Fundamentalism: a Hypothesis,' *Religious Studies and Theology*, 10 (1990), 9-22.

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suspensions that have reverberated down to this day.¹⁹ As with the accusations of Deism and Hobbism, however, over-confident and straightforward identifications of Locke with Socinianism have been proffered in the past on the basis of both inadequate understandings of the Locke's personal theology and insufficient explorations of alternative possibilities. When he comes to the vexed question of how much Socinian theology Locke may have appropriated, Higgins-Biddle is thus wisely cautious. His response, after a careful re-evaluation of the evidence, is to distance himself from these earlier conclusions. The result, Section B of the introduction ('The Spectre of Socinianism'), can be added to the growing list of studies of Locke's engagement with Socinianism, and, for that matter, the all too brief list of treatments of Socinianism in late seventeenth-century England.²⁰

After issuing a warning about the slipperiness of the term 'Socinian' (xlii), Higgins-Biddle goes on to consider the accusations laid against Locke by the Calvinist divine John Edwards, the 'unmasker of Socinianism' (xlii-xlix). Central to Edwards' attempt to attribute Socinianism to Locke is the undisputed fact that the latter omits from the *Reasonableness*

¹⁹ For a useful and highly relevant overview of the theology of the Socinians (or Polish Brethren), see John Marshall, 'Socinianism,' *Routledge encyclopedia of philosophy*, ed. Edward Craig (London 1998), 8:889-92.

²⁰ Higgins-Biddle cites (lviii) some of the more important secondary works that discuss Locke and Socinianism, including John Marshall's masterful, balanced and now published paper, which is the most sophisticated and comprehensive study on this subject thus far and to which the reader is encouraged to turn for a fuller account of Locke's engagement with Socinianism (John Marshall, 'Locke, Socinianism, 'Socinianism', and Unitarianism,' in *English philosophy in the age of Locke*, 111-82). Several other recent treatments should be noted as well: Victor Nuovo, 'Locke's Theology, 1694-1704,' *English philosophy in the age of Locke*, 183-215; idem, Introduction, *John Locke and Christianity*, ix-xxvi; Maurice Wiles, *Archetypal heresy: Arianism through the centuries* (Oxford 1996), 70-6; Wootton, 'John Locke: Socinian or Natural Law Theorist?', 39-67 (cited in full in note 6 above). See also the study of Locke's doctrinal beliefs in Sell, *Locke and the Eighteenth-Century divines*, 185-267.

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several key orthodox tenets, which Edwards infers are thus rejected. These teachings include: the divinity of Christ, the eternal generation of the Son, the essential unity of the Father with the Son, the incarnation and the satisfaction theory of the atonement. Edwards was also quick to latch onto Locke's failure to cite Matthew 28:19 – a verse many orthodox expositors viewed as the *locus classicus* of Trinitarian doctrine (xlv). But Edwards also pointed to positive testimony for his claims. Locke's (putative) reduction of the *fundamenta* down to the single article of belief that Jesus is the Messiah is branded as Socinian in origin (xliv), as is the apparent conclusion that Christ and Adam are sons of God in an equivalent sense (xlv). Furthermore, both Locke's proposition that the title 'Son of God' is synonymous with the title 'Messiah,' and his interpretation of John 14:9, Edwards contended, are 'after the Antitrinitarian mode' (xlv).²¹

These were serious allegations, especially given the fact that the religious freedom granted in the 1689 Toleration Act had not extended to antitrinitarian dissenters. If, as Edwards insinuated, Locke was consciously intending to promote Socinian heresy in a subversive way through his *Reasonableness*, the philosopher at Oates was involved in a bold enterprise indeed. But Higgins-Biddle prudently introduces a cautionary note by pointing out that none of the heterodox ideas enumerated by Edwards were exclusive to continental Socinianism. The irenicist strategy to bring peace to the church and promote toleration through the reduction of fundamentals, for example, can also be seen in the writings of Sebastian Castellio, Jacobus Acontius, William Chillingworth and the Remonstrant Philip van Limborch (lxi-lxvii).²² In the case of Locke's friend Limborch, the parallel is strikingly close. In his *Theologia Christiana*, the Dutch theologian 'comprehended' the truths necessary for salvation 'under one single Truth, *that Jesus is*

²¹ These accusations were first made in Edwards, *Some thoughts concerning the several causes and occasions of atheism* (London 1695), the relevant portion of which is printed in Nuovo, ed., *John Locke and Christianity*, 180-6.

²² At the same time, Higgins-Biddle points to two Socinians (Jonasz Szlichtyng and Joachim Stegmann, Sr.) who taught a reduced number of *fundamenta* (lxi).

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the Christ' (lxv).²³ The idea that the expressions 'Son of God' and 'Messiah' are titles of equivalent meaning and force can also be found in the same work of Limborch (lxix-lxx).²⁴ What is more, Locke himself affirmed the accord between his *Reasonableness* and Limborch's *Theologia Christiana* (lxv).

Other supposed Socinian aspects of Locke's *Reasonableness*, Higgins-Biddle argues, do not hold up under closer inspection. Thus Locke's stance on the linkage between Adam and Christ as sons of God posited that both were born immortal, whereas Socinians held that the two came into the world in a mortal state (lxx-lxxi). And, although the rejection of the doctrine of the satisfaction is often seen as the hallmark of Socinianism, Higgins-Biddle shows that Locke's position on Christ's sacrifice for sins differed from the earliest, most radical version espoused by Socinians, but was almost identical to the qualified satisfaction of Limborch – and, he concedes, that of the later Socinians, who had come under the influence of the Remonstrants on this point (lxxi-lxxii). Earlier, Higgins-Biddle notes that when charged by Edwards with denying the satisfaction, Locke had only been able to dredge up two vague passages from his book in support (li). Higgins-Biddle does accept that Locke held mortalist views on the soul, denied the eternity of hell torments and believed in the eventual annihilation of the wicked. Yet, he also seeks to qualify any similarity on these points with the Socinians by arguing that there is little evidence that the Polish Brethren denied 'the punishment of the wicked' and by noting that certain Socinians held that the resurrection would be limited to the saved. Still, Higgins-Biddle acknowledges that on the rejection of hell 'Locke may have recognized some affinity to Socinus' (lxxii-lxxiii).

Higgins-Biddle also considers possible reasons why Locke chose to omit the Trinity from his book. Allowing that the omission of the Triunity of God from 'the list of necessary articles in the *Reasonableness* did relegate the doctrine of the Trinity to a non-fundamental status and thereby promoted the Unitarian cause'

²³ Quotation from the 1702 English translation given in Nuovo, ed., *Locke and Christianity*, 66.

²⁴ Nuovo, ed., *Locke and Christianity*, 67.

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(lxvii), Higgins-Biddle believes that one aim behind the *Reasonableness* may have been an expansion of toleration to Socinians and Unitarians. This, however, must not be taken as evidence that Locke was himself of this persuasion (lxvii-lxviii). True enough, taken on its own such an irenic motivation need not implicate Locke with the denial of the Trinity. On the other hand, when confronted with his omission of this central doctrine, Locke pointed out that neither the expression nor the teaching were to be found in the Bible or the Apostles' Creed – something few orthodox believers in his day would dare to claim. Locke also resolutely evaded a series of attempts by John Edwards, Edward Stillingfleet and John Milner to obtain a public statement of his adherence to the doctrine. However, Higgins-Biddle stresses that unlike continental Socinians and English Unitarians, Locke never openly condemned the teaching either. There is also the possibility that Locke bypassed the doctrine altogether so as to avoid being drawn into the debate then raging over the Trinity – a debate that had exposed inconsistencies of doctrinal expression amongst the orthodox themselves. The prudent lay theologian chose silence (lxviii). In sum, Higgins-Biddle believes that the evidence falls short of confirming either Locke's rejection or acceptance of the Trinity (lxix).

While acknowledging that he was certainly not orthodox in a Calvinist or Anglican sense, Higgins-Biddle believes that Locke was not a Socinian. Instead, he was an independent thinker with debts to English Latitudinarian theologians, along with the Dutch Remonstrants. Locke looked askance at overwrought theological systems, and sought the biblicist way out, finding in the Scriptures 'a simple gospel which he hoped would bring religious toleration and peace.' Although Locke could have been just as reluctant as the Socinians to affirm certain orthodox teachings, he nevertheless rejected some of their most distinctive teachings and was also unhappy with their doctrinaire zeal. Higgins-Biddle concludes by stating that Locke 'was probably sincere and correct in denying the charge of Socinianism' (lxxiv). The overall picture we are left with is that of a kindly, liberal, peace-loving lay theologian. Not once is the term heresy or its cognates applied to Locke or his theology.

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Most of the remainder of this essay will serve to nuance this portrayal.

Socinianism: merely a spectre?

Writing on Locke's relationship with Socinianism can be divided into three main approaches. First, in the years immediately following the publication of the *Reasonableness*, a series of orthodox divines attempted to label Locke as a Socinian for partisan reasons (although Locke did receive some early support from liberal Trinitarian authors). The already-mentioned John Edwards was but the most vociferous of this school. Second, beginning around the same time and continuing through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Unitarian apologists attempted to recover Locke as one of their own for partisan reasons of an opposing nature.²⁵ Finally, in the last few decades, a third way has emerged. Based on much less subjective scholarship, this much more balanced approach acknowledges similarities between Locke's thought and that of contemporary antitrinitarianism, but falls short of identifying Locke as fully aligned with either the continental Socinians or the English Unitarians. Higgins-Biddle's treatment is an especially reserved variant of this latter type.²⁶

Higgins-Biddle's first point, that 'the Socinian label carried a wide variety of connotations' in the theological debate of Locke's time and context (xlii), is valid and now a commonly-recognized problem. Yet the main force of the attacks by Locke's theological opponents was directed at associating him with the theology of the continental Polish Brethren, not any British hybrid to which the books of the former may have played mid-wife. With the increasing numbers of Socinian texts now available through translation and commentary, it is possible to side-step constructions

²⁵ See, for example, Robert Wallace, *Antitrinitarian biography* (London 1850), 3: 399-428; Herbert McLachlan, *The religious opinions of Milton, Locke and Newton* (Manchester 1941). As out-dated as it is, Wallace's work remains an important resource for antitrinitarian studies.

²⁶ Victor Nuovo also occupies similar interpretative ground to Higgins-Biddle on this issue (see Nuovo, 'Locke's theology,' 210-12; idem, *Locke Newsletter*, 31 [2000], 169).

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of Socinianism and compare Locke's theology with their own words. Examples of this will be found below.

Higgins-Biddle next considers the charges of Socinianism laid against Locke by the highly polemical heresy-hunter John Edwards. Higgins-Biddle counters Edwards' accusations by illustrating that non-Socinian analogues can be found for the putatively Socinian ideas listed in Edwards' *Some thoughts* (1695). When faced with accusations such as those levelled by Edwards, the thorough historian will always want to examine alternatives and Higgins-Biddle has performed a very valuable service in doing this. Nevertheless, there are good reasons for taking orthodox theologians such as Edwards seriously, despite their proneness to exaggeration and mistaken (albeit at least partly rhetorical) insinuations that Socinianism logically reduces to atheism. Why? Precisely because men like Edwards were much more well read in Latin Socinian primary texts than almost any living historian today. Their bias notwithstanding, we have much to learn from Locke's critics. A methodological issue is at stake here. As David Wootton has pointed out:

Historians of political theory and of philosophy have a tendency to dismiss accusations levied by polemical pygmies against great philosophers. Few turn to Hobbes's opponents to learn about Hobbes, or Locke's opponents to learn about Locke. This is a mistake.²⁷

Wootton is right. And Edwards, who had done his homework, recognized in the *mix* of teaching he saw in the *Reasonableness* an affinity with the Socinian doctrinal profile.²⁸

Edwards was not the only one to perceive these analogies. Five years later, John Milner astutely identified several others that also merit serious consideration. Higgins-Biddle has chosen to focus on the more sensationalistic Edwards, but Milner provided the most

²⁷ Wootton, 'John Locke: Socinian or Natural Law Theorist,' 40.

²⁸ Although he did not always get it right, I argue that Edwards correctly identified Socinianesque theology in Isaac Newton's General Scholium to the *Principia* in Snobelen, 'Isaac Newton, Heretic: The Strategies of a Nicodemite,' *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 32 (1999), 406-7 and "'God of gods, and Lord of lords": The Theology of Isaac Newton's General Scholium to the *Principia*,' *Osiris*, 16 (2001), 191-6.

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comprehensive and well-documented list of parallels between the theology of Locke and the Socinians. In order to strengthen his case, Milner also included extensive quotations from and references to relevant Socinian works. The list of parallels with Socinian theology given by Milner is impressive. Not only does he point to Locke's use of the title 'Son of God' as a synonymous designation for the Messiah rather than as proof of Christ's full Deity, and that Locke echoes the position held by several Socinians that the only article of faith required was that Jesus is the Messiah, but he goes on to identify several other areas of congruency between Locke and the Socinians, such as mortalism, the annihilation of the wicked, the de-emphasis on original sin and the depravity of man, the rejection of innatism, and finally that several Socinians teach that the bodies of the dead do not literally resurrect, an idea that Locke added to his *Essay*.²⁹ Once again, these analogies are based on informed readings of the primary texts of the Polish Brethren and once again, the emphasis is on a range of doctrines that reveal a Socinian *profile*. Whether or not Locke obtained these ideas directly from the Socinians, there can be no question that these parallels exist.

The ability of divines like Milner to isolate theological ideas parallel to Locke's within specific Socinian texts takes on added significance when it is realised that most of the Socinian works named by Milner are also found in the final catalogue of Locke's library. Higgins-Biddle discusses Locke's antitrinitarian library and his reading of it (lviii-lx), but, in the opinion of this reviewer, undersells its importance. Noting that Locke also owned works written against both Socinianism and Unitarianism, Higgins-Biddle states that Locke's 'ownership of Socinian and Unitarian books no more proves his religious sympathies than his sizable collection of Catholic writers places him in the fold of Rome' (lx). In the absence of other forms of evidence, this simple statement would be true. But we now know enough about the general drift of Locke's beliefs to conclude that his ownership of Socinian and Unitarian

²⁹ Milner, *An account of Mr. Lock's religion* (London 1700), 180-8. Locke changed a phrase in the *Essay* (4.18.7) that read, 'And that the Bodies of Men shall rise' in the first three editions, to read, 'And that the dead shall rise' in the fourth edition of 1700 (see also note 55 below).

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titles was of a completely different order than his possession of works by Catholic authors, for while many features of his theology bear marked affinities with the writings of Raków, Locke's faith is diametrically opposed to the works of Rome. This profound dissymmetry between Locke's stance on Catholicism and his relationship to antitrinitarian theological traditions severely complicates Higgins-Biddle's rhetorical statement. It is also true that many an orthodox divine had Socinian works in his library. Once again, however, there is a categorical difference between a fiery heresy-hunter like Edwards reading Sociniana and the unorthodox Locke doing the same.

Higgins-Biddle mentions Locke's ownership of works by the Socinian authors Fausto Sozzini, Johann Crell, Jonasz Szlichtyng and Valentin Schmalz, along with his acquisition of some of these titles from 1684 to 1697 in Holland and England. In all, reference is made in his footnotes to thirty-four Socinian titles (lix).³⁰ He also mentions Locke's reading notes on these works.³¹ A comprehensive survey reveals a total of forty-two Socinian titles, and this number increases to forty-three when Transylvanian Unitarian György Enyedi's *Explicationes* is added to the list.³² When the list is expanded to include all works by European antitrinitarians, the French Christologically Socinian Matthieu Souverain's *Le Platonisme dévoilé* (1700) and four works by the German Arian Christopher Sand (Sandius) can be added.³³ Higgins-Biddle also notes Locke's ownership of works by English Unitarians, and lists as important examples the Library of Locke references to twenty-four of these. The complete list contains as many as thirty-five items, including ten individually-published works by (or attributed to) Stephen Nye, three titles by John Biddle and the first three

³⁰ An excellent analysis of Locke's antitrinitarian library is given in Marshall, 'Locke and Socinianism,' 118-19.

³¹ See Marshall, 'Locke and Socinianism,' *passim*, for an account of Locke's reading notes on his Sociniana.

³² Harrison and Laslett, *The library of John Locke*, 2nd edn. (Oxford 1971) (hereafter LL), items 331, 723, 876-84, 1052, 1062, 1377-8, 1960, 2508-9, 2574-7, 2683, 2693-7, 2704-12, 3009, 3103-4, 3170, 3174.

³³ LL 2724, 2549, 2550, 2551, 2748.

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collections of the Unitarian Tracts.³⁴ Thus, in total, Locke owned at least eighty-three separate antitrinitarian publications.

These figures need to be put in perspective. John Harrison and Peter Laslett identified 3641 titles as owned by Locke at his death. The proportion of Socinian books in Locke's library was, therefore, better than one in a hundred; more than one book in fifty was antitrinitarian. Of the total of 3641 titles, the amount of works on theology came to 870 – a number that can be reduced to 767 when the ninety-two more or less theologically neutral Bibles, concordances and prayer books are taken out of the equation, along with eleven volumes of theology penned by Locke himself.³⁵ The ratio of Locke's antitrinitarian books to his collection of 767 theological works was thus more than one in ten. These proportions are made all the more striking when one calls to mind the fact that the number of antitrinitarian works published in the seventeenth century was minuscule when compared to the works of orthodoxy. What is more, even those that were published were often much dearer and more difficult to obtain due to their status as virtual contraband. The least we can say about Locke's library is that it reveals a passionate interest in things antitrinitarian.

But Locke's ownership and reading of antitrinitarian works is placed in sharper relief when set against the backdrop of his personal contact with not only several English antitrinitarians, but also communicant continental Socinians as well – a dynamic that Higgins-Biddle never comes to address. What might Locke's relationships have been with such Arians, Unitarians and Socinians as Isaac Newton, Peter King, William Popple, Thomas Firmin, Benjamin Furly, Matthew Tindal, John Hardy, Henry Hedworth, Alexander Beresford, Matthieu Soverain, the unidentified 'D'Avaux' and Samuel, Daniel and Martin Crell – and who knows who else while he lived among the Remonstrants in Holland?³⁶ And

³⁴ LL 142-142a, 336, 543-4, 785, 1636, 1648, 2069, 2107-9, 2702, 2988-92, 3007-8, 3010-3022a, 3126a.

³⁵ Peter Laslett, 'John Locke and His Books,' LL, p.18.

³⁶ On Locke's antitrinitarian networks, see Marshall, 'Locke and Socinianism,' *passim*. On Locke's contact with the Socinian Samuel Crell and his two Amsterdam-based cousins in particular, see *The correspondence of John Locke*, ed. E S De Beer, 8 vols. (Oxford 1976-

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why, we might ask, was Locke in possession of at least two scribally-published Socinian treatises (by ‘D’Avaux’ and Souverain)?³⁷ These are questions that still require answers. It is particularly surprising that Higgins-Biddle makes no reference to Newton, who was not only an antitrinitarian with whom Locke discussed theology and prophecy through private meeting and correspondence, but is also an excellent analogue for secret Unitarianism in the period.³⁸ Significantly, Locke acted as intermediary for the planned publication of Newton’s 1690 ‘Two Notable Corruptions’ – an exercise in antitrinitarian textual criticism.³⁹ As Newton biographer Richard Westfall concluded, ‘it is hard to believe that anyone in the late seventeenth century could have read it as anything but an attack on the trinity.’⁴⁰ This was no innocuous work of irenicism.

Mere meetings with antitrinitarians do not prove Locke shared their views; one can call to mind examples of civil personal encounters between antitrinitarians and champions of orthodoxy from this period. But here the same argument applies as stated

1989), 6:466-7, 469-60, 495, 576-7, 638; 7:208, 210; on Daniel and Martin, sons of Johann Crell, Junior, see Wallace, *Antitrinitarian biography*, 3:307.

³⁷ MS Locke e. 17, pp. 175-223, 238-45. John Marshall has shown that the first is by Souverain; the second is endorsed ‘D’Avaux’, although not necessarily by this person (see Marshall, ‘Locke and Socinianism,’ 125-31).

³⁸ It is clear that the two men’s discussions of theology quickly turned to the Trinity. In addition to the evidence of the ‘Two notable corruptions,’ Marshall points to evidence that in 1690 Locke ‘either discussed three unitarian works with Newton or procured them for him’ (John Marshall, *John Locke: resistance, religion and responsibility* [Cambridge, 1994],. 390). Newton is a doubly valuable comparison to Locke, since although he was a Christological Arian, Newton’s theological thought at several points aligns closely with that of the Socinians and Unitarians (see Snobelen, ‘Isaac Newton, Heretic,’ 383-89, 406-7).

³⁹ A modern edition of the text can be found in Newton, *The correspondence of Isaac Newton*, ed. H W Turnbull (Cambridge 1961), 3:83-146.

⁴⁰ Richard S Westfall, *Never at rest: a biography of Isaac Newton* (Cambridge 1980), 490.

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above with respect to Locke's antitrinitarian library: a private meeting between Locke and Newton or Samuel Crell would have been of a very different nature than a meeting between an orthodox divine and Newton or Crell (and both Newton and Crell did meet with such). Locke's relationships with Unitarians, along with the theological exchanges and circulation of clandestine antitrinitarian writings that sometimes went along with them, hint at an involvement in a heretical network. Not surprisingly, there is a problematic paucity of surviving documentation to flesh this out, leaving us only with suggestive hints. Nevertheless, largely text-based studies of Locke's theology are weaker for their lack of inclusion of a consideration of Locke's personal encounters with antitrinitarians. John Marshall's recent work demonstrates how such explorations can transform our view of Locke from that of a quiescent unorthodox theologian, to one who may have taken an active part in antitrinitarian networks. Without question, Locke's relationships with contemporary antitrinitarians need further exploration.

As outlined above, Higgins-Biddle shows that the Socinian ideas that Edwards attempts to identify in Locke's writings need not have been derived directly from the Polish Brethren. Higgins-Biddle has presented a worthy case, and Limborch in particular is a highly plausible source for some of Locke's own theology. Higgins-Biddle has further demonstrated that certain analogies between Locke and Socinianism that appear secure at first glance, break down under closer examination – as is the case with the respective positions of Locke and the Socinians on the filial status of Adam and Christ. Again, it is important that these differences be emphasized. But doctrinal dissonance between Locke and the Socinians on certain points does not entail that Locke could not have agreed elsewhere – which in fact he did. At the same time, Higgins-Biddle does not stress with enough clarity the similarities between Locke and the Socinians. While he is at pains to magnify differences between Locke and Socinianism,⁴¹ Higgins-Biddle neglects to discuss several areas of affinity and agreement,

⁴¹ Higgins-Biddle twice does this in the notes to the supplementary manuscripts as well (199, 206).

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including denial of the orthodox doctrine of original sin (even though this topic is indexed for his edition of the *Reasonableness*).⁴²

The close examination of Locke's doctrine is a double-edged sword. Locke's belief that immortality is a reward reserved only for the faithful is identical to the position of the Socinians, as is the view that literal death (annihilation) is the punishment and that it would be absurd for God to grant immortality (even an eternity of conscious torment) to the wicked since immortality is a gift of God. At the same time, on certain points where his views clash with those of Sozzini himself, Locke's views are isomorphic with those of later Socinian theologians. This is certainly true in the case of the satisfaction theory of the atonement, where Locke's position is not as radical as Sozzini's, but aligns with the view of several important seventeenth-century Socinians, including Martin Ruar and Jonasz Szlichtyng, whose view in turn was equivalent to that of the Remonstrants – something recognized by Limborch.⁴³ The same can be said with regard to hell. Although it is true that the eponym of the movement appears to have rejected the resurrection of the wicked to punishment (however short) and to have believed that only the saved would be raised, many other Socinians held the same position as Locke. Higgins-Biddle himself acknowledges that Ernst Soner did. Several others did as well, including such notables as Johann Crell and Jonasz Szlichtyng.⁴⁴ As George Williams writes, belief in a general resurrection of righteous and wicked came to predominate among Socinians in the seventeenth century, and this position is epitomised in the final version of the Racovian Catechism.⁴⁵ Thus on two counts at least, Locke's theology is closer to late Socinian thought – a dynamic that makes sense since in both these areas the influence of the Remonstrants played a role. This again raises the question of the impact of Remonstrant

⁴² On the Socinian rejection of original sin, see George H Williams ed., *The Polish Brethren* (Missoula, 1980) (hereafter *PB*), 106-7.

⁴³ *PB*, 480 n. 11, 490 n. 7. Limborch contrasts the (classical) Socinian and Calvinist views in his *Theologia Christiana*. See Nuovo ed., *Locke and Christianity*, 51-61.

⁴⁴ *PB*, 202-4, 237, 326, 407.

³⁹ *PB*, 416, 686.

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theology on Locke's thought, and Higgins-Biddle has also done well to link Locke's theology with parallels in Limborch. Yet, here too Higgins-Biddle's analysis cuts both ways. For while he is anxious to highlight these parallels, he does not devote an equal amount of effort on the differences, of which there are several. One difference is particularly pivotal: Limborch gave positive assent to the full Deity and Eternity of Christ in his writings.⁴⁶ Locke, on the other hand, never did. On several other points, such as his mortalism and rejection of hell, Locke disagrees with Limborch,⁴⁷ but agrees with the Socinians.

One of the chief objections Locke's contemporaries raised against the *Reasonableness* was its complete silence on the Trinity. As his opponents continually emphasized, Locke could have simply affirmed the doctrine and his orthodoxy would have been accepted. But Locke did not do this, even when pressed.⁴⁸ Higgins-Biddle acknowledges that Locke refused to comply with his opponents' wishes, but adds that he did not expressly attack the doctrine either (lxviii). This proves nothing. If Locke was antitrinitarian, it would not be surprising for him to avoid direct attacks on the doctrine. Open denial was illegal and sanctions were more effective when the attacks appeared in print. Crucially, Higgins-Biddle does not explore the phenomenon of antitrinitarian Nicodemism and crypto-Socinianism. Antitrinitarian Nicodemites had developed a series of strategies that allowed them to avoid detection. One of the most important of these *modi operandi* was so obvious it hardly needs stating: precisely because the main focus of anti-Unitarian legislation was the proscription of the active dissemination of illegal theology, rather than private belief, one could avoid prosecution by refraining from publishing incriminating, direct attacks in one's own name. Once again, Newton is an excellent

⁴⁶ Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, in Nuovo, ed., *Locke and Christianity*, 48, 61.

⁴⁷ Cf. Limborch, *Theologia Christiana*, in Nuovo, ed., *Locke and Christianity*, 47, 73.

⁴⁸ On Locke's evasions, see Marshall, 'Locke and Socinianism,' 181.

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analogy for someone who was secretly a virulent antitrinitarian, yet never attacked the doctrine openly in his published works.⁴⁹

While there were good reasons for Locke to avoid attacking the Trinity if he was antitrinitarian, there are none to explain why he resisted attempts to state openly his belief in the Trinity if he did in fact believe the doctrine – especially since his refusal only served to confirm in the eyes of the public that he did deny the tenet. Also, why would he omit the Trinity from the *Reasonableness* if he was a Trinitarian? Why take the risk? There is an outside chance that in a Limborchian way, Locke wanted to avoid the doctrine for irenicist reasons. But how many of those orthodox on the Trinity actively promoted the toleration of antitrinitarians? As Higgins-Biddle himself admits, when Locke attempted to evade the attack on his omission of the Trinity from the *Reasonableness* by reminding his opponents that both the term and the express doctrine were foreign to the Bible and even the Apostles' Creed, he was only using a standard argument of Socinians and Unitarians (lxviii). If Locke's aims were merely irenic, there is no good reason why he should not have assented to the doctrine publicly after the fact. Whatever the case, it is clear that at the very least Locke relegated the Trinity to the status of an *adiaphoron* – itself an extremely radical position for the time.

But it is not merely the curious *absence* of key teachings of orthodoxy, it is also the positive *presence* of pivotal tenets of heresy within the text of the *Reasonableness* that cause problems for an uncomplicated irenicist characterization of the book. Locke's interpretation of the non-essential union between Christ and God as expressed in John 14:9 is made plain when he goes on to point out that the same phraseology is used of Christ's union with the believers in 14:20 (98) – a standard antitrinitarian argument. Locke's rejection of the doctrine of original sin is also made explicit in the *Reasonableness* (6-11). When Locke writes, 'How doth it consist with the Justice and Goodness of God, that the Posterity of *Adam* should suffer for his sin; the Innocent be

⁴⁹ Cf. Snobelen, 'Isaac Newton, Heretic,' 396-401. Locke, along with Newton, is characterized as a Nicodemite in Perez Zagorin, *Ways of lying: dissimulation, persecution, and conformity in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 1990), 327-8.

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punished for the Guilty?’ and states categorically that ‘none are truly *punished* but for their own deeds’ (10), he is making himself loud and clear.⁵⁰ Here again Locke moves beyond the mere omission of a doctrine to assail it directly. Furthermore, despite any irenicist aims Locke may have had, the denial of the orthodox doctrine of natural immortality is explicit in his published text (14). The positive affirmation of a moral or dynamic union between Christ and God, along with the denial of original sin and mortalism, put Locke beyond the pale of even the most liberal latitudinarian. All of this militates against Higgins-Biddle’s tendency to portray Locke straightforwardly as a liberal, irenicist Protestant. Locke was preaching heresy.

Locke’s semi-Socinian doctrinal profile

As discussed above, in his analysis of Edwards’ accusations, Higgins-Biddle has brought some of Locke’s putatively Socinian beliefs under close scrutiny and found that they sometimes differ from classical Socinianism in detail. This is true, but if Locke was appropriating ideas from the Socinians, this process need not have been a slavish one.⁵¹ What is more, we must not lose sight of the fact that there were differences among the Socinians themselves, especially across time. It is thus instructive that – as exemplified above – many of Locke’s own departures from certain Socinian teachings come within the range of variation and latitude that existed within the Socinian hermeneutic community itself. It is also crucial that the student of Locke’s doctrinal expressions add to a microscopic analysis of his individual beliefs a panoramic survey of the contours of Locke’s theology as a whole. When this is carried out, the extent of the doctrinal structural symmetry with Socinianism is striking.

Although Locke may have been closer to Arianism than Socinianism on the point of Christ’s premundane existence, much else in his theology parallels the thought of the Polish Brethren. These parallels and near parallels range from the more general, such irenicism, toleration, freewill, scriptural hermeneutics, the

⁵⁰ He is also expressing himself biblically (cf. Ezekiel 18:4, 20).

⁵¹ Compare the astute argument made by Justin Champion in his review of Marshall’s *Locke* (*Locke Newsletter*, 25 [1994], 117).

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belief that the Bible is inherently reasonable, a conception of a gathered church, an emphasis on the moral ethic in Christianity and the biblicist rejection of creedal and other extra-biblical authorities, to the more doctrinally specific, including not only, in broad strokes, the movement away from Athanasian Trinitarianism, but the denial of the orthodox satisfaction theory, innatism, original sin and the eternity of hell, along with the view of death as cessation of being and the belief in annihilation as the final destiny of the wicked.⁵² All of the Socinian analogies identified by Edwards can be confirmed in Socinian writings.⁵³ The same is true for the parallels discovered by Milner, including Locke's view that the resurrection does not involve the recreation of the body that died—a view that was indeed held by many Socinians.⁵⁴

One parallel, not yet discussed, deserves further comment because of its wider implications for Locke's political thought. While Locke's views may not have been as radical, he moved in the direction of the Socinian position on the separation of church and state and the non-intervention of the magistracy in ecclesiastical affairs. Magisterial Protestantism's conception of the church was classically that of a reformed ecclesio-civic *corpus christianorum* (reflected in Hobbes' position cited above), but Locke's view shares something with that of such Radical Reforming traditions as the Anabaptists, who conceived of the body of believers as a 'gathered' church or, to coin a phrase, a

⁵² Examples of these features of Socinian thought can be found by consulting the conspectual and analytical index of *PB* (xix-xxxii). See also the material on the Polish Brethren in George H Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (3rd edn., Kirksville 1992), 1136-75.

⁵³ Johann Crell, for one, argued that the titles Son of God and Messiah are used synonymously in the Bible (Crell, *The Two Books of John Crellius Francus, touching One God the Father* [London, 1665], 156-7). At the same time, it must be stressed that Crell, like all other Socinians, did not hold to a humanitarian Christology. Instead, Christ is Son of God primarily because God was literally his Father (Crell, *One God the Father*, 144-6).

⁵⁴ *PB*, 307. For Locke's view, see Marshall, 'Locke and Socinianism,' 159-61; Nuovo, 'Locke's Theology,' 193-4; Ewing, ed., *Reasonableness*, 200-2. Locke was aware of non-Socinians who held this view of the resurrection (Marshall, 'Locke and Socinianism,' 160-1).

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corpus christianorum e seculo.⁵⁵ The Socinians who, like the Anabaptists, administered believers' baptism, also conceived of the their church as 'a visible congregation,' separated from civil society. For the Polish Brethren, 'the saints are the Christians, whose special title this is ... those who are separated from other men even as from the profane.'⁵⁶ Locke's similar views are outlined above in the commentary on the Hobbist charge, but an explicit affirmation of the voluntary church can be found in his *Letter on toleration*.⁵⁷

Locke's mortalism also merits further consideration. While from 1695 into the late twentieth century much of the discussion on the question of Locke's relationship to Socinianism has dwelt on Trinitological issues and the atonement, the closest and least-ambiguous analogies are between Socinian and Lockean mortalism. The Polish Brethren may have articulated their view less often than they otherwise might have due to fear of attracting hostility, but explicitly mortalist expositions are to be found throughout the history of the movement.⁵⁸ Although it is often difficult to distinguish between the two views, both Locke's public and private writings strongly suggests mortalism of the thnetopsychist (soul death), rather than psychopannychist (soul sleep) variety. The Socinians, too, were thnetopsychists. Furthermore, unlike the situation with his Christology, there is more than adequate documentary evidence to confirm and detail Locke's mortalist views.⁵⁹ Interestingly, for the contemporary observer Gottfried

⁵⁵ On the Radical Reforming view of the visible church, see Williams, *Radical Reformation*, 687, 713, 1282-87.

⁵⁶ *PB*, 410-12 (quotations from 410, 411).

⁵⁷ Locke, *A letter concerning toleration*, ed. James H Tully (Indianapolis 1983), 28-9.

⁵⁸ *PB*, 112-24, 363-5; D P Walker, *The decline of hell: Seventeenth-Century discussions of eternal torment* (Chicago 1964), 73-92 (Walker's treatment of Socinian mortalism needs updating in light of the more explicit sources published in *PB*).

⁵⁹ On Locke's mortalism, see Marshall, 'Locke and Socinianism,' 158-61; Nuovo, 'Locke's Theology,' 192-4, 211, Sell, *Locke and the Eighteenth-Century Divines*, 250-67, and below.

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Leibniz, evidence of mortalism in Locke's thought in turn pointed straight to Socinianism.⁶⁰

The point in setting up this array of parallels is not to use them in the first instance as evidence that Locke consciously appropriated Socinian theology. The evidence does not force this conclusion. Instead, I want this assembled cluster of doctrines to show that when we turn from a close examination of each individual article of Locke's belief to survey the entire system, we see a mix of doctrine, method and religious ethos that overlaps significantly with Socinianism. This overlap is indisputable whether or not one can trace a line of direct descent. In other words, if the relationship between these radical elements of Locke's theology and that of Socinianism is not homogenetic, it is at least homomorphic. Yes, few of these theological views are unique to Socinianism; the general profile, on the other hand, is.⁶¹

But this Socinian/Socinianesque profile begs the question of whether or not Locke recognized the similarity of some of his theological ideas to those of the Polish Brethren. His earnest and thorough written replies to those who accused him of Socinianism may show that he was all too conscious of these similarities. It is certainly hard to see how a man with such an extensive library of Sociniana could have failed to perceive the analogies. A recognition of his own doctrinal unorthodoxy would have likely injected an element of reflexivity in his exertions for toleration. At the same time, Locke could deny accusations of Socinianism in good faith because he was not committed to their theology *in toto* and, perhaps, believed that he arrived at most or all of his views independently. If Locke's theology was (as seems likely) the result of eclectic mix of his own exegetical innovation and the influences of both the English Latitudinarians and the Dutch Remonstrants, this eclecticism brought him close to the Socinians even if (as seems unlikely) they never directly made an impact on his thought. Locke's affinities with the Remonstrants make an openness

⁶⁰ Nicholas Jolley, *Leibniz and Locke: A study of the New Essays on Human Understanding* (Oxford 1984), 12 and passim.

⁶¹ It seems probable that Edwards and company recognized this profile, and were thus not merely cherry-picking Locke's writings for Socinian analogues in order to slander.

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towards Socinianism plausible. The Remonstrants communicated eucharistically with Socinians, engaged with their theology and were involved in the publication of some of their works. Additionally, the analogies of other contemporary unorthodox thinkers demonstrate that there could be a middle ground between strict orthodoxy and strict Socinianism. Isaac Newton, Samuel Clarke and William Whiston provide examples of theologians who departed from high Trinitarian orthodoxy without accepting a strict Socinian Christology and yet whose thought reveals affinities with Socinian doctrinal traditions in both Christological and other ways.

The best recent scholarship on Locke's theology has begun to move towards a model in which Locke is presented as neither completely orthodox nor completely Socinian. If a consensus is emerging, it is that the matter of Locke's relationship with Socinianism need not be an either/or question. This retreat from the binary reflex that Locke must have been either fully Socinian or completely orthodox is exemplified best in the recent work of Nuovo and Marshall. Nuovo has not only concluded that Locke 'in his notes and published works seems to contradict or at the very least comes short of Athanasian orthodoxy,' but also that Locke held views on the soul, original sin and the atonement that were equivalent to Socinian positions. While he allows for the possibility that Locke may have held some Socinian views, however, Nuovo does not believe that Locke had a 'Socinian agenda.' Nevertheless, Nuovo does believe that Locke was a 'Socinian' in a way that is not 'odious,' namely that Locke was a part of what Hugh Trevor-Roper describes as 'a modern tradition of theological liberalism that begins with Erasmus and includes Castellio, Acontius and Ochino, Hugo Grotius, Richard Hooker and the entire Tew Circle,' along with Laelio Sozzini and, Nuovo would add, Fausto Sozzini himself.⁶² This is a subtly different way to orient the dynamic and is similar to the line of argument pursued by Higgins-Biddle. If this can be described as a form of Socinianism, then I think that few would disagree that Locke was a 'Socinian' after this manner.

⁶² Nuovo, 'Locke's Theology,' 211.

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Marshall also identifies an overlap between Locke's theology and that of the Polish Brethren,⁶³ but drives the case for Locke's openness to Socinianism much further than Higgins-Biddle or even Nuovo. Even though he now believes, probably correctly, that Locke accepted the pre-existence of Christ, Marshall has concluded that 'Locke was in many ways broadly 'Socinian' in the sense of holding positions regularly defined as 'Socinian' in polemic accusation,' that Locke was probably influenced by, and had sympathy with, certain Socinian and Unitarian positions and, finally, that 'he was probably, but not definitely, personally and privately a disbeliever in the Trinity of three coequal, consubstantial, coeternal persons in the Godhead.'⁶⁴ Marshall's study is both judicious and compelling. What makes his study so impressive, is that he marshals a much greater range of evidence than ever gathered before to support his case for Locke's interest in, and affinities with, Socinianism. In particular, he has transformed the dynamics of this question by detailing Locke's relationships with English and continental antitrinitarians.

While Marshall has presented the strongest and most detailed case for Locke's relationship with Socinianism, Alan Sell has presented the most forceful argument recently that Locke was, in fact, likely Trinitarian, even though the chief passage from Locke he cites as evidence of at least an informal or tacit Trinitarianism falls far short of an explicit avowal of Trinitology – but is perfectly consistent with biblical language and, for that matter, Socinianism.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, even with this dissenting view, there is a growing awareness that Locke did agree with the Socinians on certain tenets. For example, while differing in their conclusions about Locke's other heresies, however, Marshall, Nuovo and Sell all agree that Locke was unorthodox on the nature of the soul and the eternity of hell.⁶⁶

If Locke can be classified as an active antitrinitarian, that is to say, if it can be shown that Locke had an antitrinitarian or even

⁶³ Marshall, 'Locke and Socinianism,' 116, 181.

⁶⁴ Marshall, 'Locke and Socinianism,' 116.

⁶⁵ The quotation is from Locke's *Second vindication* (Sell, *Locke and the Eighteenth-Century Divines*, 185).

⁶⁶ See note 59 above.

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semi-Socinian doctrinal agenda, the best evidence will likely come from further explorations of his involvement in Socinian and Unitarian networks. Future scholarship must emphasize these less-textually based aspects of Locke's theological career. At the same time, while some uncertainty remains regarding his theology of God, there now can be no doubt that Locke was a heretic. Further evidence for Locke's advocacy of mortalism – a heresy almost as sinister in the eyes of the orthodox as denial of Triunity – will be presented after a consideration of Higgins-Biddle's critical edition.

The critical edition

The text and apparatus of this critical edition of the *Reasonableness* are the result of a careful collation of the first edition (1695), its errata, the second edition (1696), a Locke interleaved and annotated copy of the first edition now held by Harvard (c.1701-1704), the edition produced for the *Collected Works* (1714), along with the first (1696) and second (1715) editions of Pierre Coste's French translation. The layout of the text and apparatus is both practical and attractive. For a series of highly-defensible reasons, Higgins-Biddle has chosen to use the emended Harvard copy as his base text.⁶⁷ A small number of the manuscript additions may constitute Locke's personal reading notes, but the majority are the sort of emendations one would expect in a conscious revision: alterations of style, clarifications of meaning, expansions of argument. While Higgins-Biddle wisely avoids asserting that the emendations of the Harvard copy necessarily amount to the author's intended 'text for posterity'(cxxxiv), they without question constitute revisions by Locke that are very late if not final. Variants from the other English

⁶⁷ Although I incline to Higgins-Biddle's textual decision, readers are referred to Nuovo's review, in which he presents a detailed and worthy case for the use of the first edition as the copy-text (Nuovo, *Locke Newsletter* [2000], 160-8). Whatever one's preferences, Higgins-Biddle's edition provides through the main text and apparatus the entire text and *variae lectiones* of all the English printed and Locke-annotated editions, thus allowing the reader to use his or her own judgment when assessing textual priority. The editor has himself acknowledged that his textual decisions are, by their nature, open to dispute and encourages further scholarly criticism of the text (cxxxv).

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versions, along with significant and interesting differences in Coste's translations, are printed in the apparatus. Although he uses the Harvard emended copy of the first edition as his copy-text, Higgins-Biddle is at pains to point out that he does not follow this text slavishly (cxxxiv). Thus, in such cases as incorrect scriptural references, infelicities of style and errors in Greek orthography, the editor has either used the readings of one of the later editions or provided his own corrections.⁶⁸ In all cases, such deviations from the Harvard copy are noted in the apparatus.

As well as containing some of Locke's last thoughts on the content of the *Reasonableness*, the emendations to the Harvard copy provide both chapter divisions (lacking in all previous English editions) and important additions to the text that have never before been utilized in editions of this work. With one partial exception, Locke took his chapter divisions from Coste's first French edition and, although he did not include chapter headings, those of Coste are printed in the apparatus. The addition of the chapter divisions conveniently breaks up the continuous text of the original and thus renders the book more readable. Also helpful is the inclusion in the apparatus of Locke's short, marginal topical notes, which, while probably not intended to appear in print, do nevertheless provide a guide to Locke's own perceptions of the significant features of his work.

Published with this edition along with reproductions of Godfrey Kneller's chalk sketch of Locke and the title-page of the first edition of the *Reasonableness*, is an example of Locke's annotations to the text of the above-mentioned Harvard copy. One wishes that the use of such images in this edition had not been so conservative. In particular, a great number of photographs of the different sorts of annotations Locke made in particular would have served the edition greatly.⁶⁹ However skilled the writer or editor, there is no substitute for an image of the original: discursive descriptions can never do justice to the complications of an annotated or emended text.

⁶⁸ Examples of the second and third types can be found at the bottom of p. 79.

⁶⁹ One example is the two-part annotation described by Higgins-Biddle on p. 9 n. 4.

Further light on Locke's mortalism

The most substantial additions made to the Harvard copy relate to the mortalist conclusions of Locke's biblical studies. This supplementary material is of great consequence and adds considerably to what we know about Locke's mortalist anthropology.⁷⁰ The editor has performed a great service to scholars by including this crucial evidence in his edition, and I will show below exactly how these annotations help confirm Locke's mortalist heresy. Higgins-Biddle concluded that Locke could not have intended these more radical additions for the press (cxxi-cxxii), and thus relegates them to the apparatus. Although Higgins-Biddle's judgment is probably correct, it is possible that these bolder passages were drafted to serve as the basis for new material to appear in a posthumous edition. Whatever the status of these annotations *vis-à-vis* any intentions Locke may have had for a 'final text,' however, because they are more explicit than what appeared in print, they serve to illuminate the meaning of Locke's published words of 1695 and 1696.

The first mortalist annotation comes with Locke's discussion of Adam's death. To his pivotal statement, 'I must confess by *Death* [in Genesis 2:17] I can understand nothing but a ceasing to be, the losing of all actions of Life and Sense,' Locke adds the following note: '*Psa.* VI. 5. *LVI.* 13. *LXXXIX.* 48. 2 *Sam.* XIV. 14. *Job* XIV. 14. Animas esse Mortales, Justin Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone*, circa initium 173/490' (8).⁷¹ Psalm 6:5 reads: 'For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?' This is a standard *locus biblicus* of mortalists, and is read as confirmation that the death state is unconscious oblivion. The passage in 2 Samuel 14:14 describes the dead 'as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again,' and all the other

⁷⁰ For general background on mortalism, see Norman T Burns, *Christian mortalism from Tyndale to Milton* (Cambridge, MA, 1972) and Leroy Edwin Froom, *The conditionalist faith of our fathers*, 2 vols. (Washington, DC, 1965-1966).

⁷¹ The latter part of this two-part annotation, the reference to the text by Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* that includes a page reference in Locke's own copy, is an example of a manuscript addition to the Harvard copy that Locke likely intended for his personal use only.

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For Locke the contrasting fates of the righteous and wicked do not consist of different sorts of immortality, but of everlasting life opposed to everlasting annihilation, existence versus non-existence.⁷³ The same definition of death as destruction and oblivion that stands for the *intermediate* state of both good and bad, stands for death as the eternal punishment of the wicked, with the exception that in the latter case death is final with no possibility of future resurrection. Thus, Locke cannot accept the eternity of hell torments, something that is confirmed by his short manuscript treatise ‘Resurrectio et quae sequuntur.’⁷⁴ Both the arguments Locke presents, and the constellations of verses he produces in support, fit the mortalist profile and thus align his theology on the soul with radicals like the Leveller Richard Overton and, ironically, Thomas Hobbes.⁷⁵ A more relevant analogy is found in Locke’s theological interlocutor Isaac Newton, who, as recent research has shown, was also a mortalist who limited the duration of hell torments to a finite period of time.⁷⁶ As emphasized above, the presence of this heresy in the *Reasonableness* complicates our understanding of Locke’s intention to use this book as part of his irenicist project. The additions to the text and the accompanying apparatus further clarify Locke’s heterodox intentions for this book. Whether the editor intended this or not, this new edition is more theologically radical than any previous edition of the *Reasonableness*.

⁷³ This conception of punitive death bears a marked similarity to the position articulated by Fausto Sozzini. See Sozzini in Alan W Gomes, ‘Faustus Socinus’ ‘De Jesu Christo Servatore,’ Part III: Historical Introduction, Translation and Critical Notes’ (Ph.D. Dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1990), 119, 124, 129, 141, 151, 159, 182-3, 231-40 and *PB*, 116, where Sozzini states with respect to the fate of the wicked that ‘death itself is the punishment.’

⁷⁴ This manuscript was first published in Peter King, *The life of John Locke* (London, 1830; orig. publ. 1829), 2:139-151, and its radical theology is discussed in Walker, *The Decline of Hell*, 94-5.

⁷⁵ [Richard Overton], *Mans mortalitie* ([London] 1643); Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Cambridge, 1991), 424-39.

⁷⁶ James E Force, ‘The God of Abraham and Isaac (Newton),’ *The Books of Nature and Scripture*, ed. Force and Richard H Popkin (Dordrecht 1994), 179-200.

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Supplementary material

Lastly, we come to the concluding supplementary material, one of the most valuable features of Higgins-Biddle's edition. This material begins with transcriptions of Locke's own manuscript topical and scriptural indexes to the *Reasonableness*. Following this are two appendices, the first of which contains a series of transcriptions of manuscript material relevant to the *Reasonableness*. One or two photographs from these manuscripts would have enriched the edition, although a helpful description precedes every transcribed document. The second appendix is the editor's own scriptural index to the work, and although it includes only references to passages explicitly cited in Locke's published text, and not, unfortunately, verses alluded to or referred to in the notes or manuscripts, it nevertheless remains indispensable to a book of this nature. The first appendix deserves further comment. It contains a collection of eleven manuscripts and manuscript excerpts, all of which shed light on both the composition and the theology of the *Reasonableness*.⁷⁷ Included among these working papers are drafts of additions Locke made to the *Reasonableness*, scriptural reading notes likely prepared for the writing of his work, a manuscript Locke apparently prepared for a further defence of his book beyond the two published *Vindications*, and a group of manuscripts that help fill out what we know about Locke's unorthodox theology. In particular, these latter manuscripts contain more explicit confirmation of Locke's heretical (albeit biblically-derived) belief that death involved no intermediate state between expiration and resurrection but oblivion.

One particularly noteworthy example comes from a brief manuscript jotting on MS Locke c. 27, f. 103:

Rom I.2. Death signifies an end of being due to those who were sinners
God will give those who by well doing seeke immortalitie,
Eternal life. i e an eternal sensible being (201)

⁷⁷ These excerpts, taken from Bodleian MS Locke c. 27, ff. 94-118, 129-30, complement the transcriptions from this same manuscript that Wainwright published in his 1987 edition of the *Paraphrase* (namely, ff. 131-4, 162-173, 213-14, 217-19, 221-3, 278).

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Here Locke's ontological characterization of death is again explicitly mortalist, and in line with his already-cited comments at the beginning of the *Reasonableness*, where he defines death as 'a ceasing to be, the losing of all actions of Life and Sense' (8). Furthermore, in characterizing 'eternal life' as 'an eternal sensible being,' Locke rules out the possibility that the wicked will experience any sort of conscious, eternal existence. Once again, the respective destinies of the righteous and wicked are set up as contrasts between conscious existence and unconscious oblivion, not between eternal bliss and eternal torment as in the orthodox scheme. As Higgins-Biddle points out, the reference to Romans 1:2 in the manuscript fragment is a mistake.⁷⁸ The underlined portion in the second line, however, is a quotation from Romans 2:7 – a text commonly used by mortalists since it emphasizes that immortality is not something already possessed but something that must be *sought*. Locke cites Romans 2:7 in a passage in the *Reasonableness* that, while more oblique than that of MS Locke c. 27, f. 103, nevertheless states that the just end of the wicked is simply death (117). *Reasonableness* (MS Locke c. 27, ff. 104-11) in which Locke

Another example comes from a manuscript working paper for the writes: 'The Death that came on Adam was ... not Eternal punishment nor Necessity of sinning but an End of Being' (204) – another explicit affirmation of a mortalist anthropology. Earlier in the same manuscript, Locke listed four early church fathers – including Justin Martyr – believed to have been, as he styles them, 'Pseuchopannuchists' (204). He recorded Stephen Nye's *The agreement of the Unitarians with the Catholick Church* (LL 3021) as his source for this information, thus confirming that he had used this English Unitarian work as a source while preparing material for the *Reasonableness*. In yet another manuscript (MS Locke c. 27, ff. 112-13; possibly a draft of an intended reply to attacks on the *Reasonableness*), Locke begins a section headed 'Death' with the words: 'If god must punish sinners as they deserve there can be noe stop in the execution of justice short of annihilation. For our

⁷⁸ It is possible that the intended reference was Romans 1:23, which Locke cites for mortalist purposes in one of his additions to the Harvard copy of the *Reasonableness* (14).

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very beings are the gift of god which we have deserved to be deprived of" (206-7). Once again, the theme is consistent: life, of whatever form or quality, is a gift reserved for the righteous.

These private, less guarded articulations of his theology provide further enlightening tools for the interpreter of Locke's more cautiously presented published text. This material adds to the testimony of Locke's mortalism already provided by the publication of Locke's 'Spirit, Soul, and Body' and 'Resurrectio et quae sequuntur' in Arthur Wainwright's edition of Locke's *Paraphrase*.⁷⁹ Taken together, these published manuscripts constitute a powerful statement of Locke's mortalism, a relatively neglected aspect of his theology that is overdue for further study – partly because of its implications for Locke's more philosophically oriented discussions of mind, self and soul in the *Essay* of 1690. But Locke's theology of the soul also merits study in its own right. With it we can expand Marshall's description of Locke from 'an unitarian heretic,'⁸⁰ to 'an unitarian, mortalist heretic.' And with it we have another strong link between the theology of Locke and the Socinians.

A final word

Higgins-Biddle's *Reasonableness* is a worthy addition to the Clarendon series and it neatly complements Wainwright's edition of Locke's posthumous *Paraphrase*. The critical text, complete with supplementary manuscript material, helps clarify in sometimes dramatic ways our understanding of Locke's heretical theology. Locke scholars are indebted to both Higgins -Biddle and the series editor M A Stewart for producing a fine and rigorous work of scholarship that will serve students of Locke and seventeenth-century theology for years to come. It has been worth the wait.

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⁷⁹ Wainwright, ed., Locke, *Paraphrase*, 675-84.

⁸⁰ Marshall, *Locke*, 414.

DAVID HARTLEY ON HUMAN NATURE

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Richard C Allen, *David Hartley on human nature*, New York, State University of New York, 1999, xxiv + 469pp; SUNY Series in the Philosophy of Psychology. ISBN/ISSN: 0-7914-4233-0, hdk, £23.75 / \$30.50; 0-7914-4234-9, pbk, £23.25 / \$29.95.

In recent years scholars of Rational Dissent have become increasingly aware of the profound influence David Hartley (1705-57) exerted on some of the leading intellectuals of late eighteenth-century England.¹ In line with this the need for a comprehensive analysis of Hartley's life and thought has become evident. In *David Hartley on human nature* Richard C Allen has produced the definitive study of an important, neglected and misunderstood eighteenth-century thinker. He has succeeded in describing and explaining the unity of Hartley's religious and philosophical system, its influence in the eighteenth-century, and the way Hartley's concerns and propositions can speak to the twenty-first century.

Hartley lived during a time that witnessed heated debate over the validity of revealed religion, free will versus determinism, the origin of virtue, and the relationship between matter and spirit; and he sought to solve these issues by constructing a coherent synthesis of materialism and theology. Samuel Clarke had convinced many that the Newtonian universe demonstrated the existence of a Divine Intelligence, and Hartley sought to extend this insight by showing that the mechanism of the human mind revealed it to be the product of divine construction.² The *Observations on man, his frame, his duty and his expectations* (1749) is set out in two parts: the first outlines the physical structure of the human 'frame' and the process by which the various 'affections' and dispositions of the mind are formed by sensory experience and the 'association of ideas', and

¹ See the articles in *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 17 (1998), in particular R K Webb, 'Perspectives on David Hartley', 17-47.

² John Gascoigne, 'Science, Religion and the Foundations of Morality in Enlightenment Britain', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 17 (1998), 83-103.

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shows how a moral sense can be cultivated. In the second part Hartley discusses the implications of this view in relation to natural and revealed religion, advocating an enlightened Christianity with universal salvation as its central doctrine.

Twentieth-century historians had a limited appreciation of the nature and importance of Hartley's work. The *Observations* was only studied by those with an interest in its contribution to the rise of utilitarianism, psychology or literary romanticism, and their assessments of its status were mixed. In his *History of English utilitarianism* (1901), for example, Ernest Albee argued that Hartley achieved fame only because he was the first to systematically develop the implications for ethics of John Gay's theory of the 'association of ideas'. The *Observations*, he claimed, made little impression when it was published because of the 'undoubted dullness of Hartley's style and crudeness of his general treatment'.³ In contrast Basil Willey published a thoughtful discussion of Hartley's system as part of his account of the philosophical background of eighteenth-century literature. According to Willey, Hartley was 'a man of unusual originality and penetration, [who] writes with the zest of one who knows that he is engaged in a pioneering work, but who feels, at the same time, that he is building up morality and religion on unshakable grounds'.⁴ While assessments of Hartley's importance and relevance varied, they were all limited and discussed the *Observations* with an interest in shedding light on one or other particular field of knowledge.⁵ A detailed study Hartley's philosophy has been long overdue.

³ Ernest Albee, *A History of English utilitarianism* (1902 [London, 1957]), 117.

⁴ Basil Willey, *The Eighteenth-Century background* (1940 [Harmondsworth, 1962]), 133.

⁵ Leslie Stephen, *History of English thought in the Eighteenth Century*, 2 vols. (London, 1876), I, 65-68; Elie Halevy, *The growth of philosophic radicalism* (Paris 1901-04, trans. London 1928); Barbara Bowen Oberg, 'David Hartley and the Association of Ideas', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 37 (1976), 441-53; Corinna Delkeskamp, 'Medicine, Science, and Moral Philosophy: David Hartley's attempt at a reconciliation', *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, 2 (1977), 162-76; Jack Fruchtman Jr., 'Late Latitudinarianism: the case of David Hartley', *Enlightenment and Dissent*,

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David Hartley's life was relatively quiet and uneventful. A kind, modest and scholarly man, he studied at Cambridge in the 1720s, where he was exposed to Newtonian science and the philosophy of John Locke. Hartley became a fellow of Jesus College and intended upon a career in the Church. He decided against this, however, because of scruples about aspects of orthodox theology, in particular the notion of perpetual damnation. Instead, Hartley became a physician (without taking a medical degree), practising in Bury St. Edmunds, London and, after 1742, Bath. In chapter 2, 'Portrait of a Benevolent Man', Allen has provided us with an engaging description of Hartley's life and character. Hartley married Alice Rowley in 1730, but she died a year later while giving birth to a son (David Hartley MP, 1731-1813), and he was 'extremely afflicted, and remained attached to her memory all his life' (xviii). In 1735 he remarried to a young Elizabeth Packer against the wishes of her wealthy family, and the two lived happily despite bouts of ill health. Allen brings to life some of the friendships and acquaintances Hartley had in this age of coffee-house sociability: for example, the 6' 4" John Byrom, religious mystic and teacher of his own system of shorthand, and Benjamin Hoadley M.D. (1706-57), son of the famous (and to many notorious) radical Whig bishop by the same name. Hartley learned to write shorthand and discussed with both men the uses of a vegetable diet in controlling gluttony. With London wracked by the great gin epidemic of the 1730s, Hartley struggled to be abstemious and 'drink neither ale nor wine' – with what degree of success we cannot know (p.29). Hartley spent much time and effort in promoting Byrom's shorthand and Joanna Stephens's medicine that was claimed to dissolve stones in the bladder (an affliction with which he suffered greatly). In both cases he was trying to act benevolently, promoting the welfare of both the inventors and the public. Hartley collaborated with Stephen Hales, the pioneer plant and animal physiologist, in examining the chemical makeup of Stephens's medicine in an effort to discover the active ingredient.

11 (1992), 3-22; David Spadafora, *The idea of progress in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton, 1990), 149-66; Robert Marsh, 'The Second Part of Hartley's System', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 20 (1959), 264-73.

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This interest in chemistry had a profound influence on Hartley's view of matter as an active substance.

While the sources are limited, Allen could have made a greater effort to explore some of Hartley's relationships. He is particularly good on the relationship with Byrom and shows that Hartley was acquainted with some prominent Anglican thinkers such as Joseph Butler, author of the influential *Analogy of religion* (1736), and the aged William Whiston (1676-1752), Newton's hand-picked successor as Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge, who had been expelled from the university in 1710 for expounding Arian theology. It is a pity, however, that Allen has not examined Hartley's relationship with Edmund Law, who as master of Peterhouse, Cambridge, encouraged the development of heterodox opinions and seems to have promoted Hartley's work.⁶ It was Law who published John Gay's *Dissertation concerning the fundamental principles of virtue and morality*, the text that set Hartley on the path to composing his *Observations*.⁷ And surely Hartley's acquaintance with William Warburton and John Jortin, two very different but influential Anglican divines, is worthy of note.⁸ This neglect of some of Hartley's relationships, however, is not a significant flaw. As R K Webb has noted, 'for all his contacts with the great world of intellect and fashion, [Hartley] remained an oddly isolated figure, labouring away for twenty years on his great work according to his lights'.⁹

⁶ Hartley related that 'our friend Law' had 'yielded to the method of reasoning [on free-will] which I have suggested'. David Hartley to John Lister, 7 August 1739, in W B Trigg, 'The Correspondence of Dr David Hartley and Rev. John Lister', *Transactions of the Halifax Antiquarian Society* (1938), 233, 274-75; Anthony Page, 'Enlightenment and a "Second Reformation": the religion and philosophy of John Jebb (1736-86)', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 17 (1998), 48-82; Richard Brinkley, 'A Liberal Churchman: Edmund Law (1703-1787)', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 6 (1987), 12.

⁷ Law prefixed Gay's tract to his annotated edition of William King's *Essay on the origin of evil* (1731).

⁸ Hartley described Warburton as 'an intimate acquaintance'. Trigg, 'Correspondence of Hartley and Lister', 233, 245.

⁹ Webb, 'Perspectives on David Hartley', 19.

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The eighteenth century witnessed a fierce debate over the origins of knowledge. Conflict over epistemology often underpinned or fuelled debate over ethics, metaphysics and religion, which in turn fed into disagreement over politics, education and the law. The leading nineteenth-century empiricist philosopher, John Stuart Mill, depicted the battleground when he declared that,

The notion that truths external to the mind may be known by intuition or consciousness, independently of observation or experience, is ... the great intellectual support of false doctrines and bad institutions. By the aid of this theory, every inveterate belief and every intense feeling, of which the origin is not remembered, is enabled to dispense with the object of justifying itself by reason ... There never was such an instrument devised for consecrating all deep seated prejudices.¹⁰

Mill's father had encouraged him to study Hartley's *Observations* as the 'master-production in the philosophy of mind'.¹¹ Hartley and his eighteenth-century followers were similarly confident that they had found an explanation of the human mind that would allow them to reject claims to knowledge based on intuition, reason or authority. What is more, in comparison to Mill the atheist, they believed that this account of human psychology confirmed their optimistic enlightened version of Christian theology. This explains the passion with which Joseph Priestley expounded the Hartleian view in opposition to Thomas Reid's common sense philosophy. Priestley enthused that Hartley's book 'contains a new and extensive *science*' and that studying it is 'like entering upon a *new world*'. 'Such a theory of the human mind as that of Dr Reid', he declared,

(if that can be called a *theory* which in fact *explains* nothing) does not, indeed, require much study ... Dr Reid meets with a particular sentiment, or persuasion, and not being able to explain the origin of it, without more ado he ascribes it to a *particular original instinct*, provided for that very purpose. He finds another difficulty, which he also solves in the same

¹⁰ J S Mill, *Autobiography*, ed. Jack Stillinger (Oxford 1969), 134.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

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concise and easy manner. And thus he goes on accounting for every thing (cited, p.12).

Hartley's philosophy bolstered the confidence of his followers to attack beliefs, practices and institutions they saw as based on traditional prejudices underpinned by false epistemological arguments.

Hartley has often been criticised for integrating his materialist account of the mind with a Christian theology. In his study of *English thought in the Eighteenth-Century* (1876) Leslie Stephen described Hartley as 'excellent and acute'. Hartley and his follower Joseph Priestley, he argued, represented 'an curious combination of opinion' in being 'theological materialists'. He judged them less consistent than the French materialists who had logically jettisoned theology. They typified the 'less thoroughgoing' approach of English thinkers:

their theology was connected by the flimsiest ties with their philosophy. They chose to retain the old arguments, but their choice was dictated by their prejudices instead of their reason. The theology is an addition to their creed, not a natural development; and when it entirely dropped out from the later exposition of James Mill, the system only became more coherent than before.¹²

It is this view that has seen the religious aspect of Hartley's work neglected in comparison to his materialist account of the mind. Rather than view Hartley's religious concerns as an antiquated encumbrance, Allen rightly examines Hartley's synthesis of materialism and theology as a comprehensive account of human nature. It is this synthesis, Allen argues, that makes Hartley's work relevant to the twenty-first century because 'theopathic experiences and activities, by their widespread presence, are facts that a properly scientific psychology should take into account' (p. 9).

According to Hartley's daughter, 'when he was so little as to be swinging backwards and forwards upon a gate ... he was meditating upon the nature of his own mind; wishing to find out how man was made; to what purpose, and for what future end' (p.80). Hartley applied himself to these questions throughout his life and, with the

¹² Stephen, *English thought*, I, 65-6.

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aid of his studies in religion and medicine, he ventured to answer them in the *Observations*. Hartley confessed to have been ‘overcome by superstitious fears’ when he was young. But in 1735 he felt fully liberated by ‘my studies upon religious subjects’, which had led him to believe in universal salvation. ‘This has made me much more indifferent to the world than ever,’ he wrote, ‘at the same time I enjoy it more; has taught me to love every man, and to rejoice in the happiness which our Heavenly Father intends for *all* his children’ (p.78). Rational Dissenters such as the scientist Joseph Priestley and the political activist John Jebb were similarly inspired by Hartley’s religious doctrine and its philosophical basis. While Allen touches briefly upon the influence Hartley’s *Observations* exerted on the late eighteenth century, his focus is upon examining and explaining the nature of Hartley’s account of the human condition.

Allen dissects Hartley’s system into five elements: a theory of neurophysiology; an account of perception and action; an emphasis on the primacy of language; a model of psychological development; and a description of the process of religious fulfilment. In doing so he gives a detailed, thoughtful and clear account of how in ‘Hartley’s great work, the elements of physics, chemistry, mathematics, medicine, religion, and philosophy combine to form a psychology – a new compound that illuminates our physical frame, our moral duty, and our religious expectations’ (p.81).

Modelled upon Newton’s theory of matter, with its forces of attraction and repulsion, Hartley put forward a theory, the ‘doctrine of vibrations’, to explain how simple ideas were formed in the brain. He proposed that impulses are passed along the nerves to the brain via the vibration of sub-atomic particles in the medullary substance of the spinal marrow and the nervous system. By this means, he speculated, sensory stimulation causes ideas in much the same way that the vibration of a string produces noise.¹³ Hartley’s enthusiastic follower, the Cambridge don John Jebb, found this theory a convincing way to answer the question of how physical sensory experience could become mental phenomena. Where Lucretius made a distinction between *anima* and *animus* as separate

¹³ David Hartley, *Observations on man* (1791 [1749]), 298.

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and opposed substances, Jebb claimed that they were both 'functions of our corporeal frame' which cease when the 'whole machine' dies, in the same way that sound stops 'when the wire is broken'. 'Lucretius supposes the motion of the fluid to be from itself', Jebb continued, 'we, by impulse, and communicated vibrations from without'.¹⁴ As David Spadofora has noted, Hartley's 'theory of vibrations was the first detailed modern treatment of physiological psychology'.¹⁵ As such, it had to be tentative. There must be a physical mechanism, Hartley reasoned, by which sensations are conveyed to the brain, and the theory of vibrations was an attempt to provide a plausible account of how this might occur. He openly confessed that his 'doctrine of vibrations' was only a speculative hypothesis, and was careful to note that his theory of the mind would stand if it had to be abandoned. At the start of the twentieth century, Ernest Albee wrote that Hartley's 'recklessness in elaborating his theory of vibrations far beyond what neurological science in his own day (or, of course, later) would justify, could only result in disaster. Wherever he thinks he finds a mental law, he provides it with a parallel hypothetical physiological law, until the reader holds his breath at the audacity of this plodding and seemingly unimaginative scientist'.¹⁶ Allen's detailed explanation of Hartley's theory rescues it from such dismissive assessments, while pointing out that in light of twentieth-century science his speculations do not appear so far off the mark (pp.96, 398).

Central to Hartley's work is his account of how the mind is formed by the 'association of ideas' in the brain. John Locke had described a process by which simple ideas are produced in the brain by sensation and then formed into complex ideas by 'acts' of the mind; Hartley went a step beyond this in arguing that the process of thought was entirely a matter of the association of ideas. As a result, he has been accused of crude determinism in describing the mind as a passive product of sensory experience.¹⁷ The central

¹⁴ John Jebb, *The works* (3 vols., 1787), vol II, 46.

¹⁵ Spadafora, *Idea of progress*, 154.

¹⁶ Albee, *A history of English utilitarianism*, 118-19.

¹⁷ Coleridge, who came to reject his early enthusiastic support for Hartley's philosophy, complained that it would divide life 'between the

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chapters of Allen's book aim to correct this misunderstanding of Hartley's work. Hartley, he argues, is 'firmly within the tradition of the "way of ideas" as Yolton describes it',¹⁸ and devised a theory of the 'mind as a dynamic construct, the totality of physiological and psychological processes'. Here it is worth quoting Allen at length:

The language used by philosophers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries bears within itself an implicit model of mind, and even those who, like Locke, articulate a quite different understanding of how minds work are often taken to be advocating it. This model generally suggests that the mind is a nonmaterial entity that knows the world by looking at the images that appear on the retinas of the eyes. In contrast, the being Hartley observes is the human infant or young child: a living physical organism that moves, explores its environment, and learns to handle cups and spoons and toys; that coordinates flows of sensation deriving from physical movement, taste, smell, hearing, and sight; that listens to the speech of others and learns to speak; and that, through these activities develops a 'mind' filled with words and memories and capacities for perceptual discrimination and skilled motor activity – in other words, ideas. For such a being, ideas are clearly 'semantic and epistemic' responses, as Yolton suggests; but they are not simply the responses of a disembodied mind to visual stimuli; rather they are meanings an embodied, active, and speaking being develops through interaction with its social and physical environments (p.144).

Allen usefully depicts Hartley's view of the mind as being a 'hypercomplex idea', the product of the association of many clusters of ideas (p.189).

Space does not permit a detailed discussion of Allen's lucid analysis of Hartley's theory of the association of ideas. In short, in order to make sense of the complex process of association Hartley constructed a model of the mind as having six classes of

despotism of outward impressions, and that of senseless and passive memory'. Cited in Allen, *David Hartley on human nature*, 137.

¹⁸ John Yolton, *Perceptual acquaintance from Descartes to Reid* (1984).

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‘intellectual pleasure and pain’: imagination, ambition, self-interest, sympathy, theopathy and the moral sense. Each of these classes or orientations develop in sequence out of each other. In Hartley’s words, ‘as sensation is the common foundation of all these, so each in its turn, when sufficiently generated, contributes to generate and model all the rest ... Let sensation generate imagination; then will sensation and imagination together generate ambition’ and so forth. Hartley divided ‘self-interest’ into three categories: the most common is ‘gross self-interest’ (which we now call ‘ego’) which directs imagination and ambition. The pursuit of a more ‘refined self-interest’ is encouraged by the happiness experienced through friendship and indulging in compassion, sympathy, and religious thoughts. This in turn encourages a ‘rational self-interest’ in which an ‘abstract happiness’ is affected by ‘the hopes and fears relating to a future state’.¹⁹ In Allen’s words, ‘rational self-interest looks to the limitless future and asks, What means must I pursue, to secure eternal happiness?’ (pp.284-85). This rational self-interest leads to the cultivation of the ‘moral sense’, which grows out of and guides sympathy and theopathy. The whole process is interactive: ‘new discoveries mean new affections, and these provide the material for further associations and transferences ... the ascent upward that models the classes and the subsequent descent by which the lower classes are new-modelled are repetitive and dynamic’ (p.295). In opposition to notions of an ‘innate moral sense’, Hartley put forward his theory of the mind in which ‘the self’ and a moral sense is generated by an experience-based, complex, dynamic psychological process.

Hartley did not stop at a materialist theory of the development of the moral sense; his task was to demonstrate harmony between science of the mind and Christian revelation. Allen provides an excellent exposition of the religious ends of the *Observations*. Hartley wrote that ‘we do, and must, upon our entrance into this world, begin with idolatry to external things, and, as we advance in it, proceed to idolatry of ourselves’, adding that this idolatry blocks the way to ‘a complete happiness in the love of God’ (cited, p.328). The culmination of unimpeded moral development, he argued,

¹⁹ Hartley, *Observations*, 272-275.

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would be a transcendence of any form of self-interest – an ‘annihilation of self’. This did not mean a renunciation of the world, but rather

‘perfect self-annihilation’ occurs when benevolence, piety, and the moral sense ‘check’ and ‘utterly extinguish’ the dispositions of sensation, imagination, ambition, and self-interest as primary or independent sources of pleasure and pain ... It occurs when sympathy and theopathy flow without restriction – when the person loves others and loves God (p. 332)

Hartley was acquainted with the writings and persons of several ‘ancient and modern interior Christians called mystics’. While the *Observations* begin in the realm of Newtonian science, the reader increasingly encounters the language of religious mysticism – in which everything is seen to emanate from, and return to God. Hartley wrote that ‘we may learn to rejoice in every thing we see, and in the blessings past, present and future; which we receive either in our own persons, or in those of others; to become partakers of the divine nature, loving and lovely, holy and happy’ (cited, p.363). Hartley viewed the nature that we are a part of as both material *and* spiritual. With the inclusion of theopathy as a fundamental orientation of the mind, Allen argues that Hartley’s model of the psyche ‘is as intuitively compelling and as potentially useful’ as the various models put forward by leading twentieth-century theorists such as Freud, Jung, Maslow, Erikson and Kohlberg (p.400).

Disagreement between Hartley and his opponents hinged upon differing conceptions of matter. Orthodox Christianity was based upon a philosophy of dualism that divided the world into passive matter and active immaterial substances such as God and souls. Hartley, the mild mannered, rational English protestant, had decided that philosophies grounded in dualism were fundamentally flawed and that orthodox Christianity was thus indefensible. With atheist works being published on the continent, however, Hartley’s attempt to demonstrate harmony between Christianity and a materialist philosophy that rejected dualism was bound to appear suspect to many. Hartley carefully and cautiously noted that if matter is ‘endued with the most simple kinds of sensation’, then his

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'theory must be allowed to overturn all the arguments which are brought for the immateriality of the soul' (cited, p. 182). Critics who espoused dualism assumed that matter was passive and either rejected or did not understand this view of matter as a dynamic, chemically active substance.

Hartley's materialism had profound implications for religion and politics. For example, he had to explain how the mind and the soul could survive the decay that followed death. Hartley speculated that a variety of our sensations, thoughts and emotions' might be preserved in an 'elementary infinitesimal body' which would survive death and decay, and lay dormant until the resurrection when fire would bring it to life, enabling the individual's memory and identity to be restored along with their physical person. Thus, Hartley declared, 'the resurrection will be effected by means strictly natural' (cited, pp.203-04). A similar theology of 'mortalism' had been espoused by some radicals in the seventeenth century, and Hartley's speculations encouraged reform minded Anglicans such as Francis Blackburne, Edmund Law and John Jebb to revive 'the soul-sleeping system'.²⁰

Hartley was a man of science and religion, who, Allen argues, measured progress in terms of the annihilation of the individual self and the imitation of God's benevolence (p.395). While disciples such as John Jebb and Joseph Priestley agreed with this, they also sought to develop and apply Hartley's thought directly to society and politics. Traditional dualistic philosophy had assumed that 'mere matter' must be moved and directed by a spiritual substance. This chimed with conventional social and political assumptions. In Allen's words, 'just as the masses must be ruled by the princes of the state and the church, so also must mass be ruled by the aristocracy of spirit.' The analogy could also work on the other side: 'to suggest that matter is itself active is to imply that the sluggish and base masses have the energy and intelligence necessary to organize their own affairs' (p.382). Hartley's rejection of dualism, which underpinned conventional thought across a range

²⁰ B W Young, "'The Soul-Sleeping System": politics and heresy in eighteenth-century England', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 45 (1994), 64-81.

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of fields, and his emphasis on the way circumstances influence mental development, encouraged followers like Jebb and Priestley to campaign with confidence and conviction for fundamental reform of religion, education, politics and the law.

David Hartley on human nature is obviously a labour of love. Allen has thoroughly, thoughtfully and enthusiastically engaged with the work of this important eighteenth-century thinker. The result is a well-written book that manages to consider Hartley's thought in its context while also demonstrating its relevance to the twenty-first century. In particular, it should be read by anyone interested in the philosophical dimensions of Rational Dissent and the English Enlightenment.

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ENLIGHTENED INTERVENTIONS

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Jonathan Brody Kramnick, *Making the English canon: print-capitalism and the cultural past, 1700-1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), viii + 287pp, £37.50.

Thomas Woodman ed., *Early Romantics: perspectives in British poetry from Pope to Wordsworth* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 1998), ix + 276 pp, £45.00.

Andrew McCann, *Cultural politics in the 1790s: literature, radicalism and the public sphere* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 1999), xi + 226pp, £42.50.

The recent study of eighteenth century intellectual and literary developments in Britain illustrates the truth that, although the humanities do not develop in quite the way that the natural sciences do, nevertheless richer and more inclusive paradigms are as much a feature of historical as of scientific knowledge. Such a claim for advancing illumination does not prevent due obeisance to the thesis that we lose as well as gain in this process. We may after all now be less certain than we once were in our (variously) Whiggish, Wellsian or Marxizing pasts of what the Enlightenment was *for*: yet we have gained much over the last decades in understanding by what means the Enlightenment(s) of the eighteenth century actually worked, both internationally and within particular societies.

Although diverse in range and in avowed intellectual orientation all three books under review here have in common a strong sense of intellectual life in the eighteenth century as actively networked through material means such as magazines, books and pamphlets, and as actively promoted by the activities of groups, societies and institutions, by individual entrepreneurship and a sequence of interventions and controversies. The overall result of such a perspective has been to make us see the 'made', actively-constructed quality of eighteenth-century intellectual life. Lesser-known writers assume strategic significance in such mappings, well-known writers acquire greater definition and geographical clarity. The Enlightenment becomes less of a monolith, to be endorsed or

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opposed en bloc, and more a set of intellectual explorations paralleling the geographical explorations of the time.

Jonathan Brody Kramnick's *Making the English Canon: print capitalism and the cultural past 1700-1770* probes in a welcome way the mechanisms by which Britain (particularly here, England) acquired a coherent literary past or rather a narrative that gave satisfying shape to that literary past. From being (as it were) imaginatively gifted but artistically rugged early Moderns, Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton were transformed during the eighteenth-century into late classics to be reverentially analyzed as Homer and Virgil had long been analyzed. They were no longer seen as the vigorous but rude forefathers of a poetic progress only truly begun by Denham and Waller and culminating in Pope, but as sublime inhabitants of a world now hardly attainable. Of course the power of this particular narrative would be acknowledged by the Romantics, whose innovation it would precisely be to call down (or up) the spirits of the great English bards from this vasty deep and to rewrite them: Coleridge's Shakespeare, Blake's Milton and Keats's Spenser would be called to aid a re-enchantment of the English imagination. Yet the Romantics could only do this because their great precursors had already been canonized at a distance by eighteenth-century poets and critics.

The actual narrative of this 'invention' of the English classics in the eighteenth century proves in Kramnick's hands to be still capable of yielding both historical and contemporary insight. For one thing, he adds complexity to our often unconsciously Addisonian view of the eighteenth-century by stressing a tension, rather than a complementarity, between the periodical and reviewing popularization of older culture on the one hand, (as in *The Spectator* papers on Milton) and the academic production of annotated editions on the other. The first stressed the accessibility and relevance of the older writers, the latter the otherness and difficulty of these same classics. The opposition was not that simple, of course. Within the scholarly camp Johnson in his Shakespeare claimed that many of the dramatist's beauties were natural and eternal and needed no annotation from him. But for this he was in turn criticized by William Kenrick who stressed the need

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for the professional critic to act as middleman in what he termed 'the republic of letters'.

The complexity of this issue is shown in Kramnick's analysis of Thomas Warton, who is seen as pursuing a double discourse. On the one hand, Warton claims that we should appreciate, say, Chaucer for his real poetic value rather than for some attractive quaintness we may find in his antiquity: on the other hand, this 'real' appreciation is only possible through a scholarly effort that is necessarily reserved for the minority. This tension is one that has haunted literary criticism ever since, though Kramnick suggests that its alternative – a journalistic hostility to any idea of cultural difficulty as productive of insight – is even more problematic. Indeed there is a boldness in Kramnick's conclusion where he moves into contemporary mode and suggests that the dichotomy between press and academe in the eighteenth century is one that has come down to the present to the detriment, at least in the 'Anglo-Saxon' world, of the reputation of the latter. His account does help us better to understand why Britain and America can at times combine suspicion of 'intellectuals' with a wide journalistic diffusion of culture, though some readers may find his conclusions too pessimistic on these matters. The current popularity of, say, the eponymous reviews of books published in London and New York suggests that there is an appetite for an accessible difficulty which bridges his dichotomy, and this popularity in turn surely owes something to the pioneer cultural evangelism of Addison and Steele.

However, the thought that there was something problematic as well as creative about English enlightenment culture is a useful lead-in to Thomas Woodman's edited collection *Early Romantics: perspectives in British poetry from Pope to Wordsworth*. Certainly the role of the poet from Gray to Smart and beyond was an unresolved issue for both the poets themselves and the mid-eighteenth-century culture in which they worked – and arguably a fascination with that problematic status has come down to our own time. Seeing themselves as the direct inheritors of Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton, these poets of sentiment and sensibility were dogged internally by anxieties of influence and belatedness and externally by competition from a still vigorous neoclassicism

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that ran down through Johnson, Goldsmith, Churchill and Crabbe. Found wanting by some contemporaries for an unmanly sentimentalism, they have been criticized since for not being sufficiently like their Romantic successors. Help, though, has lately been at hand – again in the form of a more precise historicism which has seen the folly of consigning several generations of exploratory and subtle poetry to a custom-built limbo between ‘Augustan’ and ‘Romantic’. Concepts such as an age of sensibility have been useful in this respect, not least because they help to pull at least one acknowledged artistic heavyweight, Blake, backwards into the late eighteenth-century poetic frame.

This enhanced historicism has been the prelude to a recent artistic upvaluing of the writers of the age of sensibility themselves – a process aided by the fact that our own era is arguably one of the first since their own prepared to praise porosity and eclecticism in art rather than organic wholeness. Our own scepticism about later grand narratives has enabled us to see merits in dividedness, ambivalence, stylistic unevenness. From the over-writings in Gray’s *Elegy* to the creative forgeries of Macpherson and Chatterton to the (at the time) apparently bizarre inventions of Smart and Blake, patterns emerge which are not unfamiliar in postmodern literature. Then, as now, David Fairer points out in ‘Organizing Verse: Blake’s *Reflections* and Eighteenth-Century Poetry’, there was acute anxiety over the loss of the past and the need to somehow find means of transmitting its values to the future. It is no coincidence that the poet of this period whose stock has risen fastest over the last two decades (though Smart runs him close) is Cowper. His faith and unfaith, his urbane classicism and religious confessionality, his retreat and moral engagement, his construction of works based on association rather than logic, speak to our condition in ways that more confidently coherent (and exclusive) visions cannot. This perspective has affected our reading and viewing of Blake too: rather than stressing the systematic coherence of Blake’s myths we now tend to value the extraordinary openness and inventiveness of his successive visionary recastings. As with most such collections, the separate essays in *Early Romantics* display wide variations of approach and level, but the contributors are generally distinguished by an ability to link very

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different writers across the period between the death of Pope and *Lyrical Ballads*. Daniel E White, for example, makes particularly telling connections through the century in his 'Autobiography and Elegy: The Early Romantic Poetics of Thomas Gray and Charlotte Smith' while Chris Mounsey makes precise the often-invoked but seldom-sustantiated parallels between Smart and Blake. Mounsey's scholarly sense of their differentness is just what empowers and validates his bold connection of the two poets with our current epistemological cruxes.

One of the strongest elements of *Early Romantics* is its significant revaluation and reinterpretation of women's writing. Specifically, it reminds us that there is a quarter century c.1773-1798 when only Cowper disputes the dominance of women poets nationally as the age of Barbauld modulates into the age of Smith. This interest in women's writing naturally propels us forward to the third book under review, Andrew McCann's *Cultural politics in the 1790s: literature, radicalism and the public sphere*. Here our chronological progression through English enlightenment interventions and debates culminates in rapid triumph and disaster as the flood of radical ripostes to Burke runs within a few years into Pitt's 'gagging acts'. That women's writing was a leading element in England's second-phase (often Unitarian) Enlightenment meant that its fate would be inextricably bound up with the dramatic and often disastrous cultural events of the mid-1790s.

McCann's overall analysis of the decade has an interesting theoretical underpinning in its critical application of Habermas's ideas on the emergence of the public sphere to late eighteenth-century radicalism. It is an approach that yields specific local success as in its recovery of Thelwall as a significant political thinker, who in his *Rights of nature* attempted to reanimate the idea of the nation as unified polity. But at times McCann's answers do suggest certain problems with a largely text-based study of intellectual history. For what he argues is that even Wollstonecraft (one wonders what he would have said of Barbauld or Smith) is implicated in a language of accommodation to the status quo that ultimately works against liberation from gender and class stereotypes. This seems ahistorical to a degree, given the extreme contingencies under which Wollstonecraft's work of the 1790s was

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produced, the need to be aware of her specific target audience and the temerity, indeed bravery, of her producing it at all. Similar doubts arise in the analysis of Godwin, adversely criticized by McCann as drawing back from the mob for what he sees as its irrationality in *Political justice*. Apart from the obvious question of whether Godwin may have had a point from a progressive viewpoint in the aftermath of the Birmingham Church-and-King riots of 1791, the analysis downplays Godwin's active interventionism. It would be hard to infer from McCann's account his active involvement in the debate around the treason trials of 1794 and his triumphantly effective production of *Cursory strictures* at that time. Whatever blunting of artistic or intellectual power may be apparent in Godwin's later life (and one could argue that his retention of largely progressive attitudes through decades of neglect was itself a triumph of integrity and courage), it is surely partial to attribute it to an over-naïve faith in 'the ideal of public interaction undistorted by power relations': Pitt's measures were sufficiently frightening to be generally effective: any 'failure' on Godwin's part should be given its properly tragic tinge. Can we imagine ourselves coping much better with that mixture of public obloquy and indifference mingled with personal tragedy and financial difficulties which beset him after Wollstonecraft's death? If McCann's interesting intrinsic analysis of his radical texts had been tied into a firmer sense of political history and of biographical actuality then his book would have carried greater theoretical conviction to add to its undoubtedly acute and invaluable analyses of particular texts.

In their different ways all these books suggest that the public sphere generated in eighteenth-century England is still alive for us and operative. The attributes of that public sphere are, to be sure, double-edged. As both Kramnick and McCann suggest in their different ways, the triumph of the intellectual's freedom to critique his or her culture has been bought at the expense of a sense of marginality: that culture's commercial and consumerist imperatives, some of which are embedded in our inheritance from the Enlightenment (e.g. our news media), can seem to question the very validity of any serious cultural critique of the way we live now. We have a freedom of debate which Godwin would have envied, but by

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no means the freedom from controlling managerial structures and manipulations of truth which he desiderated as necessary to a truly liberated polity. Yet, if the eighteenth century ultimately bequeathed to us, rather than resolved, this issue of the intellectual's and artist's relationships to consumerist society, that is not a fault to be laid at the door of Johnson or Warton, of Barbauld or Smith, of Wollstonecraft or Godwin: it is they after all who created in an English context the role of the critical intellectual and its attendant cultural space – a role and a space from which we ourselves have the chance to address the very real cultural problems that have come down to us from eighteenth-century commercial England. In particular, the enlightened Dissenting concept of 'candour' in debate seems likely to be as salutary and useful in twenty-first century controversies as it was in those of the eighteenth century.

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Mark Goldie ed., *The reception of Locke's politics*, London, Pickering and Chatto, 1999, 6 vols., lxxxviii + 369, 377, 384, 448, 385, 405pp., £495, ISBN 1 851964959.

Until the 1960s John Locke's political writings were seen as Whig political philosophy incarnate, as the supreme ideological justification for the Glorious Revolution, and as a major influence on the American Revolution and late eighteenth-century British radicalism. This view of Locke was entrenched by the way political thought was then studied in the universities; that is, largely as the study of a few canonical texts divorced from the context which produced them. Locke was regarded as the principal and almost sole British political writer worth studying between Hobbes and Bentham. This interpretation of Locke has been seriously undermined since the 1960s, by work on other kinds of eighteenth-century political discourse by John Pocock in particular and by the efforts of Quentin Skinner and his disciples to move the study of political ideas away from a few canonical texts written by great philosophers to the study of political language and political discourse produced by a wide range of writers and examined within the context which produced such writings.

A great deal of modern scholarship since the 1960s has demonstrated that Locke's *Two treatises on government* were written well before the Glorious Revolution of 1688-89, that this work was not much noticed in Locke's lifetime, and that it was not immediately accepted as the Bible of eighteenth-century Whiggism. Modern scholars have also argued that Locke's fame rested primarily on his *Essay concerning human understanding*, and then on his work on religious toleration and on education. It was asserted that his political writings were not that widely read in the eighteenth century, they were certainly not closely read, and they were no more famous than the writings of Algernon Sidney. Pocock and others also claimed that Locke's natural jurisprudence, with his emphasis on the language of natural rights and the social contract, was never the dominant mode of political discourse in the century or more after the Glorious Revolution. The Tory ideas of

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divine right did not immediately collapse following the Glorious Revolution, the doctrine of natural rights was rejected by Hume, Burke, Paley and Bentham (among others), and eighteenth-century Whigs more often appealed to the political languages of ancient constitutionalism, civic humanism and classical republicanism than to the language of natural jurisprudence. Pocock centres the major political debates of the eighteenth century around the ideals of virtue and public spiritedness, and in opposition to luxury and corruption.

Pocock's efforts to sideline Locke's political writings and to marginalise his political influence were carried over to his interpretation of the ideological debates in the American colonies in the age of the American Revolution. Whereas, before the 1960s, Locke was seen as easily the most important influence on the American patriots from the Stamp Act until the framing of the Federal Constitution a quarter of a century later, Pocock sought to replace his political influence with that of British and American writers in the Country, Real Whig or Commonwealthman tradition. This interpretation fitted in well with the work of Caroline Robbins, Bernard Bailyn and Gordon Wood on the political ideology of the American patriots. For a time, this dethronement of Locke threatened to carry all before it, among historians of both eighteenth-century Britain and revolutionary America.

In recent years the pendulum has begun to swing back towards a recognition of the importance of Locke in the political debates in the anglophone Atlantic world. It is now being recognised that it is a mistake to push Locke to the margins of eighteenth-century political discourse. It is becoming clear that Locke's *Two treatises* were discussed in the 1690s and that he influenced important polemicists such as Daniel Defoe and Charles Leslie (as admirer and critic) in the early 1700s. It is also now accepted that Locke had a profound influence on Francis Hutcheson and that his ideas on natural jurisprudence can be detected in John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon's *Cato's letters* of the early 1720s. Locke's political ideas were also regarded as sufficiently influential in the eighteenth century to be attacked by David Hume, William Blackstone, Josiah Tucker, and the young Jeremy Bentham. It is becoming difficult now to deny that Locke had an influence on

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British radicals in the later eighteenth century, from Richard Price and Joseph Priestley to a raft of British radicals in the 1790s. Among American historians there has been a major effort to restore Locke and his liberal ideas to a central place in the political debates conducted by the patriots in the American Revolution, though the ground is still bitterly contested. It has also been recognised that Locke's writings on migration, imperial federation and colonial land rights were picked up by American critics of the British government in the 1760s and 1770s. What is now very apparent to most students of political ideas in Britain and America in the eighteenth century is that political writers and political activists employed a range of political languages and a variety of political discourses. While Locke's natural jurisprudence is no longer seen as the only political language employed by British Whigs or American patriots, it is also the case that Pocock has gone too far in his efforts to replace Locke's dominance with that of political writers in the civic humanist or classical republican traditions. It seems to be a mistake to see political debates conducted within only one political language or indeed to see these debates conducted in several discrete political languages. Eighteenth-century writers were quite capable of employing different political languages in the same text or in different works produced by the same author at different times.

Mark Goldie has clearly accepted that Locke is not the sole political writer of importance for students of political discourse in eighteenth-century Britain and America, while also recognising that efforts to ignore or marginalise him have gone much too far. He believes that Locke's *Two treatises* is a classic text which influenced the rise of liberal, radical, and democratic ideas, but he also realises that this canonical work needs to be studied within the broader context of a wide range of political writings in the eighteenth-century Anglo-American world. He has chosen to reveal how Locke's political ideas were interpreted in the 150 years after their first appearance by looking at what other political writers made of his work by invoking and manipulating, applauding and condemning, his writings. He rightly notes that Locke was involved in a very wide range of political debates: about divine right, the right of revolution, patriarchalism, natural law and natural rights,

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consent, contract, slavery, toleration, taxation, land rights, etc. He has selected eighty three texts by seventy seven authors in order to provide a very full range of writings positively influenced by Locke or written to challenge his arguments and claims. These texts include letters and speeches, dialogues and sermons, pamphlets and treatises, and short essays in newspapers and periodicals, and they range from short extracts from major works to the full texts of quite extensive works by William Molyneux, Josiah Tucker, Joseph Priestley and Richard Price.

The first volume in this collection examines how the Glorious Revolution was defended between 1690 and 1704. It includes works by, among others, William Atwood, James Tyrrell, Matthew Tindal, Walter Moyle, John Toland and Daniel Defoe. The second volume concentrates on writings about patriarchy, the social contract and civic virtue published between 1705 and 1760, and includes writings by admirers and critics of Locke such as Charles Leslie, Benjamin Hoadly, George Berkeley, James Pitt and David Hume. The third volume reprints political writings produced in the age of the American Revolution 1760-1780, and includes work by James Otis, Richard Bland, and Sam Adams in the American colonies, and James Burgh, Richard Price and Joseph Priestley in Britain. Volume four looks at the debate on political reform in the age of the French Revolution, taken as stretching from 1780 to 1838, and it is dominated by the writings of such critics of Locke as Josiah Tucker, Soame Jenyns, William Paley, William Jones and John Bowles. In volume five the focus shifts to the impact of Locke's views on religious toleration. The texts selected debate the role of the Church of England and Dissent and the issue of religious toleration. The texts include writings by supporters of Locke such as Benjamin Hoadly and Benjamin Ibbert, works by high Tories in England and by nonconformists in both Britain and America, and William Warburton's classic *The alliance of church and state* (1736). The sixth volume shifts focus again and examines writings published between 1696 and 1832 on wealth, property and commerce that were influenced by Locke's economic thought and his writings on coinage, usury, trade and the right to private property. It includes work by Nicholas Barbon, Thomas Spence, William Ogilvie, John Thelwall and Thomas Hodgskin.

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These eighty three texts in six volumes, varying from a few hundred words to the 90,000 words of Josiah Tucker's complete *Treatise concerning civil government*, add up to almost one million words of primary sources. All of these texts were available to contemporary readers, apart from the two essays by Thomas Hutchinson and Jeremy Bentham that only existed in manuscript form until the twentieth century. Some of the texts reproduced here are available in modern editions, but most have not been republished since their first appearance. These texts are not reproduced in facsimile – they have been completely re-set and the result is very clear, readable pages (and more words to the page). The title page of each text has been photographically reproduced (and these are often very informative) and before each text the editor has produced a dense page with valuable information on the author, the text, bibliographical information, and further reading. The original footnotes to the texts have been retained and the editor has added his own footnotes explaining foreign words, giving sources for quotations, and identifying peoples, events, movements and institutions. While there is no analytical commentary on the texts, the editor has provided a substantial introduction, setting the texts within modern studies of the political languages and political discourses in Britain throughout the eighteenth century and in America prior to the American Revolution. He has also provided a useful reading list of modern works and a helpful index. The result is a most valuable collection of texts that deserves to be in every major library visited by scholars and students interested in the political discourses of the eighteenth-century anglophone world. The editor is an expert in this field and he has applied his wide learning to selecting the texts to be included and in providing scholarly apparatus to make them accessible to the reader.

Despite the massive length of this collection, it does not include every possible work and some scholars might quibble at the selection made. It is difficult to trace all the texts in the 150 years after the publication of the *Two treatises* that have been influenced by Locke's political ideas. Only half a dozen texts make it clear on their title page that they are responses to Locke. Only a reading of every possible text would have ensured that every response to Locke had been noted – clearly an impossible task for any editor,

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no matter how learned. There are more attacks on Locke reproduced here than the historical record might justify, but these attacks had high visibility at the time and they tell us a very great deal about why Locke's ideas cannot be seen as absolutely dominating the political language and political discourse of the eighteenth century. Because he did not have unlimited space available to him, the editor has made little use of references to Locke in newspapers or in poetry (excluding Defoe's *Jure divino*, for example). He has also limited his texts to works in English and, hence, he has ignored the continental reception of Locke. He has also chosen fewer American texts than an American editor might have chosen, and has included no American text during the debates on the making and ratification of the Federal Constitution. The editor has admitted his relative neglect of the Scottish writers on natural jurisprudence, from Gershom Carmichael onwards. Limited space has also prevented the inclusion of religious works by Edmund Calamy, John Shute Barrington and Isaac Watts in volume five. On the other hand, disproportionate space has been devoted to the political responses to Locke in the first thirty years after the Glorious Revolution, but this is justified on the reasonable grounds that this was the crucial period in the emergence of Locke's political reputation. Volumes one to four follow a chronological sequence and they tell us much about the changing responses to Locke's *Two treatises* and the changing preoccupations of leading political writers. It is much harder to work out these changes in the last two volumes dealing with Locke's views on religious toleration and economic issues.

All the texts reproduced in these six substantial volumes will help any reader to understand why modern scholars disagree about the influence of Locke on the political ideas of the anglophone world in the eighteenth century and they fit well with the editor's scholarly introduction on the changing modern interpretations of the political languages and political discourses of this world. Since Locke's political writings are not reproduced here and because few of the texts in these volumes engage closely with exactly what Locke wrote, it is sometimes difficult to understand the strengths and weakness of the political arguments Locke was advancing. What is also far from clear is why the authors of these texts responded to

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Locke in the ways that they did. What is it about Locke's political ideas and what is it about the political world which these authors inhabited that persuaded them to respond to Locke with these particular writings? Why were Locke's ideas worth engaging with and why was he so admired and criticised? To answer these questions readers will need to locate these texts within their contexts. These texts are immensely valuable, and the editor has provided an immense service to serious students of political debate in the eighteenth century, but without an appreciation of the context in which they were written their full significance cannot be appreciated. But the availability of these texts in this superb modern edition should encourage readers to want to know much more about why they were written and what political purposes they were meant to serve.

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Paul Wood ed., *The culture of the book in the Scottish Enlightenment. An exhibition with essays by Roger Emerson, Richard Sher, Stephen Brown, and Paul Wood*, Toronto: Coach House Printing, 2000, 160pp. pbk, ISBN 0-7727-6035-7, \$20,00 Canadian. Discounted to members of the *Eighteenth-Century Scottish Studies Society* at \$12.00 or £8.00.

The shape of new ideas, or indeed the very possibility of their first emergence, is dictated by the intellectual environment of a particular period. But how can we describe the scene conducive to new thought processes and new ideas? The concatenation of social, political and economic factors is intricate and elusive, and even the most meticulous detective work can only sketch the rationale behind the achievements of major cultural and intellectual periods. This fascinating collection of essays, written on the occasion of an exhibition on the history of the book in the Scottish Enlightenment conveys a sense of what this vibrant period of reorientation must have felt like. Moreover, it confronts us with some of the most fundamental questions of the history of ideas and knowledge. A wealth of carefully researched details portrays the intellectual world of eighteenth-century minds in Scotland, and each of the four

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essays sheds new light on the entangled relationship between aesthetic-intellectual considerations and economic profit.

During the eighteenth century, the circulation of ideas and arguments began to turn into an independent market ensuring that the work of Enlightenment thinkers was readily available. But then the publishers' choices of which authors and subject matters should be printed strongly influenced contemporary routes of reasoning. Material factors, such as size, format, presentation, quality of paper, make statements about the respective significance of individual published works. Studies of the history of the book have illustrated the complex interplay between the material details of a published work and the abstract text and have pointed out new ways of deducing historical meanings from factual evidence. For instance, the quality and value of the finished product has been shown to affect the judgement on the worth of the ideas, while also consolidating subtle social and intellectual hierarchies.

The motto of 'tell me what you read and I tell you who you are' underpins Roger Emerson's attempt to piece together the life and opinions of Archibald Campbell, third Duke of Argyll (1682-1761). The purchasing policy behind the catalogue (printed in 1758) characterises the confident self-understanding of one of the most influential public figures of the period. Rational and principled, the task of collecting the knowledge of his day was motivated by the wish to possess the tools for being able, under all circumstances, to come up with the most informed judgement. Housing over 12,000 volumes, his library was the largest privately owned library of his time. It does not survive now, but the catalogue gives us insight into his attempt to reconstruct his period's world of learning. While contemporary accounts described the aesthetic appeal of the instruments, model machines, prints, maps and curios displayed in his library, the list of titles suggests a sober outlook. This is to say that he must have thought of books as the foundation for political and entrepreneurial success for himself and the Scots. He did not think of books as a source of entertainment, so his library does not embrace novels, while it is strong on travel accounts, even giving space to the popular imaginary journeys to mythical locations like the moon. The list of titles on science, jurisprudence, history, philosophy and theology not only portrays the knowledge

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possessed by an eminent public figure of the period, but also shows on which principles the public figures of Argyll's enlightened Scotland modelled themselves.

The entrepreneurial proficiency of Scottish publishers was undoubtedly an important factor in the spread of the Scottish Enlightenment. Richard Sher's discussion of the publication history of David Hume and Robert Henry shows that the respective success or failure of different works can be owing to the fact that books are artefacts and status symbols and not merely homes for texts. Considerations of profit were as important for publishers as for writers. The wish to take advantage of the different tastes and financial potentials of wealthy and poor customers, therefore, had ramifications on the genres chosen by prospective writers. So it comes as no surprise that the wealthy audience's taste for histories encouraged the publication of such topics in handsomely bound quarto formats. Intimations of fame and prosperity as a writer of history, for instance, induced Robert Henry to publish volume after volume of *The history of Great Britain* in quarto at his own cost until he died, leaving the sixth volume to come out posthumously in 1793. Since authors could expect only small returns from even high print-runs in the cheap octavo format, they were still considered as hacks unless they were able to secure publication in quarto. So it is owing to the uncanny causality between intellectual prowess and unadventurous publishers that David Hume's *A treatise of human nature* (1739-40) was scarcely noticed by his contemporaries and went down as a commercial failure.

The next essay discusses the involvement in culture, politics and business of the book trade in Edinburgh. Stephen Brown studies William Smellie's as a representative career of a highly gifted printer who combined his craft with journalistic and editorial genius. His insatiable hunger for science secured him the position of printer for Edinburgh University, a task associated with small financial gains but to which he clung as proof of his scientific achievements. While he possessed one of the finest intellects, he was bad at negotiating advantageous contracts. In this sense he is one among many intellectuals whose visions for social improvement and reform were boundless, but who were struggling for bare survival.

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Paul Wood interprets John Robison's marginal comments on Thomas Reid's *Intellectual powers of man* as a document explaining the influence of one thinker on another. His analysis sheds light on the development of an eighteenth-century mind, but it also develops the twentieth century debates about the communicative processes between authors, readers and texts. The structuralist outlook informing the reception theory and aesthetics formulated in the 1960s assumed universal laws to lie at the bottom of the communicative processes between authors and readers. As soon as scholars like Robert Darnton introduced a historical perspective, the analysis of reading and understanding became a great deal more elusive. It is certainly true that Robison's marginalia are fragmentary. But since they represent extensive arguments, which may indeed have been written for a third party, they convey a palpable sense of the workings of influence. His marginalia hence provide a dialogue in which he reveals his own intellectual background, particularly his religious outlook, in the process of deciding whether he wants to follow Reid's arguments or not.

The four essays collected in this volume discuss challenging instances of how the material features of a book impinge on aesthetic, emotional as well as intellectual responses to its contents. The case studies about authors, publishers and readers provide valuable insight into the circulation of information, knowledge and theories. While these case studies are focusing on the gems of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library – and as such make no claims about drawing a comprehensive picture of the culture of reading – the fact of being collected in one book makes them representative of the cultural climate of the period. Therefore the book contains a significant gap: it nowhere even touches upon the role of women who must have been around somewhere: as readers, illustrators and informed advisers. But to repeat, *The culture of the book in the Scottish Enlightenment* is a valuable study which I recommend to everyone, not just because it is a model of scholarship based on meticulous research but because it is also a pleasure to read.

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Harriet Guest, *Small change: women, learning, patriotism, 1750-1810*, The University of Chicago Press, 2000, 350pp, 22 illustrations, hdbk, £34.50/\$49.00; pbk, \$20.00/£14.00.

Commentary on British women writers (and indeed, British women) of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries has long concentrated on the problem of gender in relation to public and private life. And justly so, for the period itself spent a great deal of discursive energy debating the place of women in society and their 'proper' relationship to the worlds of paid work, learning, and politics. Until very recently, the view almost universally taken by commentators was that the eighteenth century, both in word and deed, herded women into an airless box called 'domesticity,' in which they had no access to the male (and 'real') world of work and power, and were allowed no purpose other than the raising of children. This view overrode evidence of women's own impressions, at the time, that the situation of their sex had improved, and it tended to explain the demonstrable fact that women writers at the end of the century enjoyed a lot of discursive visibility by interpreting them as agents of their own oppression (and therefore acceptable to patriarchy). While no doubt some women did encourage other women to immure themselves at home (Hannah More comes to mind here), the prevailing view that most writing women were party to this sinister project bore hard on almost everyone other than Mary Wollstonecraft, who could be made to figure as the feminist voice in the wilderness. That this view was being urged by feminist literary historians made their efforts appear (at least, to this observer) strangely self-defeating. If writers on the order of Frances Burney, Anna Letitia Barbauld, and Maria Edgeworth only promoted the entrapment of their sex, why were feminists trying to recover their work at all?

In *Small change*, Harriet Guest revisits the discourses of public and private and their genderings in examples of numerous texts of different kinds from Sarah Fielding to Felicia Hemans. She finds that the issues were far less dichotomous, far more likely to be blurred, complicated by other issues, or outright fudged, than the orthodox view could allow. The relative values of 'public' and

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'private' for women were not quite stable, for one thing; in the mid-century, for example, the needs of commerce called women into public life in the capacity of shoppers, and those who insisted on staying home and being 'notable housewives' came in for ridicule (Chapter 3). 'Public' and 'private' could also interpenetrate, producing oxymorons that seemed to trouble no one. Thus the famously learned – and vastly admired – scholar Elizabeth Carter enjoyed an acclaim based in part on the perception that she was a good housewife: her supposed private virtues were part of her very public image (Chapters 4 and 5). Then too, being able to point to learned women supported British patriotism: they became public icons of national civility (Chapter 2). Another version of patriotism recruited ideas of domesticity for no less public a purpose than the re-education of the political class. The republican 'Roman matron' (in Barbauld's phrase, 'the mighty mothers of immortal Rome') was invoked as a potential redeemer of the nation by virtue of her supposed high moral ideals and determination to raise politically virtuous sons (Chapter 9).

By 1800, as a result of all these shifts and ambiguities, the idea of 'domesticity' had become, Guest argues, almost empty of meaning; it could thus be appropriated by all sides for their own purposes. Everyone could agree that 'domesticity' was woman's proper sphere, while interpreting it to signify anything from total isolation at home (as in Jane West's poem *The Mother*, 1809) to the vantage-point for taking a broader view of society at large than could ever be possible to men, burrowed into their narrow specialisms in the division of labour; and with that broader view came a potential for the moral re-education of others (Chapter 13). Victorian feminism was about to be born.

This brisk summary may make Guest's argument sound like a simple progress narrative. As an antidote I offer her closing paragraph, which may suggest the zig-zag, oblique character of her procedures and will explain the book's title as well:

This book has explored the changing value of the 'small coin' of femininity in the second half of the eighteenth century. In some respects it tells a story about progress, about the increasing persuasiveness with which women imagine themselves as public citizens. By the early

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nineteenth century, it is possible for some women to conceive of their position as peculiarly suited to the cultivation of a stance and a language of liberal opposition, precisely because of the ways women have been excluded from involvement in the political life of the nation, and from professional ambitions. But at the same time, I think, the way this narrative has depended on the interconnections of different discourses, different narratives with quite divergent trajectories, makes it difficult to think of this as a story of the victorious agency of determined women, subduing all opposition. For it is more obviously about the sometimes incidental or accidental effects of the intersection or overlap between the different discourses that constitute gender difference, the voices and aspirations of women, and political or cultural shifts. It is about the importance of small change (p.339).

The discourses across which Guest traces her circuitous path range from those of commerce (commentaries on the ethics of shopping and shoppers, on labour and luxury) to those of history-writing, and from literary to popular, in verse and prose; they include also, as seems almost obligatory these days, pictorial representations. Her revisionist views unsettle some traditional feminist readings. Wollstonecraft appears rather more confused and distinctly more misogynist than she used to do; poor George Ballard, who used to be counted a feminist hero because he wrote biographies of Britain's learned ladies, now looks a bit of a goat because his interest in the learned ladies was purely quantitative; and Barbauld, once regarded with great suspicion as 'no feminist,' here receives a respectful, sympathetic and discerning treatment.

Small change follows closely on the heels of Amanda Vickery's pathbreaking study of women's lives in eighteenth-century Lancashire (*The gentleman's daughter*, 1998), which came to analogous conclusions about her study population. Guest's inquiry differs in attending to discourses more than to lives, and in tracing the evolutions and contradictions of the discourses across a wide range of texts. Her work is greatly to be welcomed, and I believe that *Small change* will prove to be an important book for all who wish to understand women's writing and women's issues in the

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later eighteenth century; on the public-private debate, ignoring it will be perilous.

That said, I would enter reservations about specific points. One is Guest's treatment of what she calls 'the sentimental notion of the continuity of affect linking the family and the nation' (p.16), a notion which she seems to trace to Hannah More's *Sensibility* (1782). In that poem, Frances Boscawen's 'dedication to her family' is 'imagined somehow to extend to embrace the public good' (p.203). Guest's 'somehow' intimates that she is at a loss to identify the discursive link that would get one from 'family' to 'nation.' The link, I would suggest, is to be found in Chapter 5 of Francis Hutcheson's *Short introduction to moral philosophy* (English version 1747), in which Hutcheson founds human relationships in sexual attraction and then proceeds outward from nuclear family to nation and, eventually, to all living beings. Hymn VIII in Barbauld's *Hymns in prose for children* (1781) restates Hutcheson's idea in language appropriate to a child; I suspect that Barbauld, at least, based her belief in the political potential of Motherhood on Hutcheson's ethics. Guest seems unaware of Hutcheson; a pity, for his text would be valuable to her argument--especially, of course, in her chapter on Barbauld.

A second point that troubles me is Guest's documentation for her argument about the public image of Elizabeth Carter. Her principal texts there come from Carter's letters, which were not published till some years after Carter's death. Guest derives from them a detailed account of Carter's self-representation to her friends and then projects it -- or appears to project it -- onto Carter's public image. Thus

Carter could achieve national importance, and a kind of representative status as the woman who indicated the cultural progress of the nation, because she did not in any of the senses available to great ladies claim public status. Instead she inhabited a private sphere, differentiated and stratified with subtle complexity, which allowed her to be 'living and looking,' rambling 'from raree-shows to ... politics and history' -- a private sphere within which ... her religion gave her social and national significance (p. 121).

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The quoted phrases come from Carter's letters, but seem here to be part and parcel of the public perception of her. I don't intend a quibble. I want to ask how well Carter's private self-representation was in fact known to the public. Was it available, *at the level of the details in Carter's letters*, to justify, and be imitated by, other intellectual women? Only, I should think, if copies of Carter's letters circulated outside her immediate circle. Guest writes that 'letters circulated in selected extracts and through gossip are the basis for reputation' (p. 109); while in general that may be true, it does not answer this specific historical question.

I could list other criticisms: points of interpretation or fact, some questionable choices of editions to cite, some stylistic misfortunes ('satirization' for 'satire' [p. 329]?), passages which to me were unintelligible. But they are, in the sum of things, minor matters. The importance of *Small Change* exceeds questions of its accuracy on this or that individual point. It re-opens doors which once seemed to have been tightly closed. It should inspire further revisits to the private-public topic; most of all, it should help to put paid to the old orthodoxy about the airless box of domesticity.

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M L Brooks (ed.), *Mary Hays. Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (Broadview Press, 2000), 340 pp, hdbk, £21.99; pbk, £7.99.

In 1800, exactly two centuries before the publication of Brooks' fine edition of *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, the *Annual Necrology, 1797–1798* published the signed obituary which Mary Hays had written three years earlier of her friend Mary Wollstonecraft, and which had appeared unsigned in the *Monthly Magazine*. Hays and Wollstonecraft had exchanged letters of debate over the need to revoke gendered discrimination, and the urgency to make other women fight for their emotional, sexual and rational independence. In her edition of Hays' major novel, Brooks addresses these issues, and adopts a discreet feminist perspective that extracts full potential from the authoress, her period and her most relevant work, without detracting from a comprehensive reading of the novel as a product

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of times of social change, renewed attitudes to education and literary innovations.

Much in the same way Wollstonecraft had challenged Godwin's cold rationalism in her unfinished *Maria* (1798), Hays utilises fiction to rebut his abstractions and rejection of the emotions. Brooks analyses this in detail in the Introduction, by posing parallels between the females – Emma and Hays – and males – Augustus/Mr Francis and Godwin. In particular, Brooks' analysis of the role Helvétius played in Hays' reconsidering of Godwinian necessitarian rationalism deserves praise. Influenced by Helvétius' materialism, eudemonism, and interest in human potential including women's new awareness, Hays maintained that general improvement must be achieved through emotional fulfilment, a belief which earned her Godwin's dissent.

In his role as literary mentor, Godwin was obviously an outstanding presence in Hays' writings. Their correspondence is uneven in character – her letters long-winded and systematic, but also impassioned; Godwin's brief, cursory and almost impatient. Yet through their epistolary relationship, we can trace the decaying process in their personal one. Godwin never felt shy about offering others patronising critical advice, occasionally verging on abuse – but not all of his correspondents yielded. Hays ignored his many suggested alterations to her story, and accused him of 'tyranny.'

But it is the appendices, spanning over one hundred pages, that illustrate Brooks' broad grasp of the late eighteenth century documents related to Hays' professional and personal progression. Some of the supporting material Brooks includes reveals evidence of the effect the novel had on Hays' intimate circle. One of the examples is William Frend. Hays' devotion to Frend replaced her earlier one to John Eccles, whose death diminished her hopes of becoming a mother and wife. In her new attachment to Frend, Hays would later find the Heloïse-Abelard referent for the fictionalised tutor-ward relationship in *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*. Frend's comments on the relevance of love in marriage and his encouragement of Hays' character delineation support the thesis that theirs was an epistolary and intellectual relationship. However his written comments, like Hays' own journalistic contributions, also address many issues which Jacobin, sentimental, and

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Enlightenment writers were incorporating in their fictions: Rousseau's influence, religious sensibility, the asexual nature of mind, or the need to seek distinction on the grounds of mental and personal, not artificial and social, attainments. Philosophy, Holcroft had insisted through *Anna St Ives*, should best be discussed in a fictional forum.

Through the interaction between Hays' fiction and the contemporary evidence contained in the appendices, Brooks manages to bring to life the ongoing debate on the rational capacities of women and the need for a change in educational systems, in Hays' view 'perverted' to make women socially inferior to men. Hays had been influenced by Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the rights of woman* (1792), but her own *Letters and essays, moral and miscellaneous* (1792) had opened for her the doors of London's Dissenting circles, including Holcroft and Godwin, but also Theophilus Lindsey and George Dyer.

Some of the most relevant documents in the volume are the reviews selected from contemporary journals. In Brooks' Introduction, many cross-references are established with the appendices, which help to contextualise the wealth of information these afford. The politics of journals are evident in their criticisms, although on the whole they are positive reviews – until we get to the gush of anti-Jacobin abuse of the *Anti-Jacobin Review*. Otherwise, both Tory and Whig reviews coincided in stressing the noxious effects sensibility, if unchecked, could exert on the reader. Extravagance would surely lead to despair, as the protagonists of *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* exemplified. It is fitting, then, that the appendices following the reviews focus on the debate on Sensibility, and the Anti-Jacobin backlash respectively.

The review from the *Anti-Jacobin* is dated 1799, whereas the others appeared two years earlier. The gap would suffice to account for the change of scenery operated on the English public attitude towards these related issues. Sensibility was no longer a virtuous indulgence that led to social sympathy, but an enfeebling blemish that begot the Rousseau-like excesses seen during, and after, the French Revolution. That a periodical like the *Monthly Magazine* wondered whether sensibility ought to be cherished or repressed evidences the tensions felt by the public at large, tensions whose

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ramifications covered matters of national character and identity, of history and internal order. When the *Anti-Jacobin* came to write in 1799 that it was vital that female minds kept to their female duties, allocated by nature, sex and situation, it was only striving for a traditional *status quo*, and a large sector of its reading public acquiesced in a manner that would have been unthinkable four years previously.

As proof of this reactionary zeal, Brooks includes two excerpts from fictional publications that attacked the erstwhile popular sentimental novel and what came to be termed 'New Morality,' or the radical intellectuals' (among them the Rational Dissenters') belief in a society unhindered by governmental intercession, and guided by utility, equality and the free communication of minds. In many instances the works extracted, Charles Lloyd's *Edmund Oliver* (1798) and Elizabeth Hamilton's *Memoirs of modern philosophers* (1800) draw directly on passages in, among others, Godwin's *Political justice*. This is evident not only in a direct reference to the treatise, but also in the appropriation of style and even word-for-word expressions.

This edition of Mary Hays' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* shows, through Brooks' insightful selection of documents, her use of critical tools, and her valuable annotations, the issues raised by the appearance of a novel which in many ways accorded with the radical philosophy prevalent in the early 1790s, but which in some others prefigure Hays' later withdrawal from radicalism, at the time when links with Elizabeth Hamilton and Hannah More shaped her new views. Brooks' success lies in offering texts that point in the direction of the many queries these authors had to answer, from the functionality of novel-writing as a tool for social change, to the need for a revised female education, or the disparity between emotional and rational perfectibilism. Apart from an elegant new launch of Hays' novel for the twenty-first century, Brooks' critical edition of *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* offers a condensed, but comprehensive overview of a representative fragment of the hectic 1790s in England.

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John Locke, *Epistola de Tolerantia. Epistole gia ten anexithreskia. Eisagoge, metaphrasis, scholia.* Introduction, translation and notes by Giannes Plangesis, Thessalonica, Zetros Publications, 1998, 251pp.

Giannes Plangesis, *Politike & Threskia ste Philosophia tou John Locke (Politics and religion in the philosophy of John Locke)*, 2nd edition, University Studio Press, Thessalonica, 1998, 458pp. (1st edition, 1986).

John Locke's *A letter concerning toleration*, translated from the Latin into English by William Popple (1689) has since been translated into several languages, as in recent decades into French (R Polin, 1965) German (J Ebbinghaus, 1957), and Italian (A Sabetti, 1963). Giannes Plangesis (who has written previously on Priestley) has now provided, along with the Latin original, a translation into Greek with substantial interpretative material; he has also included a photographic reproduction of the original title page and page 1 (Gouda, 1689).

The Introduction begins with a survey of secularist criticisms of religion in recent centuries, including numerous references to the Marxist tradition, before turning more directly to discussions of the theory of toleration, both in relation to Locke and his times, following on the Restoration of 1660, and also more generally in recent decades. The development of Locke's own views is then traced, with special reference to the *Tracts on government* of 1660, as edited and discussed by P Abrahams (1967) and the *Essay on toleration* (1667); in addition the present editor's placing of the *Letter* in its contemporary setting is followed by consideration of its reception both upon its original appearance (as in the controversy with Proast) and more recently. The volume concludes with an extensive bibliography.

The second work under consideration, the study of the politics and religion in the philosophy of Locke, is an extensive revision of a monograph first published in 1986. It ranges widely, beginning with a survey of English society in the seventeenth century, particularly as seen in the radical and Marxist traditions; one may perhaps wonder how valuable it is for the study of Locke to study in detail the place and activities of the Levellers. After a sketch of

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the economic situation in England in the middle of the seventeenth century, Plangesis turns naturally to the repression of Dissenters, with a sideglance at the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and surveys the relevance of the political thought of Hobbes, Winstanley, Milton and Harrington. Chapter two covers Locke's own life, with his philosophical and scientific studies, his attitudes to Aristotle and to Descartes, and the years of his literary production down to the controversy with Stillingfleet. Chapter three, on Locke's theory of knowledge, sees him as occupying a middle course between Hobbes and Descartes, and as rejecting both 'enthusiasm' and outright scepticism, setting before man the practical goals within the limits set by the necessary limitations of his knowledge (here Plangesis alludes to the recent work of Woolhouse). Surely, however, Locke's 'way of ideas' is an innovation moving beyond either the Hobbesian or the Cartesian metaphysics. Plangesis rightly sets Locke against the scientific movement of his time, in a tradition going back to Democritus; rather less happily he views him also from within the Marxist tradition of philosophical history as steering a middle course between idealism and materialism.

Chapter four, on Locke's political theory, touches on his writings in the realm of economics, and stresses the central place of property in his thought; he criticises Ashcraft as making him appear more democratic than he was. He points to the religious affiliations of Locke's approach including his appeals to revelation (on which he refers to Ashcraft). Chapter five, on Locke's philosophy or religion, including a reference to Hobbes's criticism of Descartes's *Meditations*, as well as raising the question of the relation of Locke's relation to the Socinian tradition.

There follows a lengthy survey of earlier advocates of religious toleration, including Castellion and Bodin. Plangesis looks also at various Protestant sects in Holland and England, and pays particular attention to Bayle and, from the side of the natural law tradition, to Pufendorf. He then turns to the history of Locke's own views on religious conformity and toleration from 1660 onwards, making full use of the work of Abrams and pointing to the significance of the connection with Shaftesbury. Moving forward, he also draws attention to the relevance of the passages in Book IV

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of the *Essay concerning human understanding* (chs. 15, 16 and 19) - with chapter 16.4 calling for 'mutual charity and forbearance'), points to the *Second treatise of Government* with its strict delimitation of the function of government, and discusses recent literature on Locke's mature treatment of toleration. He touches also on Bayle, with reference to Locke's denial of full rights to atheists.

From Locke himself, Plangesis turns to later champions of toleration, notably Voltaire and Priestley (*Essay on the first principles of government*, 1768) and the rejection of church establishments. One may note, incidentally, that Hume, in his *Natural history of religion* (1757), Sect. IX, argues that history shows polytheism to have been more tolerant than religions in the monotheistic tradition. Plangesis criticises Mill's argument in the *Essay on liberty* (1859) from his distinction of self-regarding and other-regarding actions. Finally he turns to modern discussions, with special reference to Rawls, who places the issue of freedom of conscience within his general political framework, and to an address of 1981 by Popper on 'Toleration and Intellectual Responsibility' (published in S Mendus and D Edwards eds., *On toleration*, 1987). Popper, while an empiricist specially interested in freedom for scientific development by the formation and correction of falsifiable hypotheses, denies generally that tolerance of the views of others points inevitably to a sheer relativism which holds all views to be of equal validity.

All in all, Plangesis deploys wide-ranging learning and suggestive criticism, and brings together an immense amount of thought-provoking material. The work closes with an extensive bibliography.

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William Godwin, *Memoirs of the author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Edited by Pamela Clemit and Gina Luria Walker. Canada: Broadview Press, 2001, 224pp, ISBN 1-55111-259-0, pbk, \$19.95 CDN;\$16.95 US; £8.99.

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In Southey's unforgettable formulation, Godwin *Memoirs* showed the widower's complete 'want of all feeling in stripping his dead wife naked'. The criticism amply justifies its repetition in the introduction to this new edition of Godwin's work as the editors aim to illustrate the extreme reaction the text has provoked (p.11). Vilified by contemporary readers for its frank account of Wollstonecraft's relationships and death, the text's more recent twentieth-century history has seen it subjected to less moral criticism and more biographical and bibliographical investigation. Editing the *Memoirs* together with Wollstonecraft's *Letters written during a short residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*, Richard Holmes allowed Godwin's work to complement Wollstonecraft's autobiography (Penguin, 1987). And in his edition of Godwin's *Collected novels and memoirs*, Mark Philp invited us to consider the place of the *Memoirs* in relation to Godwin's canon (Pickering and Chatto, 1992). What is distinctive and wholly welcome about this excellent edition is its attempt to present the *Memoirs* as 'one of the most significant biographical documents in Revolutionary and Romantic writing' (p.12).

Everything necessary to situate Godwin's text in an eighteenth-century biographical context is here. The introduction is a model of clarity and concision, examining Godwin's theory of biography with reference to the tradition of English Protestant Dissent that would manifest itself in the 'candour' of *Political justice*. Specific discussion of the *Memoirs* encourages readers to see it as both the deeply-felt portrait of a life and as a plea for the right to live such a life, as advocated by Wollstonecraft in her own writings. The student reader with little knowledge of the Godwin-Wollstonecraft circle at the outset of the volume should emerge from the introduction with a clear sense of the place of Hays, Inchbald and Imlay in Godwin's and Wollstonecraft's lives, together with an appreciation of the difficulty of reconciling radical principles and theoretical positions with societal pressures and individual wants. If there is one issue that could perhaps be addressed more specifically in the introduction it is Godwin's linguistic models. Coming to the *Memoirs* knowing the circumstances of its composition and the end to which the text must inevitably lead, Godwin's measured prose can appear shocking. Sensitive student readers may guess that

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Godwin's apparent remove from his subject is the distance of one who feels too much rather than too little. Even so, it will be hard for such readers to gain a sense of the *Memoirs* as either typical or atypical of Godwin's style on the basis of the selection from his other works included in the appendices.

Five appendices seek to contextualise the *Memoirs* as a Romantic and Revolutionary biographical text. Extracts from Rousseau's *Confessions*, Boswell's *Life of Johnson* and Mme. Roland's *Appeal to impartial posterity* provide both generic and gendered frameworks in which to situate Godwin's approach and subject-matter. Yet inevitably, extracts from *Political justice*, 'on cohabitation and marriage', show Godwin in pursuit of an argument that seeks to persuade through rational rather than emotive force. Godwin's personal qualities begin to be glimpsed only in his preferences expressed in the 'Essay of History and Romance' (Appendix B), or as he is the inspiration for Wollstonecraft's passionate outpourings (Appendix C). Only in the letters beginning on p.154 does Godwin begin to reveal rashness, uncertainty; even fear of his own human frailty: 'I am a fool...do not hate me...suffer me to see you...I need some soothing'. In the whole volume, this is arguably the point at which Godwin appears most vulnerable and shows his prose to be capable of emotional abandon.

The most able students will be able to synthesise all the introductory material and appendices to reach conclusions about acceptable linguistic registers within different generic frameworks at the turn of the eighteenth century, however, given the shadowy presence of Holcroft and the 1794 Treason Trials in the introduction, a few pages focused specifically on radical language would have been welcome. But this is ultimately a minor criticism of an otherwise superb edition; clearly and attractively produced to rehabilitate the *Memoirs* as biography in a format unlikely to strain student budgets or backpacks.

Appendix D provides a comprehensive range of contemporary reviews of the *Memoirs*, including those from the *Analytical Review*, the *Anti-Jacobin Review*, the *Lady's Monitor*, the *Monthly Review* and the *New Annual Register*. Having all of this material collected together, no seminar group ought to be casting around for ways in which to approach discussion of the text. Indeed, material

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from the *Analytic Review* alone would fuel seminars on biography and in the areas of ethics, social policy and women's studies. Appendix E gives substantive variants between the first and second editions of the text (from January 1798 and August 1798 respectively).

Finally, the pleasure of using this edition can only be enhanced by finding John Whale's 'Elegy for Mary Wollstonecraft' reproduced in Appendix D (pp.200-1). The most accomplished of all the poems collected here on the subject of Wollstonecraft's life, it freezes Godwin at the moment of his wife's death; numbed into silent remembrance of her 'as she went reeling through life./ And it took so many days to die.' In the selection of letters reproduced in Appendix C, Wollstonecraft is ready to declare herself happily silent if Godwin can find the words she needs: 'I am afraid to express a preference, lest you should think of pleasing me rather than yourself - and is it not the same thing?...I am not sure that please is the exact word...may I trust you to search in your own heart for the proper one?' (p.158). For Wollstonecraft, Godwin is the perfect interpreter and spokesman. In presenting the *Memoirs* as a significant biographical document, Clemit and Walker show how well placed was Wollstonecraft's trust that Godwin could find the words she could not. This new edition of the *Memoirs* deserves a place on all our bookshelves.

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Alan P F Sell, *Confessing and Commending the Faith. Historic Witness and Apologetic Method*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2002, xi + 550pp, £45.00. ISBN 0-7083-1747-2.

This book completes Professor Sell's trilogy on Christian apologetics. In the first two, *Philosophical idealism and Christian belief* (1995) and *John Locke and the Eighteenth-Century divines* (1997), he dealt with the starting points for commending the Christian Faith. Here, he says he 'must now directly address the question: is there a more satisfactory approach, or is the apologetic aspiration for ever doomed?'

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Consistent with his other writings, Sell grapples with Reformed thought in general and English Dissenting thought in particular; but this leads on to an examination not only of other Christian confessions but to other religious expressions (though in practice these are only sketched-in and not developed): he says that it is 'possible and desirable to be committed in faith and eirenic in spirit'; however, this 'interface' (sic) between Christian and non-Christian faith occupies but a very small portion of the book. Sell constantly sinks and re-sinks his foundations into the bedrock of Christian historical tradition and engages in 'conversing with [its] past witnesses'. This he admirably always attempts to do in the contexts of their particular times and settings: the gospel is unchanging, but the apologetics presenting it must be smack up-to-date. None the less, Sell's apologetic is orthodox to a fault – beginning from a decidedly-rooted Christian commitment, based upon 'what I take to be the only satisfactory starting point: the confession of what God in Christ has done'. Although alert to the potential this leaves for its being challenged as a circular argument, Sell cannot see any alternative for a successful Christian apologetic and in the end equates apologetics with 'the act of confession'. This is not to say that Sell demands a bolted door to other positions: indeed, he is ever willing to see the usefulness of other apologetic starting points (such as reason and moral experience) as a means of maintaining an openness to those not of the traditional Christian persuasion.

However, for the Christian, Sell believes that a 'truly experimental Christian faith is a faith in someone about whom certain things are believed to be true – supremely, that he has done the decisively redemptive deed'. Faith is not concerned with God's nature, but his action. Because of this focus on the Cross, Sell finds the Apostles' Creed wanting. He keeps repeating that biblical faith is 'not about the cradle, but the Cross'. However, for the fullness of the Christian good news, perhaps one so intentionally rooting himself in an orthodox formulation of Christianity could/should ponder the suggestion that cradle and cross were carved from the same wood. If he could appreciate such a claim, Sell might not find the Creed so wanting, after all. More than once throughout this volume he argues that faith is 'a matter of the whole of life'. It is curious that

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Sell cannot apply this important truth to the life of him who is the central truth of his apologetic. However, he does not shy away from referring to the notion of Christ's substitutionary atonement as an 'immoral doctrine'. Whether 'immoral' is precisely the appropriate word, Sell's heart and head are so much in the right place here that he could be forgiven a great deal.

Although dealing at some length with the nature of sinfulness, Sell does not do justice to Calvin's doctrine of human depravity, which is surprising, since it was not wholly different to Sell's careful spelling-out of his own position: all parts of our nature are infected by evil, but these parts are not each *absolutely* ruined. What Sell does is to ascribe to Calvin the later distortions of 'Calvinism' by Calvinists who (it might be said) out-Calvined Calvin. Sell only very briefly hints at this in an endnote; moreover, he omits any mention of William Perkins and makes only one fleeting reference to Theodore Beza. Later, in a different context, Sell quotes John Baillie's decisive observation: 'The truth is that a totally corrupt being would be as incapable of sin as would a totally illogical being of fallacious argument.' I have no doubt that Calvin would have agreed. Sell does not appreciate how much Calvin sought to establish – devoting an entire chapter of his *Institutes* to the topic – that after the Fall mankind *did* retain some knowledge of God. In fact, although our wills may be sorely deformed, our intellects are much less so. Calvin's point is that without Christ's action towards us, we can have no *saving* knowledge. Once again, this turns out to be Sell's own position.

By the end of the first two main chapters, which constitute the book's first main section, 'The Confession and the Confessors', we are far down the road of establishing and pushing forward an orthodox Christian confession/profession. At this point Sell says that 'it is time to opt out of confessional mode in the interests of the intellectual commendation of the faith'. Whether he ever truly 'opts out of confessional mode' is certainly open to doubt. Indeed, as he turns now in his second main section to 'Presuppositions of the Confession' there may be those who wonder if he would have made a more persuasive case by placing this section first. However, he is ready for that charge and insists that before an intellectual case can be made for the faith, what that faith – that confession – is must be

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stated. And yet, and yet: if not by explication, then surely by implication, this approach leaves the Christian apologetic open to a charge of being, at best, a-intellectual.

The first of the two chapters in the second section focuses on religious language, and it is clear that the author takes his leading cues from J L Austin. Naturally enough, Sell engages here with Wittgenstein and D Z Phillips. Some may find this discussion a trifle 'bitty' and truncated and find more useful Sell's addressing the vocabulary of religious discourse, raising the question of whether the context in which language is uttered and the intention with which it is used can deem (redeem?) it as 'religious'.

The third main section, 'Alternative Apologetic Starting Points', briefly rehearses his intentions thus far: in part one he sought to express what the generality of Christians wish to confess. In part two he confronted views such as those of positivists and post-modernists – a negative approach showing how such views cannot lead to any position validly termed Christian. Now part three turns to the positive ways in which reason and experience can present Christian claims. The bedrock position he struck from the outset, that the 'fundamental truth of the Christian Gospel is that in Christ God has acted redemptively within human history' cannot be proved logically: the only way we can believe it is by experiencing it – by its being 'brought home to us by God the Holy Spirit'. Well, that is one explanation; but Sell does not envisage alternative explanations, for example, that we may believe it for 'psychological' reasons that may have nothing to do with the Holy Spirit.

When dealing, insightfully, with the theology of Karl Barth, Sell disarmingly states that 'many detected in his writings a return to Calvin'. Actually, anyone who did not thus detect must have been a pretty thick theological stick. Sell departs from Barth's crucial rejection of 'natural theology', arguing its positive value: it builds 'upon insights and intimations derivative from God's general revelation, which need to be taken into account in any attempt to commend the faith to unbelievers. When Christian confessing takes a more intellectual turn it may be appropriate to draw analogies of attribution from Being to the Christian God.'

In the last full chapter, 'Faith, Knowledge and Experience', Sell rather limply comments that 'it cannot be denied that there is an

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intellectual element in faith'. One certainly hopes this is the case, not least after ploughing through Sell's apologetic writings. Surprisingly, the matter of the relation between religious understanding and religious 'experience' or feeling is left underdeveloped. It hardly is enough for Sell to observe that because 'God is known "inwardly" we need not conclude with the sceptic that religious experience is thereby suspect', since 'everything that we know is inwardly experienced'. May be, but the rub of truth is that much of what we know is also *externally* experienced. I am uncomfortable with Sell's well-intentioned introduction of a line from an Isaac Watts hymn:

Where reason fails with all her powers
There faith prevails and love adores

as an apparent last-ditch fall-back for the Christian unable to make *sense* of his Christianity. It may smack of a version of the 'God of the gaps'.

Overall, this is an erudite and often stimulating book, the fruit of many years tilling and planting. It must be said that Sell often bombards with numerous quotations and observations from a myriad of witnesses, which can leave one frequently longing to hear more of his own voice. His tendency to swing widely from highly technical and densely-packed philosophical/theological theory on the one hand to pithy – even somewhat cheeky – off-hand comments (albeit frequently located in the 120 pages of endnotes) on the other will be found either unsettling or liberating, according to one's taste. Although there is a copious index of persons, this is obviously only computer-generated, with no topical subdivision. This lack is made all the more significant by the very inadequate 'Select Index of Subjects', which is *so* select as to prove of quite marginal usefulness. For example, there is no entry for Unitarianism, although there are half a dozen or so important references to it in the body of the text. These are incapable of discovery, unless one reads the whole book or perchance is wise enough to begin with the name Joseph Priestley in the index of persons, and then finds his co-religionists in that circuitous manner.

Invariably with a work of this length and range, the author will stub a toe or two along the way. Far from being its first, as Sell claims, John Witherspoon was the sixth Head of the College of

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New Jersey, at Princeton. It was Benjamin Colman, not Coleman. Francis Quarles, a dedicated and constant Royalist whose papers were burnt by the Parliamentarians, might feel somewhat peeved by Sell's description of him as a Puritan. Sell appears to misread Joseph Bellamy on moral capacity. None of these, probably, is a hanging offence; indeed, one hopes that Professor Sell receives only a caution when brought to ultimate historical judgement.

Of somewhat greater concern is what is missing from this apologetic. Realising that church members are doubters as well as believers, Sell insists that a true, a useful, Christian apologetic must face towards their concerns, as well as be a defence of the faith for those outside the church. Since we no longer can assume 'Christendom', Sell clearly understands that a modern-day defence of the faith must proceed in strikingly different ways than hitherto and that Enlightenment and modern biblical criticism are factors significantly altering the ways and means for such an enterprise; yet he does very little indeed to follow-through on the implications of these changed circumstances. Although the exposition of his position regarding biblical inspiration is spot-on, he very well could have hammered-home the point much more firmly: how a belief in biblical inerrancy actually can be seen to be a negation of the gospel. He admits that he has mentioned the problem of the existence of evil 'only in passing'. Quite, yet acknowledging the omission does not make recompense for it. Perhaps most serious of all, to this reviewer, is Sell's virtual silence regarding the relation between faith and science. He says that 'God alone can reveal himself to us, and that he does ... supremely in Christ, but also throughout the created order' but then drops the point. The whole areas of creation, evolution and science are left virtually untouched and totally underdeveloped. Surely, any Christian apologetic for our age demands, especially, that the questions of science versus faith; the existence of evil; and the nature of biblical authority be fully addressed.

A persistent theme throughout this book is that a Christian apologetic must take special care to maintain the distinction between Creator and creature. To this reviewer's mind, this is a vital plank in the construction of any firm confessional platform. '[H]owever much we may believe that our noblest ideals are

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derived from God, unless the transcendent God is conceived of as supernatural and not simply our own self projected to infinity, ethics will ultimately be at risk', Sell writes in his usual felicitous way. In other words, without a truly 'other' God at the centre of our theology, we ourselves will end as the centre of that theology.

In his Conclusion, Alan Sell re-strikes the impressive note that underlies the constant desire to keep his 'orthodoxy' open and creative: his insistence that when Christians address non-Christians they are addressing those likewise created in the *imago dei* and who thereby share with them epistemological common ground. His reasonable reasoning here is that if this were not so, 'the apologetic task would be ruled out from the start'. Related to this, he once again insists that room be maintained for natural theology, together with the 'extra-ecclesial' work of the Holy Spirit. However, his repeated insistence that a defence of Christianity worth its name must proclaim that the 'fundamental truth of the Christian Gospel is that in Christ God has acted redemptively within human history' may suggest to some that there really is little for that Spirit to do, apart from triggering in a person faith in a past historical action. Surely it is not necessary to appeal for some doctrine of the Holy Spirit that borders on 'continuing revelation' to suspect that Sell's insistence on establishing Christianity as an historical faith goes so far as to threaten to preclude, in practice, the *vitality* of God's Spirit in *our* time and place.

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Jeremy Waldron, *God, Locke, and equality: Christian foundations of John Locke's political thought*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, 276 pp, ISBN: 0521810019; £37.25.

In this work Professor Waldron undertakes an examination of the elements of egalitarianism in Locke's political thought, and contends that the concept of the basic equality of all men and women is a fundamental principle in the construction of his social and political system. A great deal of the work is taken up with elaborating the way in which Locke conceived that all men and

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women are equal and in drawing out the implications of the adoption of this principle for political practice. Waldron also argues that for Locke the successful realization or embodiment of this principle in the regulation of society depends upon a theological underpinning. Locke, the author believes, holds that society can only be held together and prevented from declining into chaos by the general acceptance of the existence of a God that has a providential care for the well-being of the human race and is prepared to punish those who break the laws which He has laid down for their guidance.

Waldron employs the notion, also employed by John Rawls, that equality may be treated as a range property: a range property is one which while it defines the membership of a class, is possessed in varying degrees by the members of the class. For example, while all beautiful women are beautiful some may be more beautiful than others. The property that defines the class of human beings is, according to Locke, the capacity for abstract speculation (thus it really is true that while all men and women are equal, some are more equal than others). As we shall see the notion that humans share the capacity for abstract speculation, albeit in varying degrees, is pivotal for the development of Locke's system. According to Waldron in Locke's thought the principle of equality is also embedded in the conviction that all men and women are created in the image of God and as such are entitled to be treated with respect and are under an obligation to treat each other with respect. It is this mutuality of consideration that is the basis of a healthy and viable community. It is not, however, easy to show how the capacity for abstract speculation is related to being created in the image of God. (Are we to think of the Deity as being engaged in, and needing to be engaged in abstract speculations?).

Waldron is very thoroughgoing in his analysis of Locke's treatment of equality and examines in detail the difficulties that stand in the way, it may be alleged, of thinking of Locke as an egalitarian: the status of women, the place of minors, the distribution of political rights, particularly of the franchise, the distribution of property, the scope and limitations of toleration, the exclusion of atheists, the treatment of criminals and the defence of slavery, not neglecting the part that Locke might have played in the

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construction of the Constitutions of Carolina. In all these instances, Waldron shows that he has an enviable mastery of the relevant texts and considerable ingenuity in defending his thesis which, as he insists, is more concerned with the principle of basic equality than with the equality of outcomes and benefits. Here it may be alleged that it can be very misleading to concentrate on the interpretation of the basic or fundamental principle at the expense of the practical applications that Locke thought his treatment sanctioned. Before we can rest comfortably with the notion that Locke was an egalitarian, we need to take account of the whole of his theory together with his applications; we need to take account not just of his starting point, but also of the conclusions he ended with. Or to change metaphor: of egalitarians it might be said that it is by their fruits that we know them.

One of the difficulties in interpreting Locke's political thought lies in assessing to what extent his political system considered in its entirety, including his practical recommendations, remains true to the principles upon which it purports to be founded. Even if it were granted that Locke's principles seem to be those of an egalitarian and, potentially, those of a democrat, how far do his practical proposals remain true to them? What all commentators can be agreed upon is that Locke was vehemently and unambiguously opposed to attributing to the sovereign absolute, arbitrary power. To this end which involves justifying rebellion against tyrants, Locke claims that political society originated in all those involved coming together and agreeing among themselves, in the formation of a social compact, and deciding upon the forms of government to which they would be subject and locating the necessary and powers of government. Locke was as ready as Filmer was to use a fiction, or a piece of 'as if' philosophy if he found it convenient to his purpose. No man, it would appear, can be subject to authority unless he has participated in the processes whereby that authority is created. It has to be borne in mind, however, that Locke was not constructing forms of government to grace a democratic utopia. His objectives were intensely practical: to justify preventing an obnoxious prince from coming to the throne and establishing a set of principles that would secure the public against the abuse of power and provide grounds for rebelling against those whose

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abuses of the privileges of government became intolerable. At the same time this set of principles had to be acceptable to whoever should succeed James II. So it is not surprising to see that the initial position is watered down: active participation in the institution of political society is replaced by consent, and, furthermore, consent is presumed to be given where the people are governed in accordance with the true ends of government and within the framework set for its exercise. What this reduces to is that ‘a good prince cannot have too much authority’ – something that would warm the heart of William of Orange. In effect Locke’s position in practice, when stripped of the fictions of the social compact, virtually amounts to saying that government in accordance with the current perceptions of what benefits and safeguards the community requires will be seen to be legitimate. It should be borne in mind too, that once the people have set up the forms of government and peopled the positions of authority, they have alienated their creative powers to those to whom they have transferred their authority. It is only when these powers are abused or when the period set for their enjoyment is ended, that these powers return once more to the people. This consideration shows, I believe, that Locke was far more concerned with securing remedies for the abuse of power than endowing the people, whoever the people for political purposes might be deemed to be, with the continuous exercise of authority.

Another difficulty in interpreting Locke lies in the variety of positions that, in theory at least, are alternatives that could be chosen in the development of the institutions of government. For example, Locke assumes that when individuals come together to set up a civil society that the compact to which they bind themselves includes the acceptance of decisions by majority voting. (To avoid the submission of minorities to the tyranny of the majority later theorists on Rousseauist or Idealist lines advocated the creation or rather the realization of a general or a real will as the foundation of legitimacy). Further, after civil society has been instituted and those assembled proceed to create the institutions of government, Locke allows that there is a wide variety of different forms from which the constitution makers could choose. It was a welcome concession for Locke’s contemporaries, or for many of them, that he preferred the institutions that were acceptable to many of his

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own contemporaries: including the distribution of power over the three estates, King, Lords and Commons with a judicious separation and limitation of powers of a kind that prevented the concentration of authority and powers in one set of hands. From the way in which Locke said that political society was, or should be constructed, it was, if only in theory a distinct possibility that the body of the people should choose to retain power in their own hands. But what Locke does choose in the name of the people is something far less radical and much more acceptable to those who sought to hold the reins of government.

An important example of how a seemingly radical position is watered down is seen in Locke's discussion of property rights. In his discussion of how these rights are acquired he assumes an environment in which every man creates a right to land by mixing his labour with it and where there is enough land for everyone to acquire what he can make good use of, typically a frontier situation where land is being brought into cultivation. There are certain restrictions and conditions that govern acquisition: there must be enough land for everyone; in the accumulation of wealth nothing must be left to spoil; and those who have more than they need have a duty to supply the wants of those in need. Waldron points out that those who are in need have a right to acquire the surplus goods of those who have plenty. On the face of it this is a set of principles for holding landed property and wealth that would, as near as practically feasible, grace a community, where those whom fortune has blessed, share and have a recognised duty to share their goods with the less fortunate. But what is to happen when all the available property has been distributed? And what are the implications for the defence of property rights in Britain in the late seventeenth century? Applied to the circumstances of his own time Locke seems to assume that the property rights that the government of the day must defend are those enjoyed by the current property holders, rights that are defended by established legal practice. What might have been from the embodiment of the basic principle of equality turns out to be a highly conservative defence of established distributions.

Another example of the way in which Locke's requirements are watered down can be seen in his treatment, admittedly sketchy, of

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the distribution of the franchise. When civil society was formed, it would appear, everyone had a right not only to participate in the creation of civil society itself, but also in the formation of the government and in the location of authority. Thereafter Locke seems to allow that the body of the people may choose, if it seems good to them to place the choice of representatives to the legislature, in the hands of a few so that a large majority of the members of the society do not even have a vote in the choice of their representatives. It may well be questioned whether it is conceivable that a full-blooded egalitarian could tolerate the notion that the bulk of the members of a society should alienate completely the right and the duty to participate in the government of their society. True, Locke claims that everyone owning taxable property has a right to be represented in the legislature but this qualification for voting (even assuming that the ordinary person has a vote in the choice of his representative) is a far cry from the notion that what creates the rights of citizenship is common humanity. In defence of Locke, Waldron points out that Locke does not exclude those who do not possess taxable property from bring a representative, but it needs pointing out he does not insist that they should have a right to participate.

As is well known, Locke denied toleration to atheists on the ground that their opinions threatened the integrity and security of the whole society. Belief in a deity that has a providential care for humankind and who will mete out punishments to those who break his laws is a kind of cement that binds citizens together in an enduring community. This is a view that Waldron has some sympathy for, but it has its dangers: it can easily lead to the belief that the primary purpose of religion is to serve as an instrument of government to terrify the populace into fearful obedience; secondly, it can obscure the point that belief in the existence of a Deity who cares for the well-being of mankind should rest on what evidence there may be that the belief is a true belief and not on its efficacy in keeping the lower ranks in order; and thirdly it can distract from the truth that justice is not something that can be left to a Providence whose existence is problematic, but should be the responsibility of humans to do what they can, to secure it, grossly imperfect and inadequate those as attempts may prove to be.

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To say that all men and women are equal is not to say that they are all the same or that they should be placed on the same footing in all respects; they can be and should be treated as different in at least some respects. So it becomes important to specify the respects in which they are or should be placed on the same footing. If we can be certain of anything we can be sure that this question will engender and continue to engender a great deal of controversy; some will stress the incidence of opportunities, others will stress the provision of benefits, goods and services. Some, like Waldron, will emphasize the basic principles upon which a political system should be built, others will emphasize the outcomes of the whole system. But whether the reader will agree with Waldron's stance in stressing the importance of treating equality primarily as a basic principle in the interpretation of Locke, he can be assured of enjoying an ingenious and thought-provoking, if not altogether convincing, challenge to received wisdom.

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Peter C Myers, *Our only star and compass: Locke and the struggle for political rationality*, Lanham, Md., Rowman and Littlefield, 1998, xii+269pp, hdbk, £63.00, \$83.00 US; pbk, £20.95, \$27.95 US.

Peter C Myers finds in Locke's political philosophy 'the deepest, most philosophically self-conscious expression of modern liberal thought'. In Locke, he says, 'we can find, relative to much contemporary liberalism and to much of the rest of modern political philosophy, a superior, more realistic, more philosophically self-conscious and politically sensitive account of political reason and the basis of liberal politics' (pp.1-2). Myer's comparison class is constituted by the 'neutralist liberalism' of John Rawls, which he thinks has become a 'huge, all-encompassing carnival tent, providing welcoming shelter for a plenary diversity of visions of the good or modes of living' (p.4) despite its admitted virtues of toleration and individual rights. On the basis of the introduction, the reader might expect an indictment of Anglo-American social and political organization and cultural values, but, for the most part,

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Myers leaves the answer to the question why neutralist liberalism might be considered irrational and disoriented up to the imagination of the reader. Instead, he works carefully through Locke's philosophical anthropology and his theory of education, focusing on the *Essay concerning human understanding*, Locke's educational writings and his *Letter on toleration* in preference to the already extensively commented upon *Two treatises of government*. He succeeds in presenting Locke as an appealingly moderate political theorist who steered prudently between authoritarianism and sectarianism. On the question of whether Locke's offer to pilot us through the hazards of representative government is still worth accepting, Myers' conviction that Locke's political anthropology contains information relevant to modern industrial and post-industrial societies pits him against the school of Cambridge historians led by Quentin Skinner who repudiate the notion that philosophers can address distantly separated audiences. The Cambridge school, and especially John Dunn, who has written extensively on Locke, tend to find him in any case a pusillanimous figure who often failed to speak coherently to members of his own society. Myers handles the historiographical issue with grace and tact. He acknowledges frankly his debt to the opposing Straussian school of textual interpretation, while distancing himself from Leo Strauss' own equally critical reading of Locke as disappointingly populist.

Defending Locke against charges of inconsistency is not easy. Locke is not one of the rigorous intellects of the seventeenth century, and there is little point in making him out to be so. How can a nominalist philosopher who claims that species have no fixed boundaries have a conception of human nature sufficiently powerful to ground any perfectionist ideals? How are Locke's statements concerning the rational basis of Christianity to be reconciled with his seemingly fideistic fallback position? How does the moral pessimism of his theory of motivation and his skepticism about knowledge of nature fit with his rationalism and his notion that morality is potentially a science of demonstration? Myer's discussion of these familiar problems is resourceful and responsible in its quotation of opposing texts; the footnotes are helpful in indicating points of divergence from and rapprochement with

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current political theory, and there is an extensive bibliography. The author's evident sympathy for Locke produces a surprisingly warm and lively picture. Myers succeeds in communicating his subject's earnestness, the striking absence in his philosophy of vengeful and punitive motives, and his appealing interest in young people and naïfs.

The weakness of the book is that its critique of postmodernism and pluralism rests on a methodological decision to try to reconstruct Locke as a perennial philosopher by ignoring his context. The argument of critics of the Enlightenment is that rationality is a rhetorical, not an empirically descriptive term that was used historically and can still be turned conveniently to the maintenance of power by elites because it is easy to ascribe the political nullification of disenfranchised groups exclusively to their failure to meet an allegedly universal standard of reasonableness. Locke's views on the performance of labour, on slavery, and on the appropriate remedies for poverty, as well as his attitudes towards indigenous peoples and towards the non-landowning classes and their role in the sectarian uprisings of the 1640s and 1650s are grist for the critics' mill. Myers is very good at bringing out what is truly reasonable in Locke, and he is sensible not to try to absolve and rehabilitate him, but in ignoring these challenges while presenting Locke as a philosopher for modern times he appears to be trying to have his cake and eat it too. There is no discussion of the simultaneous presence of hierarchical and levelling motifs in Locke's theory of representative government. Myers suggests that Locke adequately addresses the problem of class division by designing an 'egalitarian principle guaranteeing for the majority the preservation that is their primary concern while securing for the more ambitious minority the opportunity to achieve at least the more civil forms of eminence' through the rewarding of their rational industry, (p.196) thereby 'basing social distinction upon a standard of achievement that is understandable, accessible, and beneficial to the common majority' (Ibid.). But such a proposal portrays rational industry as a capacity that is paradoxically valued by all but possessed by only a few, rather as Robert Nozick conceives a talent for basketball. It is condescending in its suggestion that mere subsistence is properly the concern of the

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masses, who are at the same time supposed to enjoy vicarious rationality by approving and compensating the performance of experts. Myers seems determined to avoid the unapologetic elitism of the Straussians, but he needs to make his position more explicit in order to do so.

On the subject of the family, Myers does have some interesting things to say, filling in some details of the ideal of rationality he means to defend against the neutralist liberal carnival of values. Men are undependable creatures with a tendency to roam, as Locke (along with Hobbes) realized. Mothers do not normally require an incentive to remain with their children, whilst fathers do. Yet the influence of fathers appears to be, as Myers puts it, 'crucial to the achievement of adulthood' (p.199) and, as he correctly observes, the patriarchal family has been considered as an institution that provides men with the requisite incentives by offering them an opportunity to rule and be served by their familial underlings. Myers rejects this solution to the problem of wandering fathers, arguing that it is incompatible with Locke's underlying, though largely unexpressed belief that the capacity for rational self-government is inalienable, extending to wives, daughters, and younger sons. He pleads for a return to a more unsentimental and pragmatic conception of marriage than modern liberals who value the individual pursuit of happiness would care to support. Such a conception can be developed and sustained, he argues, by educating parents and children alike to appreciate the prudential benefits of the stable family.

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TWO PAMPHLETS ON THE REGENCY CRISIS BY WILLIAM GODWIN

*Pamela Clemit**

William Godwin's writings in the decade prior to *An Enquiry concerning political justice* (1793) reveal the extent of his practical engagement with Foxite Whig politics. In 1783 and 1784 he published two political pamphlets, *A Defence of the Rockingham Party*, vindicating the coalition of the Rockingham Whigs, led by Fox, and the Tory followers of Lord North, and *Instructions to a Statesman*, protesting at the use of court influence to bring down the Fox-North coalition.¹ From 1783 to 1791, he wrote the 'British and Foreign History' chapters of the *New Annual Register*, a journal sympathetic to the Foxite Whigs, which was begun in opposition to Burke's *Annual Register*.² When in 1785 Fox and Sheridan established the *Political Herald and Review* to propagandize their views, Godwin became one of the main contributors, and later, acting editor.³ However, Godwin's practical involvement with the Whig cause is often thought to have diminished after the closure of the *Political Herald* in December 1786.⁴ His next work, *History of the internal affairs of the United Provinces* (1787), a

* I am grateful to Lord Abinger for permission, granted through the Bodleian Library, to consult and quote from Godwin's manuscript diary, held on deposit in the Abinger Collection at the Bodleian Library. Thanks are due to the following individuals for their expert advice: T W Craik, Stuart Curran, Robin Dix, Martin Fitzpatrick, Gary Kelly, Beth Rainey, and David Woolls.

¹ See Jack W Marken, 'William Godwin's *Instructions to a Statesman*', *Yale University Library Gazette*, 34:2 (Oct. 1959), 73-81; Burton R Pollin, 'Introduction', *Four early pamphlets (1783-1784) ... by William Godwin* (Gainesville, Florida: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1966), x-xiii.

² See Jack W Marken, 'William Godwin's Writing for the *New Annual Register*', *Modern Language Notes*, 68 (Nov. 1953), 477-79.

³ See Jack W Marken, 'William Godwin and the *Political Herald and Review*', *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 65 (1961), 517-33.

⁴ Mark Philp, 'Introduction', *Political and philosophical writings of William Godwin*, gen. ed. Philp, 8 vols. (London, 1993), 1:8.

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spirited defence of the Dutch Patriot Revolution, appears to indicate a move towards broader philosophical concerns in preparation for the writing of *Political Justice*.⁵

Two pamphlets have recently come to light which show that Godwin, far from distancing himself from practical politics towards the end of the decade, was still prepared to write in support of the Foxite Whigs when the occasion arose. During the Regency Crisis, prompted by the temporary mental derangement of George III from November 1788 to February 1789, Godwin produced two anonymous pamphlets vindicating the Whig stance on the Regency question. The first of these, *The Law of Parliament in the Present Situation of Great Britain Considered*, was published by J. Debrett on 1 December 1788 and went into a second edition early the following year. The second, *Reflexions on the Consequences of His Majesty's Recovery from His Late Indisposition. In a Letter to the People of England*, published by G G J and J Robinson, Godwin's then employers, was internally dated 16 February 1789, the day of the debate on the Regency Bill in the House of Lords, but did not appear until around a month later.⁶ Though the *English Short Title Catalogue* does not make an authorship attribution for either pamphlet, nor record any other copies attributed to Godwin, his authorship is suggested by an anonymous contemporary manuscript attribution, 'By Mr Godwin,' on each of the copies held in the University of Durham Routh Collection.⁷ In the case of *Law of*

⁵ See Jack W Marken, 'William Godwin's *History of the United Provinces*', *Philological Quarterly*, 45:2 (Apr. 1966), 379-86.

⁶ John W Derry, *The Regency Crisis and the Whigs, 1788-9* (Cambridge, 1963), 187; *Monthly Review*, 80 (Mar. 1789), 275; on Godwin's known work for Robinson, see G E Bentley, Jr. 'Copyright Documents in the George Robinson Archive: William Godwin and Others, 1713-1820', *Studies in Bibliography*, 34 (1982), 77-83, 89.

⁷ University of Durham, Special Collections, Routh 67.F.2/5 and Routh 67.F.2/6. Both pamphlets are contained in a volume of ten tracts, entitled 'Pamphlets concerning the King's Illness 1788-89'. The volume includes a manuscript contents list in an unidentified late eighteenth-century or early nineteenth-century hand, headed S.S.S.7.' Before rebacking in 1998, the spine had a fragment of a label bearing the same number, which suggests that the volume was originally part of a large pamphlet collection

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Parliament, this attribution is strongly supported by evidence in Godwin's manuscript diary, where, according to his customary practice of recording the publication of his own works, he noted, 'Law of Parliament published,' on 1 December 1788.⁸ In the case of *Reflexions*, the evidence in Godwin's diary is insufficient to support a definite attribution. However, in view of the manifest similarities in theme and technique between the pamphlets and Godwin's known writings, it was decided to employ computer-assisted methods of textual analysis, as used in forensic linguistics, to see if additional internal evidence could be found to facilitate author identification. This textual investigation confirmed Godwin as the author of *Law of Parliament* and established him as the author of *Reflexions*.⁹

George III's derangement was formally announced to ministers on 6 November 1788, precipitating a vigorous debate on the question of a Regency both in and out of Parliament.¹⁰ Controversy was heightened by lack of information about the nature of the king's illness, which is now known to have been porphyria, a rare hereditary metabolic disorder.¹¹ The Whigs, who represented the king's condition to be permanent, sought to seize the opportunity to

or that this is the pressmark of a private library. The volume also had a nineteenth-century ownership inscription, 'James Weale'. The pressmark on the spine, 'LVII | F | 2.' Indicates that it forms part of the library of Martin Joseph Routh (1755-1854), the great patristics scholar, whose collection of printed books passed on his death to the University of Durham. The hand in which the authorship ascriptions of the two pamphlets in question are written does not occur elsewhere in the volume and is not that of Routh himself. A review of copies of each pamphlet in other libraries found no other evidence of authorship attributions.

⁸ Godwin, diary, Bodleian Library, Abinger Manuscripts, Dep. e. 196, fol.20r.

⁹ For further details, see Pamela Clemit and David Woolls, 'Two New Pamphlets by William Godwin: A Case of Computer-Assisted Authorship Attribution', *Studies in Bibliography*, 54 (2001).

¹⁰ My account is based on Derry, *Regency Crisis*, 67-119, and L G Mitchell, *Charles James Fox and the disintegration of the Whig Party, 1782-1794* (Oxford, 1971), 118-52.

¹¹ See Ida Macalpine and Richard Hunter, *George III and the mad-business* (1969, pbk edn. London, 1991), 3-98.

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capitalize on their longstanding association with the Prince of Wales and to oust Pitt the Younger's ministry. The government, by contrast, emphasized the temporary nature of the king's illness and sought to delay parliamentary proceedings, hoping that he would recover in time to prevent the Whigs from forming an administration. After Parliament assembled on 20 November, it – was immediately adjourned for a fortnight, when, Pitt declared, if the king remained unwell, they should consider what measures to adopt to secure the continuation of executive government. *Law of Parliament* thus appeared before the crucial parliamentary debate of 10 December 1788, in which Fox asserted the automatic and indefeasible right of the Prince of Wales to become sole Regent and was outmanoeuvred by Pitt.¹² Indeed, Godwin's first pamphlet on the Regency Crisis may have been designed to influence the internal dispute among the Whigs, begun in Fox's absence – he was in Italy with his mistress Elizabeth Armistead when the crisis broke – concerning the best means of achieving government office.¹³ While Sheridan, a close associate of the prince, advocated coming into office by negotiation with his opponents, Loughborough, a leading Whig lawyer, sought to promote the Whigs' claim in constitutional terms, a position supported by Godwin and subsequently adopted by Fox in the parliamentary debates.

In *Law of Parliament* Godwin presents himself as a disinterested guardian of constitutional liberties, who has 'nothing to do with administrations. I simply confine myself to the state of the human mind, as it appears in this island' (p.223). Yet, as in his other political writings of the 1780s, notably his contributions to the *Political Herald*, this stance of philosophical detachment is no more than a rhetorical strategy designed to create a bond of common interest with his intended audience. As contemporary reviewers noted, Godwin's arguments are far from even-handed.¹⁴ *Law of Parliament* has a two-fold purpose: Godwin seeks to

¹² Derry, *Regency Crisis*, 69-71.

¹³ Derry, *Regency Crisis*, 50; Mitchell, *Fox and the disintegration of the Whig Party*, 122-26.

¹⁴ See *Critical Review*, 66 (Nov. 1788), 496; *English Review*, 12 (Dec. 1788), 471; *Monthly Review*, 79 (Dec. 1788) 550-51; *New Annual Register ...for 1789* (1789), 251.

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promote the view that Parliament has a right to convene itself without the express authority of the king, and to justify the Whigs' claim of the prince's right to be sole and uncontrolled Regent.

Godwin's argumentative method is to present a mixture of historical analysis and discussion of abstract principles. Thus much of the first half of the pamphlet is taken up with a survey of historical precedents – a procedure advocated by the government on 10 December – in which Parliament was convoked by authorities other than the king.¹⁵ Characteristically, Godwin pursues this historical argument to an extreme, highlighting the examples of convention parliaments at the Restoration and the 1688 Revolution in order to argue for 'an inherent virtue in parliament to assemble' (p.209). In the second half of the pamphlet, Godwin's main arguments for vesting royal authority in the Prince of Wales are based on philosophical principles rather than historical precedents. He presents the regency of a single person as the best means of preserving the mixed constitution established in 1688 and thus safeguarding the liberties of the individual. By contrast, a council of regency, the option preferred by Pitt and his ministers, appears as a dangerous constitutional innovation, leading to '*government by the narrowest, and therefore the worst of aristocracies*' (p.217) [Godwin's italics]).

Godwin not only seeks to convince his readers by a logical style of argument but also employs a range of emotive devices to whip up their fears and persuade them to adopt his point of view. For example, the epigraph, which alludes to Cicero's account of the charge issued by the Roman senate to consuls, tribunes, and proconsuls, when the city was on the brink of civil war in 49 BC, generates a sense of political crisis and warns that British constitutional liberties are in danger. Godwin further seeks to awaken fears of civic unrest by alluding to recent upheavals in Corsica, Sweden, Geneva, and Holland, where, he says pointedly, 'we have seen liberty annihilated' (p.196). And, at the close of the pamphlet, Godwin describes in alarmist tones the political instability of Europe, engendered by the outbreak in August 1787 of the Russian War with Turkey and Sweden, highlighting the

¹⁵ Derry, *Regency Crisis*, 67-68.

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struggles for constitutional reforms in Holland, Poland, Sweden, and France, and predicting revolutionary upheaval ‘from one end of Europe to the other’ (p.220). The only way that Britain can avoid sharing in this ‘state of universal concussion’ Godwin implies, is by a co-operative parliamentary effort to establish a single sovereign power – that of the Prince of Wales.

Godwin’s second pamphlet on the Regency Crisis, *Reflexions*, is a sequel to the first, since it deals with the constitutional question of how Parliament should proceed in the event of the king’s recovery from his illness. Written in response to news of the king’s improvement, announced on 10 February 1789, it warned of the dangers of an immediate restoration of full royal authority.¹⁶ As in *Law of Parliament*, Godwin adopts an avowedly non-partisan tone while promoting arguments sympathetic to the Foxite Whigs. His main proposition is that the king should not be allowed to resume full powers without an agreed procedure to establish that his recovery was complete, echoing concerns voiced by Burke and Sheridan in the parliamentary debates of 11 and 12 February.¹⁷ However, *Reflexions* was overtaken by the events it sought to influence: the announcement on 26 February of the ‘entire cessation’ of the king’s illness, followed by his immediate resumption of full powers, made its cautionary arguments redundant.¹⁸ Even so, the pamphlet was well received by journals sympathetic to the Whigs, though it was derided by the Tory *Critical Review* for its scepticism concerning the king’s recovery.¹⁹

Though *Reflexions* closely resembles *Law of Parliament* in its combination of historical and philosophical arguments, its style is adapted according to the specific audience and occasion for which it was intended. As indicated by the subtitle, ‘In a Letter to the People of England,’ *Reflexions* is addressed to the politically aware, middle section of society which had a voice in public affairs, and

¹⁶ Macalpine and Hunter, *George III*, 81.

¹⁷ Derry, *Regency Crisis*, 186-87.

¹⁸ Macalpine and Hunter, *George III*, 86; Derry, *Regency Crisis* 188.

¹⁹ See *Monthly Review*, 80 (Mar. 1789), 275; *New Annual Register ... for 1789*, 10 (1790), 265; *Critical Review*, 67 (Mar. 1789), 229.

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which largely supported the government on the Regency question.²⁰ Mindful of the recent surge of public affection for the king, prompted by his illness and heightened by news of his recovery, Godwin adopts a personal, informal manner, playing on the emotions of readers in order to win their assent to his proposals.²¹ For example, he presents himself in confessional style as not only an impartial, trustworthy, and experienced commentator on public affairs, but also a man of ‘the extremest sensibility’ (p.228) who is thus peculiarly qualified to speak to readers’ concerns. To alert his audience to the dangers of a premature restoration of full royal authority, he not only uses reasoned argument but also dramatizes the disastrous consequences throughout history resulting from deranged monarchs who resumed executive power too soon.

When Godwin turns from history to principles, his arguments are similarly laced with emotive devices. In the hope of achieving the moderate goal of establishing measures for ascertaining the state of the king’s health, he makes the extreme proposal that the uncertainties of the present situation would be resolved if the king were to resign. In this imaginary scenario, the solution lies in ‘the breast of the sovereign alone:’ George III, acting the part of an exemplary ‘father of his people,’ would perform ‘the highest office of a sovereign in preferring the salvation of [his] country to every inferior consideration’ (p.242). Though Godwin dismisses this remedy as ‘at least in the eye of a political speculatist [...] improbable and visionary’ (p.242), it forms the logical outcome of his view that the king has no rights, other than those vested in him by the people as a trust for the benefit of the whole. While the pamphlet’s open-ended conclusion may reflect the peculiar circumstances of its composition, it also strikingly prefigures Godwin’s writings of the 1790s in its gradualist design, ‘rather to

²⁰ On the Foxite notion of ‘the people’, see L G Mitchell, *Charles James Fox* (1992; Harmondsworth, 1997), 260; Derry, *Regency Crisis*, 116-119, 120.

²¹ Linda Colley, *Britons: forging the nation, 1707-1837* (1992; pbk edn. London, 1994), 212; Derry, *Regency Crisis*, 190-91.

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awaken the true principles of understanding in others, than to specify the conclusions from those principles' (p.248).²²

Godwin's two pamphlets on the Regency Crisis are important additions to the canon of his writings. They are significant for what they reveal about both his developing political views and his consistent resourcefulness as an occasional writer. They demonstrate that his practical engagement with contemporary British politics did not lessen after 1786, but that he continued actively to support the Foxite Whigs right up to the eve of the French Revolution. At the same time, they indicate just how much Godwin was preoccupied with constitutional questions, two years before he began writing his celebrated 'treatise on Political Principles.'²³ The importance which Godwin attached to the events of the Regency Crisis is indicated by a later passage in the *New Annual Register*, where he speculates that Pitt's plan for a Regency with restricted powers, 'might have terminated in a very different manner from what the minister expected; or at least would have set men's minds afloat and engaged them in the examination of the first principles of political government.'²⁴ Finally, Godwin's Regency pamphlets, in their mixture of abstract speculation and engagement with concrete political questions, adumbrate a characteristic feature of his thought as it developed through the 1790s, and beyond. As he wrote in 1806:

My political creed [...] consists of two parts, speculative and practical. In speculative politics, I indulge with great delight to my own mind (and I cannot easily persuade myself with injury to others), in meditating on what man can be, on all the good which our nature, taken in the most favourable point of view, seems to promise [...] In practical politics, my path is marked with many a beacon, which is wanting to me in the tracks of speculation, and therefore I may hope is

²² Cf. Godwin, preface to *The Enquirer; Political and philosophical writings*, 5:78.

²³ Godwin, undated autobiographical note for 1791, *Collected novels and memoirs of William Godwin*, gen. ed. Mark Philp, 8 vols. (London, 1992), 1:49.

²⁴ *New Annual Register ... for the Year 1789*, 10 (1790), 115.

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less exposed to error [...] I am therefore practically a friend to the English constitution.²⁵

As experiments in combining speculative and practical politics, *Law of Parliament* and *Reflexions* help to explain how Godwin became the author of not only *Political justice* but also *Cursory strictures* (1794).

The texts printed below are based on the first edition of each pamphlet. Editorial emendation is light. The original spelling, capitalization, and punctuation have been retained, even where inconsistencies occur, except for the correction of printer's errors, the discarding of the long 's,' ligatures, and pinched letters, and the removal of inverted commas down the left-hand side of the margin. Editorial footnotes identify quotations, contemporary personalities, and contemporary events, so as to facilitate understanding of the occasion of each pamphlet, but there has been no attempt to document the extensive catalogues of historical precedents.

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²⁵ Godwin, 'Introduction to a History of the Administration of 1806', n.d., paper watermarked 1807, *Political and philosophical writings*, 2: 219-20.

THE
LAW OF PARLIAMENT
IN THE
PRESENT SITUATION
OF
GREAT BRITAIN
CONSIDERED.

NE QUID DETRIMENTI RESPUBLICA CAPIAT, CAVETE.¹

LONDON:

Printed for J. DEBRETT, opposite *Burlington House, Piccadilly*.

M.DCC.LXXXVIII

[Price One Shilling and Six Pence]

¹ Cicero to Tiro, 12 Jan. 49 BC, *Letters to friends*, XVI.xi.2 (adapted):
'Take care lest the republic sustain any harm.'

[*William Godwin*]

THE
LAW, &c.

The attention of Englishmen cannot be too often recalled to the spirit of their constitution, and the blessings of liberty which it secures to them. Considered in this respect only, the present situation of our country is not to be reckoned unhappy. Such a crisis could not perhaps have occurred at a more favourable period. Knowledge of all kinds has made a rapid progress within the last twenty years; and the science of politics, and of the rights of human nature, has had its share in these improvements. Abilities of no contemptible kind, whether in administration or opposition, are at hand, to aid our inquiries, and mutually to check the errors into which either may fall. We have the advantages of party without many of its evils; we have an active administration and an active opposition; and yet these two have of late conducted themselves towards each other in a liberal manner, without asperity or malice.

In this situation a private individual stands in need of no apology for offering his sentiments to the public. In every important conjuncture, the citizen of a free country is bound, in proportion to his knowledge and his talents, to contribute to the public weal. While the author of such a disquisition as this conceals his name, there is perhaps little danger that his qualifications should be rated too high. I would have my sentiments stand upon no other basis than that of argument and common sense. I shall speak with simplicity, because I wish to be understood, and because I wish my countrymen to know as well as myself, that I have no view but to their advantage.

It will not be very improper, before I treat of the means of preserving the spirit of the constitution, to inquire whether it be worth preserving.

To the man who does not know the value of liberty, I have little to say. Liberty is the handmaid of virtue and of truth. It is to her we owe the independence and firmness of mind, without which virtue must be unstable and precarious. It is to her we owe the daring

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spirit of adventure, by which we explore the regions of truth. I will not say that every individual slave is a bad man, but I dare affirm, that the qualities that usually spring out of slavery, are timidity, indolence and deceit.

Under the feudal constitution every country of Europe was as free as our own. But there was a period in the progress of society, when the power of the nobility was fast declining, and the power of the commons was not yet established. This period was fatal to the rights of mankind. In Spain, in Portugal, in Germany, in Denmark, they became nothing. In France the struggle was long and generous, but it was unsuccessful. In England we secured and established our liberties: but they cost us fifty years of civil commotion, many victories and as many defeats, and the best blood of the most generous spirits that ever graced the theatre of the world. In our own day we have seen liberty annihilated in Corsica, in Sweden, in Geneva and in Holland.² The poor vestiges that remain in Europe are confined to Great Britain, and the petty cantons of Switzerland.³ The tumultuous privileges of the Poles do not deserve to form an exception.⁴ We are told, that the period of

² The independent republic of Corsica, established in 1755, was invaded by French troops in 1768 and became a province of France a year later. In 1772, Gustavus III (1746-92, King of Sweden 1771-92) used royal guards and officers of the Finnish army to seize control of government from the Swedish parliament in a bloodless *coup d'état*, after which he put into effect social reforms based on the ideas of 'enlightened despotism.' In 1782, the ruling patriciate in the republic of Geneva was overthrown by a coalition of democratically-minded citizens and artisans, but the insurrection was quashed by France, Piedmont, and Bern. The Dutch Patriot Revolution, which began in 1780, temporarily wrested control of civic and provincial government from Prince William V of Orange (1748-95, Stadtholder of the Netherlands 1751-95), and restored it to the citizenry, but was suppressed by Prussian troops, supported by Great Britain, in 1787.

³ Eighteenth-century Switzerland was a loose confederation of Protestant and Catholic cantons (with their dependent territories), each of which was autonomous and organized mainly along republican lines.

⁴ In November 1788, the Polish Diet, taking advantage of the Russian war with Turkey and Sweden (see note 15), rebelled against Russian

[*William Godwin*]

vindicating the rights of mankind is now over, and that the standing armies of Europe render every expectation of that sort hopeless. This is a melancholy assertion, and I hope it is not a true one.

It appears, then, that we possess no trifling advantage, in having thus escaped from the general catastrophe. Our liberties, in the most extensive sense of that word, have now stood an experiment of one hundred years, and I believe I may add upon the whole, that they are as full and entire at the present day as they have ever been. In Athens and Rome, where freedom was well understood, she was exposed to perpetual storms. They had their intervals of despotism and tyranny. The admirable scene of their history is stained with tumult and bloodshed. In England on the contrary we have enjoyed perhaps as much tranquillity as is consistent with human imperfection, for an entire century. I am not now inquiring into the cause of this; I am describing the effects.

A farther advantage possessed by the inhabitants of this country, is personal freedom. The English law is doubtless in some respects imperfect; but this is one of the most beautiful points of view under which we can consider it. The trial by jury, the act of habeas corpus, and the other provisions of our statute law upon this head, form a system of individual security, that is very little short of perfection.

I shall add but one article more, freedom of speech and of writing. There is nothing more dear to the human heart, or that is productive of more glorious and beneficial effects; and yet this freedom is permitted in no other country in Europe. In despotic countries it is natural that it should be placed under restraint. In Holland and Geneva in their best days the press was subjected to limitations incompatible with true freedom. Our own liberty in this respect is of very late growth, and is subject to one or two unhappy exceptions: but we prize it the more highly for the slowness of its acquisition; and though not complete, it seems in train to become so.

Such are the advantages we at present possess, and which have been continued to us uninterrupted through a considerable

control of its affairs and sought to transform Poland from an elected monarchy into a hereditary constitutional monarchy.

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succession of time. They are secured to us by the popular nature of our constitution. The monarch of a despotic state might grant them, but it would be always in the power of himself, his successors and their ministers to take them away again. In England they are in the hands of the nation at large. We can never lose them, but by our own fault; they will last, as long as our constitution continues undebased and unaltered. It becomes us therefore to prize and to study this constitution; we ought not lightly to innovate upon it, never to the diminution of popular privilege, never but for some general and preponderating advantage.

I come to my immediate subject.

The questions, that have for some weeks engrossed the attention of the real friend to their country, rise out of the melancholy situation of our sovereign.⁵ We have been informed from very high authority, that “the severity of the indisposition, under which his Majesty labours, has rendered it impossible for his servants to receive his commands.” It is understood, that this indisposition had for some time preceded the official notice of the twentieth of November, from which the above passage is taken; and there are grounds to fear respecting the future, that the indisposition may either be permanent, or of considerable duration.

In this situation the business of the nation is of course at a stand. The executive power is vested in the king alone, and of consequence nothing of any sort, except what is absolutely indispensable and of common occurrence, can now be transacted. There is another power vested in the king of a mixed nature, partly executive, and partly belonging to him as a member of the legislature; the power of convoking the two houses of parliament. How in the present conjuncture is parliament to be assembled? In what hands is the executive power to be placed, and by what

⁵ George William Frederick (1738-1820, King of Great Britain and Ireland 1760-1814, and Elector 1760, then King of Hanover 1814-20) developed the first signs of mental derangement in October 1788. His illness recurred in 1801 and 1804, eventually causing permanent incapacity so that from 1811 until his death, the Prince of Wales - the future George IV - was Prince Regent.

[William Godwin]

authority transferred? I shall examine these two questions in the order in which they stand.

The power of convoking the two houses of parliament is by the common law of the realm attributed to the king alone. In matters which make no part of the statute law, it is usual to rest our assertions on respectable authority. In the present case the authorities of Blackstone and De Lolme will be perfectly sufficient.⁶ Blackstone, Book I. chapter 2. of his *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, says: “The parliament is regularly to be summoned by the king’s writ or letter, issued out of chancery by advice of the privy council. • It is a branch of the royal prerogative, that no parliament can be convened by its own authority, or by the authority of any, except the king alone.”⁷ He then proceeds to assign the reasons in which this prerogative is founded. “Supposing parliament had a right to meet spontaneously, without being called together, it is impossible to conceive that all the members, and each of the houses, would agree unanimously upon the proper time and place of meeting; and if half the members met, and half absented themselves, who shall determine which is really the legislative body, the part assembled, or that which stays away. It is therefore necessary that the parliament should be called together at a determinate time and place: and highly becoming its dignity and independence, that it should be called together by none but one of its own constituent parts: and, of the three constituent parts, this office can only appertain to the king; as he is a single person, whose will may be uniform and steady; the first person in the nation, being superior to both houses in dignity; and the only

⁶ Sir William Blackstone (1723-80, knighted 1770), the author of *Commentaries on the laws of England* (1765-69), the best-known description of the doctrines of English law, which became the basis of university legal education; John Louis de Lolme (?1740-1807), the Genevan author of *The Constitution of England* (1771; first English edition, 1775), a treatise which appealed to British reformist thinkers because of its representation of Britain as the only country where government was both strong and free.

⁷ Sir William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the laws of England: in four books* (8th edn., Oxford, 1778), 150. (Godwin’s dash at the end of the first sentence indicates that a passage is omitted.)

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branch of the legislature that has a separate existence, and is capable of performing any act at a time when no parliament is in being.”⁸ He adds, “Nor is it an exception to this rule that by some modern statutes, on the demise of a king or queen, if there be then no parliament in being, the last parliament revives, and is to sit again for six months, unless dissolved by the successor: for this revived parliament must have been originally summoned by the crown.” In these last words Mr. Justice Blackstone seems to have made no proper distinction, between the summoning a new parliament, and the calling together for its session a parliament in being.

The sentiments of De Lolme on the subject are as follow: “The king is the third constitutive part of parliament: it is even he alone who can convoke it; and he alone can dissolve or prorogue it.—

“When the parliament meets, whether it be by virtue of a new summons, or whether being composed of members formerly elected, it meets again at the expiration of the term for which it had been prorogued, the king either goes to it in person, invested with the insignia of his dignity, or appoints proper persons to represent him on that occasion, and opens the session by laying before the parliament the state of the public affairs, and inviting them to take them into consideration. This presence of the king, either real or represented, is absolutely requisite at the first meeting; it is it which gives life to the legislative bodies, and puts them in action.”⁹

Upon this passage it is obvious to remark, that the authority of Mr. De Lolme is more decisive than that of judge Blackstone, but that, as might be expected from a writer, who is neither an English lawyer, nor a native of this country, it is neither so scientific, nor so conclusive.

Such then are the provisions of the common law of the realm for common and ordinary cases. But the constitution of our government must be extremely imperfect, if it do not include in it

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ John Louis de Lolme, *The Constitution of England, or an account of the English government; in which it is compared with the republican form of government, and occasionally with the other monarchies in Europe* (London, 1775), 73-74. (Godwin inserts the phrase, ‘or appoints proper persons to represent him on that occasion.’)

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provisions for an extraordinary emergency. This inclusion may be derived, either from precedent, if the case have occurred before; or from the spirit of the constitution candidly applied, in a new case; or from considerations, partly of one kind, and partly of the other.

Nothing can be more natural, than the recurring to examples in the history of our country. In the earlier periods of that history it is by no means uncommon, to find parliament, or the great council of the nation, convoked by an authority, which is neither that of the king, nor an authority delegated by him.

In the third year of the reign of king Richard the first, A. D. 1191, a general council of the nobility and prelates was summoned by prince John, the king's brother, to meet at Reading. Richard, who was engaged in a crusade to the Holy Land, had delegated his authority to Hugh de Puzas, bishop of Durham, and Walter de Longchamp, bishop of Ely, whom he appointed justiciaries and guardians of the realm. Longchamp, who was a man of violent character and tyrannical principles, deprived his colleague of his authority, and vexed the kingdom by his arbitrary and licentious proceedings. Richard sent orders to reinstate Puzas, but they were superseded by his rival. He sent new orders, appointing a fixed council to Longchamp, and commanding him to take no measure of importance without their concurrence; but these orders were neglected. The nation now cast their eyes upon prince John; the emergency of the situation superseded the forms of law, and the authority he assumed, though he were in reality no more than a private person, was generally applauded.

The next example, which demands attention, is more important: it led to the great measure of the establishment of Magna Charta. King John, the brother and successor of Richard the first, was the weakest and most odious of tyrants. He lost in the most despicable manner the English provinces in France, and he drove himself to the necessity of surrendering the crown of England to the pope's legate. He affronted the barons by his insolence, dishonoured their families by his gallantries, and gave discontent to all ranks of men by his endless exactions and impositions. His lawless practices alienated the whole kingdom from his obedience, and in the sixteenth year of his reign, A. D. 1214, a numerous meeting of the barons was summoned by cardinal Stephen Langton, archbishop of

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Canterbury, to meet at St. Edmond's Bury in Suffolk, and at this meeting a second was agreed upon, which negotiated with the king, and by the joint authority of him and themselves a third meeting was summoned for the following year. This meeting was held, first at Stamford, and then at Runnamede, and extorted from king John the great charter of our liberties.

At the death of king John, his son Henry was only nine years of age. The discontented barons had called in prince Lewis, son of Philip Augustus, king of France, and it seemed as if nothing, but the opportune death of the tyrant, could have saved the country from complete subjugation. In this situation William Marshal, earl of Pembroke, great marshal of England, summoned a general council of the barons to meet at Bristol, A. D. 1216, where he was chosen protector of the realm.

The earl of Pembroke lived only long enough to deliver the kingdom from its invaders, and upon his death, in the first year of the reign of king Henry the third, a great council was summoned, as in the former instance in the name of the king, whose youth forbids us to consider it as his own act, and there was no person legally authorised for that purpose. This council appointed Peter des Roches, bishop of Winchester, to be protector of the realm, and Hubert de Burgh to be chief justiciary of England.

The instances, which immediately follow, are of less authority, as belonging to a period of civil confusion. In the forty sixth year of the reign of king Henry the third, A. D. 1263, a parliament was summoned by Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester, and the barons of his faction, to meet at Westminster; and the like measure was adopted in the two following years, when king Henry was a prisoner in his hands. In estimating these proceedings we ought to remember, along with the delinquency of Montfort, that to his genius and ambition we owe the origin of the house of commons.

A subsequent example is connected with the deposition of King Edward the second. The king was a prisoner in the hands of Henry Plantagenet, earl of Lancaster, great grandson of king Henry the third. Under these circumstances a parliament was summoned in his name by queen Isabella, his consort, in the nineteenth year of his reign, A. D. 1327, the object of which was to deprive him of his crown.

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This parliament, in consideration of the minority of king Edward the third, now in the fifteenth year of his age, appointed a council of regency, consisting of twelve persons; but their authority was superseded by Roger Mortimer, earl of March, the paramour of the queen mother; and in the following year he thought proper to summon a parliament.

A parliament was summoned in the first year of the reign of king Richard the second, A. D. 1377, for the purpose of establishing a plan of government, that prince being only ten years of age.

In the twenty third year of the reign of king Richard the second, A. D. 1399, a parliament was summoned by Henry, duke of Lancaster, afterwards king Henry the fourth, which proceeded to the deposition of Richard.

In the first year of the reign of king Henry the sixth, A. D. 1422, a parliament was summoned, that prince having not yet completed the first year of his age. Henry the fifth had verbally appointed his elder brother, John, duke of Bedford, to be regent of France, and his younger brother, Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, to be regent of England; but this destination was superseded by parliament. The privileges of this assembly were in higher estimation during the reign of Henry the sixth, than in any subsequent reign to the death of queen Elizabeth.

The next example has been thought particularly worthy of notice. King Henry, in the thirty third year of his reign, A. D. 1454, fell into a distemper, which so far increased his natural imbecility, as to render him incapable of maintaining even the appearance of royal authority. In this situation, Margaret of Anjou, his consort, and the privy council, appointed Richard duke of York, who had pretensions to the crown, to be lieutenant of the kingdom, with powers to open and hold a session of parliament. That assembly accordingly met, and, taking into consideration the state of the kingdom, raised the duke to the office of protector.

In the course of a few months the distemper of Henry subsided, and he called upon the duke of York to surrender his trust. Instead of complying, the duke assembled an army, and having obtained a victory in the first battle of Saint Albans, a parliament was summoned by him in this state of anarchy and uncertainty.

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The battle of St. Albans was the first in the bloody contest of the two houses of York and Lancaster. The following battles of Bloreheath and Northampton were equally attended with victory to the party of York; and in the last of these king Henry was taken prisoner. A parliament was now summoned by the Yorkists in the thirty ninth year of king Henry the sixth, A. D. 1460, by whom the entire administration was vested in the duke, and he was declared the immediate heir to the crown.

From this period there is a considerable interval, before any thing occurs that is applicable to our purpose. Upon the death of king Henry the eighth, his only son, Edward, was in the tenth year of his age. The king, whose government had been more absolute than that of any of the contemporary princes of the continent, appointed by his will sixteen executors, to whom was intrusted the whole regal authority, and twelve counsellors, who were to assist with their advice, when called upon for that purpose. The executors chose out of their own body Edward Seymour, duke of Somerset, for their president, with the title of lord protector. This nobleman speedily superseded the power of his colleagues, and by his authority a parliament was summoned in the first year of king Edward the sixth, A. D. 1547.

Such are the most considerable examples that can be drawn from the earlier periods of our history. Two, which remain, are present to the memory, I had almost said are inscribed in the heart of every true friend to his country: I mean the restoration and the revolution.

In the year 1660 the long parliament was reassembled upon the invitation of general Monk, and, having adopted some necessary measures, they dissolved themselves, and issued writs in the name of the keepers of the liberty of England for assembling a new parliament.

The parliament, by which the restoration was effected, met on the twenty fifth of April, and sat till the twenty ninth of December, full seven months after the return of king Charles the second. The first thing done after his arrival was to pass an act, confirmed by the three estates, declaring, that this was a good parliament, notwithstanding the defect of the king's writs; and its acts were confirmed by statute in the next parliament in the thirteenth year of king Charles the second, A. D. 1661.

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In the close of the year 1688, all the members, who had sat in any house of commons during the reign of king Charles the second, were called together, and there were added to them the lord mayor of London, the aldermen, and fifty of the common council. By this body an address was presented to the prince of Orange, son-in-law of king James the second, praying him to summon a convention of the representatives of England, by the mode of a circular letter to the counties and corporations, directing them to proceed to a general election. A similar address was previously presented to him by a meeting of the lords spiritual and temporal, to the number of near ninety. He complied with these addresses, and a convention parliament was summoned, which met on the twenty second of January 1689, and conferred the crown of England upon the prince and princess of Orange.

Among these instances I have purposely omitted those which occur from the death of king Charles the first to the restoration. What ever be their merits, they do not apply to the present constitution. The government during that period was sometimes an imperfect republic, sometimes a despotism, and sometimes a scene of anarchy: it was never a mixed monarchy.

The first corollary, that arises from this catalogue of examples, is, that the English constitution, if its principles are to be inferred from the practice of former times, has made a sufficient provision for cases of emergency.

The emergency must doubtless be obvious, if we expect it to justify a deviation from the forms of the constitution for the sake of adhering to its spirit. So far as the precedents I have recited are to be considered as admissible, the emergency will be found to spring, either out of the delinquency of the sovereign or his ministers on the one hand, or from his incapacity, whether from nonage or distemper, to perform his legal functions on the other. Instances of the former sort are subject to a disadvantage. The delinquency of a person in high station will afford matter for variety of opinions; the sort of remedy that is to be applied will be subject to equal uncertainty. The second class of instances are liable to fewer disputes: the nonage or incapacity of the monarch will of course be a matter of public notoriety.

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It is sufficiently curious to observe, that there is no instance of a minority in the history of Great Britain, where a legal administration or regency had been previously fixed. It always remained to be settled by parliament, if settled at all, after the necessity had actually taken place. It was thus in the minority of Henry the third, of Edward the third, and of Henry the sixth.

The example of the mental imbecility of king Henry the sixth would be exactly in point, if the transactions that followed had taken place in a period of tranquillity. But they happened in the first fermentation of the parties of York and Lancaster; nothing else could have led to the conferring the protectorate upon the pretender to the crown. It may be added, that the measure of appointing the duke of York lieutenant of the kingdom, with powers to open and hold a session of parliament, by the authority of the queen and council, seems not sufficiently conformable to the spirit of enlightened jealousy for their liberties, which at present pervades the people of England.

But these instances are too far involved in remote antiquity to be a sufficient foundation for any present proceedings. They cannot do more than corroborate and enforce the instances, that may be drawn from our later history. Those we should chiefly have in our view are the examples of the restoration and the revolution; events which took place, when mankind were more enlightened, when our constitution and our laws were better ascertained, and when the attention of Englishmen had been called by recent events to the subject of political liberty.

There is a consideration, which might be stated separately, but which is immediately involved in the question concerning the convoking of parliaments: I mean, respecting the power of the two houses of the legislature acting for the whole. This indeed did not follow upon an irregular convocation of parliament in the reign of king John, and in the latter part of the reign of king Henry the third. But in every other instance the same necessity, that obliged the two houses of parliament to assemble, obliged them to act without the intervention of a third estate.

It will probably be admitted, that the settling of the nation, supposing the present indisposition of the sovereign to continue, ought to be made by the two houses of parliament. In every

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instance but two this has been done in all similar cases, and these instances belong to the odious usurpation of Richard the third, and to the tyrannical reign of king Henry the eighth.

But a question may be started, whether the subject ought to be considered by parliament in its ordinary session, or by a convention parliament summoned and elected for this express purpose. The latter was the measure adopted in 1660 and 1688.

On the one side it may be alledged, that the appointment of a regency is a measure of much less importance, than either the entire change of the very form of government, as was the case in 1660; or the renovation of the principles of the constitution, and the transfer of the crown of Great Britain, in opposition to hereditary right and lineal succession, as was the case in 1688. It may be added, that all the regencies ever conferred by parliament, were conferred by the two houses in their ordinary session. And it may be farther observed, that an immediate head to the government is now wanting; that it would be extremely unwise to suffer the kingdom to continue in its present disjointed state for some months longer; and that, even were we to have recourse to a convention, it would be necessary, to do beforehand the very thing for which the convention would be summoned, and to confer the regency *pro tempore* till that assembly should meet.

These arguments appear to be decisive; and yet what shall be alledged on the other hand may not perhaps be unworthy of attention. Regencies have been conferred by the two houses of parliament in its ordinary session; but that was before the constitution was fixed upon its present basis. A convention is undoubtedly the mode of proceeding, most agreeable to modern precedent, and most congenial to our popular policy. It is liable to none of the objections which frequently lie against popular measures. It is no innovation; it does not lead to remote, indefinite and uncertain consequences. Another thing should be considered. It is perhaps doubtful which is the regular mode of proceeding. A convention is the most deliberate, the most solemn, and that to which no objection could hereafter be started. Parties in the state are often useful: while their object is a contest for administration, the limits of their opposition may be easily foreseen. But an opposition, contesting the hands in which the sovereign power and

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executive authority ought to be placed, would indeed be a melancholy event for this country.

I do not pretend to decide between the reasonings on the two opposite sides of this question.

Before I dismiss the inquiry respecting the power of convening a parliament, it may not be useless to recollect, how far that question is already influenced by the transactions of the present month. Previously to his indisposition, the king in council prorogued the meeting of parliament to the twentieth of November; but it was not intended that the session should commence at that time, and of consequence the notice, that they should “meet for the dispatch of business,” was omitted in the royal proclamation.¹⁰ Had that notice been inserted, it seems that they would easily have got over the authority of Mr. De Lolme, and not have found, that “the presence of the king, either real or represented, was *absolutely requisite* at the first meeting;” or that it was that presence, “which *gave life* to the legislative bodies.”

In this situation it is understood, that circular letters were written by the ministers to the members of both houses, “apprising them that they must of necessity assemble on the day to which they were prorogued, and earnestly requesting their attendance.”¹¹ Parliament accordingly met; the attendance both of lords and commons was extremely numerous; and they proceeded to adopt a resolution of adjournment, together with some other resolutions preparatory to their meeting on the fourth of December.

I do not affirm that this proceeding was not perfectly right. On the contrary it seems to follow from the arguments already adduced, that a wiser measure could not have been adopted. Still however it is to be considered, that parliament has actually met, and that it has actually performed the functions of a parliament. To

¹⁰ Cf. *Parliamentary Register; or history of the proceedings and debates of the House of Commons ... during the sixth session of the sixteenth Parliament of Great Britain*, 25 (London: Debrett, 1816), 1; *The Parliamentary History of England, from the earliest period to the year 1803*, 27 (London: Hansard, 1816), 653.

¹¹ Cf. *Parliamentary Register*, 25:2; *New Annual Register... for 1789*, 10 (1790), 92.

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adjourn themselves is a legal act, and could not be performed but by a legal authority. Thus they have ascertained an inherent virtue in parliament to assemble, without the express authority of the sovereign, conveyed to them in its ordinary and established form.

But they have done more than this: they have determined on a future meeting. Already each house has assumed the authority of a house of parliament acting separately, and it seems, that it would be idle for them to stop upon the threshold, and not, if the emergency should occur, assume the authority of a parliament acting for the welfare of the nation according to the scope of that emergency. They have already expressed their sense of this by the choice they have made of an adjournment.

The question respecting the powers and proceeding of parliament in the present conjuncture, though perhaps little inferior in importance, is to be regarded as preparatory to the decision of another question, that of the power which is now to be substituted, as the representative of royal authority. The precedents, which occur in our history, do not seem to afford much assistance in this point. But that nothing may be wanting towards enabling the reader to form a complete judgment, I will briefly state such precedents as may be deemed the most material.

When Richard the first departed from the Holy Land, he deputed by his own authority the guardianship of the realm, to Hugh de Puzas and Walter de Longchamp, chief justiciaries of England. In this appointment prince John, who failing issue of the king, and passing over as was afterwards done the claim of Arthur duke of Britany, was the immediate heir to the crown, was entirely overlooked. Longchamp was afterwards set aside by the authority of parliament, and Walter archbishop of Rouen, was substituted in his stead.

At Runnamede, in the reign of king John, twenty five persons were chosen by the barons out of their own body, under the title of conservators of the public liberties, and a power was engrossed by these persons, so extensive as nearly to annihilate the royal authority.

Upon the accession of King Henry the third, the prince being then a minor, and the kingdom almost destroyed by internal war, the earl of Pembroke, great marshal of England, was appointed by

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parliament protector of the realm. Upon the death of this nobleman, the kingdom having been restored to a state of tranquillity, Peter des Roches, bishop of Winchester, was appointed by parliament protector of the realm, and Hubert de Burgh nominated chief justiciary of England. The administration was almost solely in the hands of the justiciary.

When a delegation of the authority of king Henry the third was introduced, not as before by the minority of the prince, but by the weakness of his conduct and the factious intrigues of Simon de Montfort, a council of twenty four persons was elected by parliament, with authority to redress the grievances of the state; and this council engrossed the prerogatives of the sovereign. The same delegation was renewed five years afterwards; and a similar one to a council of nine persons was made in the year following.

Weakness and faction produced a similar measure in the reign of king Edward the second; and parliament, having obtained a commission from the prince for that purpose, elected a council of twelve with royal authority.

A council of twelve was also the regency appointed by parliament in the minority of king Edward the third.

In the minority of king Richard the second the house of commons petitioned the house of lords to appoint nine persons, who should jointly transact the public business; and their prayer was accordingly granted. The regency was virtually in the hands of the king's uncles, Lancaster, Gloucester and York, who were not included in the council of nine.

Richard, like two of his predecessors that have already been mentioned, had to encounter with personal weakness and external faction, and was ultimately deposed. In the course of his reign a council of fourteen persons was nominated by parliament, and to them the sovereign authority was transferred for a limited time.

In the minority of king Henry the sixth, the regency was vested in the uncles of that prince. The duke of Bedford was nominated by parliament protector of the realm, and as he was destined to command the armies in France, the duke of Gloucester was invested with the same dignity during the absence of his brother. Cardinal Henry Beaufort, another branch of the royal family, was also declared guardian of the royal person.

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When Henry, after having reigned several years, was attacked by an indisposition, which rendered him incapable of exercising the offices of sovereignty, the duke of York, who had begun to advance his pretensions to the crown, was appointed by parliament protector of the realm. Henry afterwards resumed his authority, which from that time was not exercised by parliamentary delegation, but when the party of his rival was triumphant. Twice did Richard, duke of York, who, though not destitute of ability, was a man of quiet and unenterprising spirit, content himself, instead of seizing upon the crown, with receiving from parliament the title and functions of protector.

When, some years after the accession of king Edward the fourth, a temporary restoration of Henry the sixth was effected, the duke of Clarence, and the earl of Warwick, surnamed the kingmaker, were declared by parliament, in consideration of the incapacity of the sovereign, guardians of the realm. This is the last instance of parliamentary delegation.

I have purposely omitted the instances, in which the sovereign by his own authority constituted a regency, in consideration of his absence from the realm. Thus Edward the third constituted his son, Edward, prince of Wales, surnamed the black prince, guardian of the kingdom. Thus William the third declared Mary, his queen, regent during his absence, and after her death appointed in similar cases a council of regency, consisting of the principal officers of state. Thus king George the first and king George the second appointed regencies during their absence on the continent, which also consisted of the principal officers of state.

King Henry the eighth assumed a similar power upon his death, and by will appointed, in consideration of the minority of his son, sixteen executors, to whom he intrusted the government of the king and kingdom. These executors out of their own body elected a protector.

Richard, duke of Gloucester, afterwards king Richard the third, was declared protector of the realm during the minority of his nephew by the authority of privy council.

The examples, that have been produced, appear some of them to operate in favour of a joint regency, and some of them in favour of the regency of a single person. It should however be recollected,

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that the regencies, if they will bear that appellation, introduced by the rebellious barons, can afford no authority. The contests of the barons were the struggles of an aristocratical power, and it was an inevitable consequence, that, when they became victorious, they should be desirous to introduce an aristocratical sovereignty. The numerous regencies during the minorities of Edward the third and Richard the second, sprung in a considerable degree from the same cause, and they were neither of them successful. In the first instance the real power was in the hands of Roger Mortimer, earl of March; and in the last instance in Lancaster and Gloucester, the uncles of Richard.

The regency of the two justiciaries in the reign of Richard the second, and of Clarence and Warwick under king Henry the sixth, will scarcely be regarded as examples of a numerous regency. The last was the result of a military confederacy; and in both instances the harmony of the two regents hardly subsisted for a moment. It needs indeed little political knowledge, to foretel that a sovereignty, vested in two persons, must always be nugatory. The joint regency in the minority of king Edward the sixth was undoubtedly constituted under the presumption, that the government of England was absolute; and this presumption will not now be admitted: they also chose a protector, and the power was vested in a single person. The joint regencies of William and of the two Georges were intended to subsist only for a short determinate period; and this circumstance affords arguments in favour of a council of regency. The remaining instances are all of the authority of a single person; the earl of Pembroke and his successors; Edward the black prince; the duke of Bedford, and the duke of Gloucester, uncles to king Henry the sixth; Richard duke of York; and Richard, duke of Gloucester, afterwards king Richard the third. Arguments of the inexpediency of a joint regency drawn from history, are undoubtedly different from arguments of illegality; but both are entitled to attention.

The observation of Mr. Hume, the historian, upon this last instance of the duke of Gloucester, deserves to be mentioned in this place. "The duke of Gloucester, being the nearest male of the royal family capable of exercising the government, seemed entitled by the customs of the realm to the office of protector; and the council,

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not waiting for the consent of parliament, made no scruple of investing him with that high dignity.”¹²

Let us then in the last place consider the precedents we have cited with a view to this maxim of Mr. Hume. In the example of king Richard the first, prince John was passed over in the nomination of the regency; but his dispositions were well understood by his brother, and no inference deserves to be drawn from the exclusion of so unprincipled and profligate a character. In the minority of king Henry the third the regents were not of the royal family; but then neither was there any individual of that family capable of exercising the government. The encroachments of the barons are to be passed over, for the reasons that have already been assigned. The parliamentary regency, during the minority of king Edward the third, amounted indeed to an evident exclusion of the earls of Norfolk and Kent, brothers to the late sovereign, and of Henry, earl of Lancaster, his near kinsman. But this was evidently an irregular act. The queen dowager Isabella, and her paramour, the earl of March, were in reality at the head of the government, and they well knew how to defeat the attempts of a council of regency, though they could not have counteracted with impunity the regency of a prince of the blood. In the minority of Richard the second a council of regency was also appointed, and no protector; but the protectorate, as I have already observed, was virtually in the hands of the king’s uncles. In the minority of Henry the sixth it was expressly so. In the reign of Edward the third, the prince of Wales was constituted pro tempore guardian of the realm. The duke of York, protector during the imbecility of Henry the sixth, was the first prince of the blood capable of holding the reins of government. The duke of Gloucester during the minority of Edward the fifth, is the instance that led to Mr. Hume’s remark. The regency of Clarence and Warwick resembles too much the case of the commanders of an army resting upon their arms; but Clarence sufficiently answers the historian’s description. The regency of these two noblemen, as well as the first and second regencies of

¹² David Hume (1711-76); his *The history of England, from the invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688* (1754-62), new edn., corrected, 8 vols. (Dublin, 1775), 3:290.

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Richard, duke of York, was expressly limited to the majority of the prince of Wales, son of king Henry the sixth. In the case of Edward the sixth no prince of the blood was excluded. The duke of Somerset, lord protector, was the brother of the king's mother.

From this summary it appears, that the precedents upon the subject of a regency are not perfectly conclusive. Upon the whole they are greatly favourable to the regency of a single person, and that person the first prince of the blood. It was an accurate knowledge of the circumstances of these various cases, that led Mr. Hume to the decision I have quoted.

I proceed, from the consideration of the subject in an historical view, to enquire into the light that may be thrown upon it from the reason of the thing, whether we consider it in a view general and abstract, or as connected with our free constitution.

Why is a regency at this moment the subject of general expectation? Because we stand in need of a head to the executive government, a centre to the proceedings of administration. But the advantages we shall derive from such a head will certainly be more complete, if the regency be vested in a single person. Why has monarchy been made a part of our constitution? Because without this ingredient our government can never be active, energetic and respectable. Why has a minority been always considered, as a circumstance to be deplored in any government? Because a minority is almost necessarily feeble, disjointed and inactive. Such are the considerations that arise upon a first view of the subject; let us neither give them an implicit credit, nor refuse them an impartial consideration.

The general topics of comparison between a free state and a despotic one, are too common to all writers upon the subject of government, for it to be necessary that I should state them with considerable minuteness. Liberty cultivates in the mind of man the sentiment of independence, the consciousness of moral agency, the principle of self reverence, and those generous and dignified feelings that prepare us for the pursuit of heroic virtue.

Has despotism then any recommendations? It has recommendations of the greatest moment. It prevents faction, it concentrates our efforts, it curbs our irregularities and our vices. If we could always be secure of a governor, perfectly virtuous and perfectly wise, there

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is no doubt that an absolute government would be the best that could be chosen. But unfortunately, so far from princes being better than their subjects, they are usually worse. Every thing that enters into their education, the adulation to which they are accustomed from their infancy, tends to cherish their passions, to give the reins to their vices, and to destroy that sobriety and good sense, which perhaps are the only monitors they could safely trust.

It is this comparison of the benefits of liberty and despotism, which has led so many of the writers upon politics to prefer a mixed government. It is for this reason that the monarchical branch has been considered as a valuable feature in our constitution. Does it not seem to follow, that, wherever we can obtain the advantages of absolute government without risking any incroachment upon our liberty, we ought to embrace those advantages? Is there any danger, that, in placing the regency in the hands of a single person, we shall infringe in any degree upon the freedom of our constitution?

There is another consideration, not less forcible, than the consideration of strength and efficiency. I mean, that of the accountableness of the ministers of the executive power to the two houses of parliament. If we are to be governed by a joint regency, it is probable some of those ministers will stand in the place, and represent the person of the sovereign. It has been said to be a maxim of our law, that the king can do no wrong. This maxim has been rejected by some modern lawyers of considerable eminence; but it will be admitted as a matter of expediency, that the king is not accountable, but in the last resort, and for the adoption of measures, which almost amount to a subversion of the government. Is this sacredness of the person of the prince, to be transferred to the archbishop of Canterbury or the lord chancellor, to the first lord of the treasury or president of the council? It will be answered, that the regency is merely the representative of the sovereign. But this, however plausible it may appear, is not true. The sovereign they represent, is a name, and not a reality. They represent the place and office of the sovereign, and not any individual that holds it.

Let us push the consideration of responsibility a little farther. The king is not merely the seat of the executive power, he is also the third branch of the legislature. Shall the regency represent him

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in the former of these capacities, and not in the latter? For the present, as I have said, we are obliged to supersede the forms of the constitution, for the sake of adhering to its spirit. Because the two houses of parliament must now act for the whole in a case of emergency, must they continue to do so for an indefinite period? This is too absurd to be imagined.

I resort to the other side of the alternative, and suppose a council of regency made up of the heir apparent, of some remoter branches of the reigning family, and of a certain number of private subjects, to be constituted the representative of the third branch of the legislature. The representative did I say? No: they are the thing itself. Representation here is impossible. This council is to exercise at their pleasure the power of rejecting a law which has already passed both houses of parliament.

The royal negative has not for many years been called into action. Why is this? Because the proceeding is insidious; because the two houses of the legislature being irritated, have an object against which to direct their vengeance. They would fix upon the minister by whose advice the sovereign had acted. The responsibility of office would make him accountable for his conduct. But in the case we have supposed responsibility is at an end. The minister and the sovereign are the same. The invidiousness, the caution, that induce an individual, standing in the place of the sovereign, to withhold his negative, would be lost when the sovereignty was placed in a council. They would countenance each other in the enterprise; we should be governed by the narrowest and therefore the worst of aristocracies.

We are accustomed to the prerogatives of royalty, as they are vested in the king; and we perhaps scarcely recollect what they would be, when vested in a minister. The minister has then the power of peace and war. He can call parliament and dissolve it. He can hasten its session or procrastinate it. He can oblige parliament to sit, when the season of the year has emptied the metropolis: or he can put a sudden close to their sitting in the moment of the most important deliberation. He appoints to all offices of trust and emolument. He has the disposal of the civil list, of the secret service money, and of every engine of corrupt and sinister influence.

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But I shall be told, all this he has already. Without a real as well as a nominal trust, no man of spirit would accept the great offices of administration. The prerogatives then are nominally in the crown, but really in the servants of the crown. And is there indeed no difference? By the old constitution the minister can be removed at a moment's warning. By the new constitution that is now proposed, he is permanent and immutable. He may bid defiance to every political commotion, short of an intestine war. But the regency which parliament created, parliament may change? Indeed! And who can assure us, that a board of sovereigns, once constituted, shall be displaced so easily? Do the prerogatives I have mentioned afford them no means of procuring to themselves friends, and combining a predominant faction? It is easier to refuse sovereign authority, than to withdraw it. If parliament grant it for a limited time, the limitation will be useless and nugatory. If parliament grant it for an unlimited period, there would probably be lawyers found subtle enough to prove, that they had not the right of resuming it. I am then inevitably brought back to my former inference, *the government of a council of regency would be a government by the narrowest, and therefore the worst of aristocracies.*

I dismiss the consideration of responsibility, and proceed to some other topics that deserve our attention. I willingly quit a supposition, that appears to include in it every thing that should alarm the true friend to his country, and recur to the other side of the dilemma; the regency of a single person, and that person the heir apparent to the crown.¹³ At first sight it would appear to be a happy circumstance, that the heir apparent is by his age capable of exercising the functions of government. All the arguments in favour of substituting the nearest competent male of the royal family, operate with double force in his favour. He cannot aspire to a crown upon which he has no claim, like king Richard the third; he can have no interest in undermining the reigning family, like the duke of York, the father of Richard. If the indisposition of the

¹³ George, Prince of Wales (1762-1830, Prince Regent 1811-20, King of Great Britain and Ireland and of Hanover 1820-30), who was in close alliance with the Foxite Whigs up to 1811.

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sovereign should unfortunately prove incurable, the situation of the kingdom is then to be regarded, as virtually the same with that, which would follow upon the demise of the sovereign. The person or persons in whose hands the executive power is vested, is then to be regarded, as nominally a regent, but really a king. Is it our intention to set aside the prince of Wales from the succession to the crown? If that measure should be thought advisable, would it not be better to vest the sole regency in the next heir, rather than substitute an executive council, and thus subvert the principles of the constitution. The principles of our government as much require the succession of the next heir not labouring under a legal disqualification, upon the incurable malady of the sovereign, as upon his actual demise. Let this then be the point of view, in which the question is considered by parliament and the people. Let us not determine upon a great and fundamental question, while we imagine we only decide upon a subordinate and inconsiderable one.

But the other side of the supposition may also be taken, and, as it appears that the worst consequences would follow upon the permanent institution of a joint regency, it behoves us to enquire, whether there is any mischief to be feared from the temporary investing of the prince of Wales with the sole regency. In this case he is to possess and exercise for a time all the functions of royalty, and he is then to descend from the situation of a sovereign into that of a subject. Vicissitudes, like these, are undoubtedly calculated to try the temper of the human mind. I am considering the subject in an abstract view, and it would be greatly out of my design, to examine how far our hopes or our fears in such a situation would be increased, by our knowledge of the real character of the heir apparent. One thing is entitled to observation. If the dispositions of the prince were ambitious and criminal, they would necessarily labour under considerable restraint. The constitution of our country is free; and arbitrary and violent measures cannot so easily be attempted in a free country, as in an absolute one. The age in which we live is greatly enlightened; and we are very strongly influenced by a sense of propriety and decorum. Were the son therefore in any degree to counteract the interest or the welfare of the father, he would have little chance of success in so odious an undertaking. I have admitted, that for a man to be one day a sovereign and the

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next day a subject is an undesirable circumstance. It remains for the people of England to balance this single disadvantage, with the more numerous ones of a joint regency.

It is somewhat remarkable that at this very moment the administration of two great countries of Europe is vested in the heirs apparent of each crown respectively, in consideration of the imbecility and indisposition of the sovereigns.¹⁴

The consideration of the last point I have discussed, that of the constitutional tendency of the question, is of all others the most important; but I should leave my view of the subject imperfect, if I did not offer a few remarks upon the probable effects that its decision may produce, upon the present state of Great Britain and of Europe.

The weakness of a joint administration has scarcely need to be illustrated. An executive council conducting the affairs of a state, has always been either divided into two factions, or kept together by an external opposition, that seemed to threaten its very existence. If we suppose the latter to happen, can we expect, that a government, kept in continual alarm, can form comprehensive plans, can digest liberal systems of policy, can pursue its object with unintermitted exertion, and can sow the seeds of future dignity and happiness with the confidence of surviving to water and to protect them? The consequences of faction in the executive council must be equally injurious. Of these factions one will probably be predominant at one time, and another at another. If it be otherwise, from whence can the faction, that uniformly predominates, conceive so much alarm, or apprehend so imminent danger, as from a factious minority, that lives in its very vitals? Let it also be considered, of what members this council, whose harmony is so

¹⁴ Godwin alludes to Denmark and, most likely, Spain. When Christian VII (1749-1808, King of Denmark and Norway 1766-1808) lapsed into insanity in 1771, the court physician, John Frederick Struensee (1731-72), was made Regent with unlimited powers, but was overthrown a year later, after which Christian's brother, Frederick VI (1768-1839, King of Denmark and Norway 1808-39), was made Regent. When Charles III (1716-1788, King of Spain 1759-88) died on 13 December 1788, he was succeeded by his son, Charles IV (1748-1819, King of Spain 1788-1819), who was widely regarded as incompetent, if not imbecilic.

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essential to the public welfare, will in the present instance be composed. Of the prince of Wales, who cannot but conceive himself deeply injured, in what he has been taught to regard as his hereditary right; and of the ministers, who have successfully exerted themselves to remove him from the eminence to which it was his duty to aspire, and to sink him into an individual member of a complicated sovereignty.

To induce us therefore to tolerate this project for a moment, it should seem to be necessary to suppose, that society is at present in one of those unaccountable trances, the attendants of which are supineness, inactivity, and oblivion, and that she is waiting as it were to recruit her strength in tranquillity, before she can be expected to produce any considerable exertions. A sluggish and aristocratical government might have suited with the condition of mankind in the ages of darkness and ignorance, but is in the last degree unfit for the close of the eighteenth century.

Europe and the human mind are in a state of universal fermentation. The demon of war has lighted up her torch, and the flames of discord appear rapidly spreading from one end of Europe to the other. The north and the east are already in arms; Turkey, Austria, Russia and Sweden. Denmark has sheathed an unwilling sword. Prussia is at this moment in a state of equilibrium and uncertainty.¹⁵ If Prussia engage, it is a matter understood that England appears as her ally,¹⁶ and France must then enlist herself

¹⁵ Godwin alludes to the second Russo-Turkish War (1787-92), begun by Turkey in response to Russia's aggressive policy of expansion south towards the Black Sea, in which Austria aided Russia (1788-91) against the Ottoman Empire. Taking advantage of the Russo-Turkish conflict, Sweden made war on Russia (1788-90) in an unsuccessful attempt to recapture Finnish provinces northwest of St Petersburg, which had been lost in the Russo-Swedish War of 1741-43. In September 1788, Denmark, which had signed a mutual defence treaty with Russia in 1773, marched against the southern frontier of Sweden, but, after British diplomatic intervention, an armistice was declared in October. Prussia encouraged the Poles in their struggle for independence from Russia (but did not supply military aid).

¹⁶ A treaty of defensive alliance was concluded between Britain and Prussia in August 1788, following Britain's support of Prussian military intervention in the Dutch Patriot Revolution.

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on the opposite side. This would be by no means an ordinary war. If the present system is to be followed, we are to engage with new allies and new enemies. We are to drop Russia, our commercial friend; we are to drop Austria, whom half a century ago we exerted every nerve to preserve from destruction.¹⁷ We are to enter into concert with Prussia, whose alliance was a principal feature of the war of lord Chatham, a war not more brilliant, than it was expensive and ruinous.¹⁸ France has for ages been the ally of Constantinople: the Turks are now made over to the court of Great Britain. France has held the Swedes in a situation little superior to that of tributary: we are now to engage in war for the preservation of Sweden.¹⁹ Surely so extraordinary a situation calls for strong and adventurous councils. If the present system be broken through, it must be by no common exertions. If the peace of Europe be

¹⁷ The commercial treaty between Britain and Russia expired in 1786 and was temporarily prolonged for another twelve months, after which it was allowed to lapse. Godwin refers to the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-48), a conglomeration of related campaigns ignited by Prussia's invasion of Silesia, in which Britain, alarmed by the threat to the balance of power in Europe posed by France's successful support of the Bavarian claim to the throne of the Holy Roman Empire, became Austria's main foreign ally – but not one as committed as Godwin implies to preserving the territorial integrity of the Habsburg lands.

¹⁸ In the Seven Years War (1756-63), Britain allied itself with Prussia, reversing the recent enmity between the two countries, partly in order to protect its continental possession, the Electorate of Hanover, from the threat of French takeover, and partly to strengthen its position in overseas colonial struggles with France. William Pitt the Elder (1708-78, first Earl of Chatham, virtual Prime Minister 1756-61 and 1766-68) brought Britain victoriously through the Seven Years War and secured its transformation into an imperial power. For Godwin's earlier verdict on Pitt's conduct during the Seven Years War, see *The history of the life of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham* (1783); *Political and philosophical writings*, 1: 52-54.

¹⁹ The British ambassador at Constantinople was widely suspected of encouraging the Turks to make war on Russia, while the Austrian and French ambassadors urged a policy of reconciliation. In October 1788, Britain, acting in concert with Prussia, promised military support to Sweden, which led Denmark to withdraw from the Swedish territories; but neither British nor Prussian troops were deployed.

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preserved, it must be by the wisdom, the dignity and the firmness of Great Britain, acting as a mediator.

The internal struggles of the different countries of Europe are entitled to a degree of attention. The democratical spirit, which had its beginning in the British colonies of America, will not easily be extinguished.²⁰ Of the different countries in Europe they were first propagated in Holland, and, though they were overborne for a time, the fermentation continues. The present state of the Poles is critical. In Sweden we have seen the extraordinary spectacle of an army, entering into treaty with a foreign power, without the concurrence of their sovereign; the throne of Gustavus the third is shaken to its basis.²¹ Of the present situation of France it is unnecessary to speak. The transactions, that respect her parliaments, her notables, her states general, are matters of universal notoriety; and he must be no contemptible adept in politics, who can predict their consequences.²² Whilst Europe is in this state of universal concussion, ought we voluntarily to submit to a complex government and divided sovereignty?

²⁰ Britain's thirteen American colonies gained their freedom in the War of American Independence (1776-83), and subsequently established a federal republic under a president.

²¹ Godwin alludes to the Anjala League, a group of Swedish and Finnish army officers in the Finnish town of Anjala, who in July 1788 declared that they would not serve in an offensive war without the consent of the Swedish parliament, after which they sent a letter to the court of Russia proposing peace negotiations. (When Gustavus called upon the officers to repudiate the letter in return for a full pardon, they refused and were arrested in January 1789.)

²² Godwin alludes to the series of attempts from 1786 to 1788 by Louis XVI (1754-93, King of France 1774-92) and his ministers to reform the French finances, which were opposed by the *Parlements* (the major courts of appeal under the *ancien régime*) and blocked by a specially convoked Assembly of Notables. In 1787-88 the *Parlement* of Paris successfully urged the election of an Estates General for the approval of tax reforms. During the intensely fought election campaign of autumn 1788, calls for a limited monarchy and participation of representatives of the nation in government gained strength.

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From the consideration of other countries I revert to our own. I enter not into the question respecting our finances and the liquidation of our national debt; though that be of the utmost importance. I enquire not whether the schemes of administration upon this head are wise in their structure, or will prove effectual in their progress; though that be an enquiry that deserves much consideration. I have nothing to do with administrations. I simply confine myself to the state of the human mind, as it appears in this island. The progress of knowledge has been great and extensive. It has been advancing for more than two centuries, and, like the power of gravitation, the farther it proceeds the more it appears to be accelerated. It is impossible to set bounds to it; and its effects will certainly be considerable, not merely upon the conduct of individuals, but upon the state of society. It is perhaps happy for us, that, in the political characters existing among us, there is an ample portion of ability, genius, and spirit. They are to be found in administration, they are to be found in opposition. The assistance of such men, in the prospect we have before us, must be no mean advantage. It remains for us to consider whether we shall adopt a measure, that amounts to the perpetual exclusion of many of those characters, from the most distant hope of serving their country in active situations.

The questions I have been considering are too big for party. I have confidence enough in the present leaders on either side, to believe they will be sensible of this. It is impossible that administration should be so mean in their views, and so despicable in their feelings, as to study for the best way of preserving their own situations, when the welfare and the constitution of their country are at stake. This is no time for coalitions, and political negotiations between the opposite leaders. Let every thing be done in a way candid, manly and unreserved, but let the government be committed to its new possessor unshackled. It is of the extremest importance, that the transactions of the present crisis should bear the stamp of fairness and harmony. Let us not be distracted with disputes, when we should be co-operating with united hearts, for the preservation of our constitution, the vindication of our liberties and the existence of our country.

APPENDIX.

The following passages from two several patents recorded in parliament, upon occasion of the appointment of Richard, duke of York, to the office of protector, 32 Hen. VI. A. D. 1454; which passages were repeated in the patents of the following year; may contribute to the satisfaction of the curious reader.

“Henricus, &c. Nos,— de avisamento et assensu dominorum spiritualium et temporalium, quam de assensu communitatis regni nostri Angliae,— Ordinavimus et constituimus — Ricardum, ducem Eborum,—dicti regni nostri Angliae, et ecclesiae Anglicanae protectorem et defensorem, ac consiliarium nostrum principalem.— Auctoritate dicti ducis, quo ad exercitium et occupationem oneris protectoris et defensoris praedictorum regni et ecclesiae omnino cessante, cum sive quando Edwardus, filius noster primogenitus, ad annos discretionis pervenerit. Praesentibus literis nostris patentibus, nec non vigore et effectu earundem, extunc minime valituris, si dictus Edwardus, cum ad huiusmodi annos pervenerit, onus protectoris et defensoris praedictorum super se assumere voluerit.”—

“Henricus, &c. Nos,— de avisamento et assensu,— ordinavimus et constituimus, quod Edwardus, carissimus filius noster primogenitus, cum sive quando ad annos discretionis pervenerit, regni nostri Angliae et ecclesiae Anglicanae protector et defensor, ac principalis consiliarius noster sit et nominetur,— si idem filius noster, cum ad huiusmodi annos pervenerit, onus protectoris et defensoris praedictorum super se assumere voluerit.”—

[*William Godwin*]

Rotuli Parliamentorum, Vol. V.
p. 243, 288.²³

THE END.

²³ 'Henry, etc. We—by the advice and assent of the lords spiritual and temporal, as by the assent of the commons of our kingdom of England—have here ordained and constituted—Richard, duke of York—protector and defender of our said kingdom of England and of the church of England, and chief of our counsellors.—The authority of the said duke, as far as the exercise and occupation of the charge of protector and defender of the said kingdom and church, wholly ceasing, when or at what time Edward, our firstborn son, shall have come to years of discretion. These our present letters patent, and also their force and effect, shall be of no validity, if the said Edward, when he shall have come to such years, shall have wished to take upon himself the charge of protector and defender aforesaid.'—

'Henry, etc. We—by advice and assent—have ordained and constituted, that Edward, our dearest firstborn son, when or at what time he shall have come to years of discretion, shall be and shall be called protector and defender of our kingdom of England, and our chief counsellor,—if our same son, when he shall have come to such years, shall have wished to take upon himself the charge of protector and defender aforesaid.'— *Rolls of Parliament*, Vol. V. pp. 243, 288.

REFLEXIONS
ON THE
CONSEQUENCES
OF
HIS MAJESTY'S RECOVERY
FROM
HIS LATE INDISPOSITION.
IN
A LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF
ENGLAND.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR G. G. J. AND J. ROBINSON, PATERNOSTER-ROW.
1789.

[*William Godwin*]

TO THE
PEOPLE OF ENGLAND.

FEBRUARY 16, 1789.

The mental alienation of a Sovereign, is a case that has seldom occurred in the history of the world. Providence, that has undoubtedly led nations as well as individuals to the obedience of wisdom through the school of affliction, has not often seen fit to distress a people with so signal calamity. You cannot therefore be sufficiently enlightened by the examples of former ages; you must recur to the principles upon which all governments are founded. In this recourse, and in the right application of these principles, it is only by attending to the united efforts of many understandings that you can be preserved from mistake and injury.

I am myself unbiassed and impartial. The faculties I possess have been devoted to your service. The vigils of a life, now arrived at its meridian, have been spent in the investigation of political truth; and it has been my ardent desire to apply the result of my enquiries to the service of my country. I am unconnected with party. In what I have to offer I may myself be deceived; but you may rest assured I will not willingly deceive you in the smallest trifle.

Do not mistake the object of these professions. Do not imagine I desire to be credited upon my bare word. The direct contrary is my intention. By advancing my claim with no common firmness, I am anxious to rouse your vigilance. I would have you carefully watch every step of my argument. I have no doubt, that the farther I am heard, the more clearly will it appear to every man of discernment, that I am too daring for party, and too honest for faction.

It is only integrity, open, unquestionable integrity, that can shelter me amidst the extreme delicacies of the subject I have to treat; but that shield is broad enough for my protection. Ministers have been known, in the sunshine of their power, who have allowed personal feeling to get the better of public utility; who have trenched upon the liberty of the press, for the poor gratification of personal revenge. But the man is yet to be found, who would make an

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example of another, because he was the friend of his country; and hold him up to public vengeance, because he was bold enough to inculcate salutary truth. This kind of persecution I do not court; but certain it is, from this kind of persecution I would not fly.

But, though to the threats of power and the frowns of greatness I am invulnerable, there is a view of my subject in which I feel the extremest sensibility. I observe my countrymen universally impressed with a sensation of joy. I hear you exclaim – “The sovereign is recovered: we shall no longer afford a melancholy spectacle in the eyes of Europe: we are no longer reduced to grope after the principles of the constitution amidst the musty rolls of three centuries back, and of a period of civil confusion: we are returning to the mild and well-poised direction of affairs, under which we have so long flourished.” When I observe this general alacrity of mind, can I refrain from observing? – “Alas! who then am I, that I should oppose the sentiments of an united nation; that, when every heart is expanded with gratitude and pleasure, I should come forward with a melancholy countenance, and an ill-boding voice, to inform you that this joy is deceitful; and that the circumstances which occasion it may be attended with the most fatal effects?” I feel something within me, that tells me I was not formed to mar the general joy, and to interrupt the most amiable and delightful ebullitions of the soul, by an ill-timed and misanthropic severity.

But there is a consideration, my countrymen, that at once puts to flight the idea of an indulgent forbearance. It is, that indulgence now may be pregnant with ruin hereafter; that it were better that a momentary effusion, an intemperance of the soul which prevents you from discerning the irradiations of reason, should be suspended, than that you should plunge blindfold from a precipice; the very recollection of which makes me shudder.

In reviewing the situation of my country, one of the first things that occurred to me was what I have already stated – that there are few similar instances upon record in the history of the world. I am sorry I must now add, that those instances have been unfortunate. To call them to your recollection may, by interested men, be thought invidious; to reasonable men it cannot fail to appear salutary. Fortunately for us, I am at liberty to pass over with perfect

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security such monsters as Caligula and others; men indeed who suffered an alienation of mind, but whose alienation appears to have sprung from the ferocious barbarity of their natures, as it led them to the commission of still more atrocious barbarities. In the character of our present sovereign, we have a perfect security against the revival of scenes, the most infamous that ever stained the annals of mankind. He, who never authorized one act of deliberate torture, would not, if he could, in any state of mind, be the perpetrator of such nefarious wickedness.

Two instances occur in modern history as favourable, if we consider them under the head of personal character, as could possibly be wished. Charles the Sixth of France, and Henry the Sixth of England, appear to have been both of them of dispositions mild, amiable, and benevolent. They sought the happiness of the people, though they found – their destruction! The reign of each is beside sufficiently long, to enable us to form a perfectly competent judgment of the consequences their situation and government were likely to produce.

The reign of Charles the Sixth extended from the year 1380 to the year 1422, through a period of something more than forty-two years. He succeeded Charles the Wise, a prince, who whatever defects we may impute to him, governed his country with a steady hand and uniform measures, and reduced the kingdom to a state of tranquility and regular obedience, very uncommon in those barbarous ages. The young monarch, who acceded to the crown in the thirteenth year of his age, was left in the hands of his three uncles, the duke of Anjou, the duke of Berry, and Philip the Hardy, first duke of Burgundy. Being naturally of an easy and pliable disposition, he submitted to their control much longer than the regulations of the monarchy required; and at length assumed the reins of government in the year 1388, at the instigation of his brother the duke of Orleans.

It was in the year 1393, that he was first seized with the symptoms of insanity. He was then engaged in a military expedition against a rebellious subject, and happening casually to be left almost alone in the course of the march, a figure dressed in white burst from an adjacent forest, and seizing the bridle of his horse, commanded him to desist from his expedition. The unfortunate

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monarch concluded the appearance to be preternatural; and soon after falling into a transport of violence, exclaimed that he was betrayed, and wounded several of his attendants. He was re-conducted to Paris, and appeared to recover his reason. But, being present at a masquerade, and chusing a dress composed of resin and other combustible materials, he was very dangerously burned with a torch, by the duke of Orleans; and, in consequence of the terror he suffered, became more distempered than ever.

The scenes which follow are such as humanity would wish to consign to eternal oblivion, were it not that the records of past ages form one of the most valuable sources of instruction for the present and for future ages. The people of Paris, not being able to persuade themselves that what had happened at the ball was the fruit of accident, were exasperated against the duke of Orleans; and the enterprising Burgundy, taking advantage of their disposition, seized upon the reins of government. But Isabella of Bavaria, the consort of Charles, was of too ambitious a character to suffer his usurpation, and accordingly formed a coalition with the duke of Orleans, by whose assistance she changed the administration of affairs. This coalition soon degenerated into a connection of the most disgraceful kind. Isabella forgot her husband and her king; the duke of Orleans, who was already married, was or pretended to be enamoured with her, and they lived in open adultery. During these scenes of shameless profligacy, every personal attention to the unfortunate sovereign was disregarded, and in one of the paroxysms of his malady he was suffered to remain five months without going to bed, without changing his linen, without applying any remedy to a wound he had made by keeping a piece of iron for some time buried in his flesh, and which threatened a mortification.

So unnatural a situation of things could not continue. But the remedy, as too frequently happens in these cases, was worse than the disease. The detestation, which the names of Isabella and her paramour universally excited, encouraged John the Fearless, the son and successor of Philip the Hardy, duke of Burgundy, to cause his political rival to be assassinated in the very streets of Paris. To this atrocious proceeding, he added the dangerous precedent of a public avowal and justification. His conduct upon this occasion was the source of the famous controversy respecting tyrannicide,

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which was at length authoritatively decided against the partizans of the duke of Burgundy in the council of Constance.

John the Fearless may be regarded as one of the most mischievous characters in the annals of history. He was munificent in his transactions, affable in his manners, and skilled in all the arts by which popularity is most successfully courted. In every reverse of fortune the bulk of the inhabitants of Paris were inviolably attached to him. But it was impossible that his boundless ambition, his unprincipled conduct, and still more the open murder of the first prince of the blood, should not excite against him many enemies. The partizans of the duke of Orleans, who now bore the appellation of Armagnacs, from the name of their present leader, with the queen at their head, maintained a perpetual struggle against his assumed power. Each party by turns got the wretched shadow of a sovereign into their hands, and authorised their proceedings with his name. His returns of reason, as they were called, and his relapses to manifest insanity, frequently recurred three or four times in the course of a year. In the first case he was a passive puppet in the hands of his keepers, and in the last they openly usurped the government without being at the trouble to seek for so much as a pretence to cover their odious proceedings.

A situation like this naturally led to the most fatal extremes. The contending parties had laid aside all pretence to character, and the action of the Duke of Burgundy seemed to authorise every thing that was atrocious. Both sides flew to arms, and the nation was speedily desolated with all the horrors of a civil war. The lowest orders of the metropolis were enlisted into a sort of militia, for the sake of committing mutual depredations. The butchers adhered to the duke of Burgundy, and the carpenters to the count of Armagnac. The English were called in to decide these intestine contests, and our crafty Henry the Fourth sent auxiliaries first to the Duke of Burgundy, and afterwards to the party of Orleans. Each year was productive of a peace, and in the next war broke out with redoubled fury. An event which took place at this time decided the balance. The insolent treatment of the duke of Burgundy towards the dauphin Lewis, his son in law, and who had lately taken some share in the government, threw the young prince into the hands of

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the Armagnacs, and obliged the duke to retire to his hereditary dominions.

There was but one thing wanting to complete the misfortunes of a devoted kingdom – foreign invasion, and conquest. The duke of Burgundy, in his present disgrace, once more solicited assistance from England, and Henry the Fifth, who had succeeded to the crown, and was of a vigorous and enterprising disposition, meditated an interposition, more serious than that of his father had been. He landed upon the coast of France on the fourteenth of August 1415, and two months after gained the celebrated battle of Agincourt, one of the greatest victories that ever was obtained over any nation. But however considerable was this advantage, he was obliged soon after by his inability to support the expences of an uninterrupted war, to return home, and to leave the fruits of his success to the disposal of an uncertain hereafter.

The parties in France, instead of being induced to reconciliation, by so formidable an attack on their common country, seemed determined to proceed to greater extremities than ever. The dauphin Lewis, alternately exposed to the insults of both parties, died of grief and mortification. The count of Armagnac, in the height of his power, had dared to seize the treasures of the queen, to defray the expences of the war. His party now proceeded a step farther, and caused Bois-bourdon, who was at this time her favoured lover, to be thrown into the Seine. The dauphin Charles, afterwards Charles the Victorious, was said to be privy to this piece of vengeance. In the mean time the queen, irritated at these repeated attacks, entered into the party of the duke of Burgundy, received him to her bed, and agreed to place the crown upon his head to the exclusion of her son. By her assistance he was admitted into the city of Paris, and his entrance was distinguished by the massacre of the count of Armagnac, constable of France, the high chancellor, five bishops, and a number of persons of every sex and age. The air was rendered pestilential by the effects of these barbarities, and the plague carried off multitudes of those whom the sword had spared.

John the Fearless had now triumphed in what is called successful villainy for a period of twelve years. In reality, he had been far from successful. He was perpetually haunted by the demons of guilt and remorse. In his palace he had an apartment constructed

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entirely of stone, and in this he shut himself up every night. In passing from place to place, he caused the persons of his suite to leave a considerable interval before and behind him, that no concealed assassin might approach him at unawares. But, notwithstanding these miserable precautions, he had been more than once exposed to the knife of the bravo. At length he met with the fate he merited. An interview was proposed between him and the dauphin, in order to effect a compromise of the two parties. The scene of their meeting was upon a bridge; an equal number of both parties were admitted, and a barrier was erected between them for their mutual safety. An indiscreet partisan of the dauphin leaped the barrier, others followed, the suite of the duke of Burgundy were astonished and put to flight, and the duke himself killed.

In the midst of this scene of turbulence and confusion, Henry the Fifth once again landed upon the coast of France. A member of the conclave of cardinals endeavoured to dissuade him from his project. Henry answered with apparent reason and justice: "Do you not see that France, urged by an infernal fury, knows no distinction of subject or prince, and has no power of recovering her proper tranquillity? Tranquillity in such a country, can only be the fruit of conquest, and the gift of a victor. The kingdom demands a master, and I am the master they want. It is God that leads me by the hand, and urges me to deliver this people from their own madness, and restore them to tranquillity and happiness, by placing on their throne their lawful sovereign, the descendant of king Edward the Third."¹

The miseries occasioned by Henry in the pursuit of this object were extreme. In the battle of Agincourt, he was obliged on a sudden alarm to direct a general massacre of his prisoners. At the siege of Rouen, twenty thousand persons were turned out of the walls, and suffered to perish with cold and famine between the foot of those walls and the camp of the English. The invasion was at length attended with complete success. The English monarch was admitted into the city of Paris. Isabella, unrelenting in her hatred to

¹ This speech and its context do not appear in any of the sources cited by Godwin (see note 2) and were probably invented by him to suit his argument.

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her son, declared herself in his favour. The duke of Burgundy retained the popular affections even in the tomb; and the dauphin, who was probably innocent of his murder, became the victim of their vengeance. He was proscribed by the highest authorities in the kingdom, and declared incapable of the succession; and upon the death of his father, which speedily followed, Henry the Sixth, yet in his cradle, was proclaimed king of France. Charles the Victorious had not completely recovered his dominions till the year 1454; and thus the calamities of more than half a century resulted from the alienation of mind of his unfortunate predecessor.*

The latter half of the reign of our Henry the Sixth was not less miserable; but, as the events that distinguish it are better known to the generality of my countrymen, I shall dwell upon them with less minuteness. The malady of this monarch first appeared by indubitable symptoms, in the year 1454, but the partial imbecility that had preceded it had long rendered his court a scene of faction and disorder. The first minister was violently suspected of having been the murderer of the king's uncle; and, when Henry was no longer capable of maintaining the appearance of royalty, the expedient to which his family was driven was no other, than that of calling to the regency the duke of York, who claimed a prior right to the crown to that of the house of Lancaster who sat upon the throne.

* Histoire de France par Velly, Villaret, and Garnier, tom. 11, 12, 13, 14. Histoire de la Querelle de Philippe de Valois et d'Edouard III. par M. Gaillard. Henault, Abrégé Chronologique. Observations sur l'Histoire de France par l'abbé de Mably.[Godwin's note]²

² Paul François Velly (1707-59), Claude Villaret (?1715-66), and Jean-Jacques Garnier (1729-1805), their *Histoire de France, depuis L'établissement de la monarchie jusqu'au regne de Louis XIV* (1755-99); Gabriel-Henri Gaillard (1726-1806), his *Histoire de la querelle de Philippe de Valois et d'Edouard III, continuée sous leurs successeurs* (1774); Charles-Jean-François Hénault (1685-1770), his *Nouvel abrégé chronologique de l'histoire de France* (1749, frequently revised and reissued); Gabriel Bonnot, abbé de Mably (1709-85), his *Observations sur l'histoire de France* (1765).

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Here again, as in France, the resource was brought into play of causing the monarch in a few months to be declared once more capable of performing the royal functions. The duke of York refused to submit to the decision, and the consequence was a battle, in which the unfortunate king was made prisoner. In the beginning of the contest the rights of the prince of Wales were respected, and it was expressly declared that the regency should devolve upon him as soon as he became major. But civil contention at length opened the way to the most odious extremities; and the son of Henry, a prince of the most amiable manners and the most promising hopes, was at length declared by parliament incapable of the succession. It is perhaps unavoidable in such cases as these that a considerable influence should not devolve upon the royal consort. In France, as we have seen, Isabella of Bavaria was the stain of her sex, and the blot of human nature. After having dishonoured the bed of her husband, she contracted an unnatural antipathy to her son, and strained every nerve to transfer his rightful inheritance to a foreigner. In England Margaret of Anjou was a pattern of heroism and maternal attachment. The claim of Edward, prince of Wales, maintained by her intrepidity, was the subject of ten battles, and expired only with his life. At length more successful pretensions placed on the throne the profligate, the hard-hearted and ungenerous Edward of York, and the bloody tyrant king Richard the Third. The memorable contest of Lancaster and York terminated in the battle of Bosworth Field, after a struggle of more than thirty years.

The consequences of the weak government of Henry the Sixth were melancholy in the extreme. The whole race of the English nobility were destroyed in the field, or on the scaffold. Our country had begun to advance in civilization and literature, but ignorance and barbarity returned with gigantic strides. The historian, who searches for the materials of his narrative, finds them fail him at once, and he thinks himself falling back upon the period of the Danish invasions and the Norman conquest. Liberty had begun to be digested into a kind of system, and a sketch of government was formed under the first princes of the house of Lancaster, not unworthy of that glorious constitution, which has since become the astonishment and envy of the world. But the confusion of the civil

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wars seemed to put an end to the prospect, and prepared the way for the grinding tyranny of Henry the Seventh, and the barbarous caprices of his infamous son.

Every competent judge of history will acknowledge, that the features of these two memorable periods in the annals of France and England, are not exaggerated in the sketch I have delineated. I am not therefore to be blamed, if they should appear to you, as they do to me, the most calamitous periods that can be found upon record in the history of any age or any country. It is not my object to excite terror but reflection. I should defeat my purpose, if I infused despair into bosoms, which I am anxious to find the seats of firmness and manly courage. But it is weak and pusillanimous to shut our eyes upon our real situation. If we would act wisely, and prove faithful to ourselves and our country, it becomes us to enquire, what other nations have suffered in a situation similar to our own, what reason we have to apprehend from like causes a corresponding event, and what remedies there are, which may, with the greatest probability of success, be applied to counteract that event.

With regard to the resemblance between the present situation of our country, and the instances I have adduced, I wish to say as little as possible. There is not an individual in the island of Great Britain, who more ardently desires the complete restoration of the health of the sovereign, and that for this obvious reason, because there is not an individual in the island of Great Britain who is more perfectly aware of the mischiefs that will result from a partial restoration. But my wishes, however ardent, have not the power of shutting my eyes on the light of evidence. The age, at which the king has been seized with this alarming malady, is extremely unfavourable. Great pains have been taken to arrive at the solution of this interesting enquiry, Whether any considerable number of persons attacked with the distemper in question at the age of fifty years, have been restored to reason? and the result of the researches that have been made, has not been in unison with the wishes and prayers of an anxious nation. If a farther question had been proposed, and it had been asked, How many persons, arrived at an age of such maturity, and who have had periods of convalescence and recovery, have

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ever risen entirely superior to the distemper? the answer would certainly not have been more favourable.

I am ready to acknowledge, that a malady of the nature of that we are considering, is less alarming in the sovereign of a great country now, than it was in the fifteenth century. Formerly it was absolutely necessary, that a king should have a considerable share of personal firmness and energy, that he should even be distinguished for courage and intrepidity, in order by these qualities to keep under restraint the haughty, turbulent, and overgrown barons. Princes in the darker ages, of the most innocent intentions, but of an easy and inactive disposition, frequently lost their thrones amidst the perpetual tumults of civil discord. The situation of Europe is now happily altered. Whatever be the character and talents of a monarch, if he do not violently seek to overturn the constitution, he may grasp the sceptre with security; and it will frequently happen, that the country will enjoy a high and enviable degree of prosperity under his auspices.

The great requisite of national welfare is a certain degree of stability and uniformity in the public administration. In the numerous changes which marked the commencement of the present reign, are to be discovered the causes of the loss of America. The facility of the king of France in changing his councils at the recurrence of every petty obstacle to the plan that had been laid down, has at length prepared the way for a great national convulsion. But the evils that result from such a defect are increased a thousand fold, when the causes of such variations are of an equivocal kind; when, as in the instance of Charles the Sixth, it appears that every set of men, who in turn have access to the royal ear, are able to direct him at their pleasure; when the shades of capacity and imbecility are so nicely blended, that perhaps the most accurate eye can scarcely distinguish them, and the unscrupulous ambition of party can easily twist them to every nefarious purpose; when party, which in its natural state is salutary and nutritive to liberty, is driven to every odious extreme by the struggle of contending sovereignties. At one time the administration will be conferred by the legislature, and at another reclaimed in a manner, oblique, irresponsible, and that shuns the light. The powers of government will be vested in the hands of one set of men, but they

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will hold them by a precarious tenure, incapable of conferring essential benefits on their country, because incapable of foreseeing that the next hour may not reduce them to a private station. In a few months, perhaps in a few weeks, they will be replaced by men of dissimilar sentiments, men introduced into power by an opposite principle, who have no interest in blending and melting the measures of their predecessors into their own, but who will be heated by the unnatural contest, and will place their glory in destroying all that was understood and established and practised in a former period.

The man must have a strong mind, and a steady hand, who can hold unshaken the perspective by which he is to develop the particulars of such a prospect. I have touched the subject with a softened pencil. I have not conjured up the demon of civil bloodshed. I have not calmness and philosophy enough, to trace the field of battle; to examine the mangled carcasses of the dead, and count the groans of the dying; to enquire how many victims of decrepid age, and of the defenceless sex are sacrificed to the unrelenting fury of the sword; to follow to the scaffold the heroes whom battle has spared, and to behold learning, and wit, and genius, and virtue, and honour, condemned by civil rage under the mask of justice, and mangled by the executioner. I leave the finishing the picture to colder heads than mine, and turn from these melancholy apprehensions to the more pleasing task of stating to you the better hopes I entertain, and enquiring after the timely remedies I desire to see applied.

I have some confidence in the high degree of civilization, and in the humane sentiments that are diffused among the people of this country; but to whatever they amount, it is in my opinion beyond all question, that circumstances may be so unfavourable, as to supersede the best dispositions that can be supposed prevalent in a nation at large, and to involve them in the most unjustifiable measures, and the most deplorable barbarity. I have some confidence in the honourable and liberal sentiments of the ministerial and parliamentary leaders among us; but it is of the very essence of politics to enforce every practicable precaution against human frailty. The parliament of England have lately shown, that they would not trust to the effects of the humane and liberal sentiments

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of the present age, in inducing a son to acknowledge the sanity of the intellects of his father; and I may be allowed to extend a little more generally so salutary a precaution. It must certainly be admitted, that the charms of power are of a most fascinating nature, and that men have been led by motives of ambition to perpetrate that, against which their sense of honour, their innocence and their virtue, seemed to give us every previous security.

The task, my fellow-citizens, that I have undertaken, is of the humblest nature, and upon which vanity herself could not found any very arrogant pretensions. It is the statement of facts, not the deduction of conclusions. All that I intended to do, and all that I shall be able completely to perform, is to describe the danger, and to leave to greater abilities, and to a longer experience (Oh, that that experience may not be bought at a price at which even knowledge itself is too dear!) to provide a sufficient antidote. I have promised indeed, to point out to you such remedies as shall suggest themselves against the danger of our situation; and, however inadequate to the performance, I will not withdraw from the engagement. But I feel the powers of my mind shrink before the magnitude of the object. There is a delicacy, a novelty, a complication in the present business, that sets at defiance all the principles of politics that have hitherto been discovered.

Before I enter upon the imperfect hints I shall be able to offer, I must beg leave to state a few of those first principles, which form the hinge of all that is valuable in politics, and all that is dignified in morality. I assume it then as an axiom, that government, in the respectable sense of the word, was instituted for the benefit of the people in general, and not for the emolument of a few individuals. In comparison with the magnitude of this object, the immunities of nobles, and the prerogatives of princes, sink into nothing. A nobleman of great political weight and authority, lately asserted, in the most dignified assembly in this kingdom, "that the people were possessed of most essential rights, but that kings and princes had no rights whatever."³ I do not quote this sentiment for its novelty, for

³ Godwin alludes to Lord Lansdowne's speech in the House of Lords, 26 Dec. 1788; cf. *Parliamentary History*, 27:878; *New Annual Register... for 1789*, 10 (1790), 108. Sir William Petty (1737-1805, second earl of Shelburne 1761, first marquis of Lansdowne 1784) served under Chatham

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nothing can be more trite and obvious in a free country; but I am glad that such a sentiment has been started upon such an occasion in the discussion of this subject. I would have it recorded in the hearts of the people of England, and incessantly applied to the present painful situation of our affairs. I would have the argument placed upon its proper basis, and the sentiment universally felt, that, if ever an attention to the gratification of an individual should be brought into competition with the welfare of the whole, and the existence of the community, the former might be regarded in the balance as lighter than nothing.

“For what purpose was hereditary succession itself introduced into our monarchy?” It was, said the same nobleman, and he confirmed his opinion by the respectable authority of judge Foster, “as a political expedient, calculated for the good of the community, and to prevent the mischiefs that might accrue to the general welfare, from an elective competition for an object of so great magnitude.”⁴ In pursuance of this principle in one great aera of our history we superseded all regard to hereditary claim, and called to the throne a prince, who could have no pretensions, but what he derived from the free suffrage of the nation. “What is the basis of the prerogatives, which our constitution vests in the sovereign?” They are not granted as a boon for the gratification of the monarch, but as a trust for the benefit of the whole. They are extensive, because our ancestors were of opinion that the public good required that they should be extensive; and they are limited, because it would be a solecism and an outrage to common sense, to suffer the first magistrate to possess one atom of authority, the power of

and Lord Rockingham, on whose death he became First Lord of the Treasury 1782-83 (Prime Minister), but after his defeat by the Fox-North coalition in February 1783 he did not hold office again.

⁴ Cf. *New Annual Register... for 1789*, 10:108. Lansdowne refers to Sir Michael Foster (1689-1763), his ‘Observations on Some Passages in the Writings of Lord Chief Justice Hale, Relative to the Principles on which the Revolution and present happy Establishment are founded,’ in *A report of some proceedings on the Commission of Oyer and Terminer and Goal Delivery for the trial of the rebels in the Year 1746 in the County of Surry, and of other Crown cases. To which are added discourses upon a few branches of the Crown Law* (Oxford, 1762), 405.

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exercising which may not at all times be necessary for the good of the nation.

It follows from these principles, that the interests of the prince upon the throne can in no case be entitled to distinct consideration. As they respect his public character, they cannot be separated from the interests of the people; and in any other view he is a private individual, whose pleasures it would be high treason against the rights of mankind to bring into competition with the welfare of millions. He is merely the instrument, the first servant of the public; the absolute creature of their necessities, and who, in every just and rational estimation, ceases to exist when he can no longer be useful.

Considering the subject in this light, can I hesitate to declare what is the only adequate remedy to the evils that impend over us? It is in the breast of the sovereign alone; it consists in his RESIGNATION. And, when I say this, I do not mean to doubt of the right of the people to depose their first magistrate. I am sensible of their right to depose him, without waiting for any action, upon account of which they might think themselves bound to proceed criminally against him, – of their right to depose him, from the mere consideration of the common interest requiring it. But I say it, because I am well assured that in this case the remedy would be worse than the disease. There are rights vested in the community at large, which it would not be expedient, except in emergencies of the most perilous nature, emergencies that superseded all the rules of established prudence, ever to call into exercise. There are principles, the too frequent practice of which, though the principles themselves are immutable, would carry us at once to the infant state of society, and leave all the work of civilization to be done over again.

What a picture of true magnanimity and virtue does the remedy I have suggested present to the human mind? Kings have resigned their sceptres for their private gratification, because they were tired of the empty pomp of grandeur, of the never-ending fatigue of public business, of the fruitless dreams of ambition, and the barren gratification that results from the mere exercise of power. Kings have resigned their sceptres from motives of false religion, that they might devote the dregs of an insipid existence to God in the

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unprofitable solitude of a cloister. Kings have been found, who have terminated their authority and their lives together, by generously devoting themselves to destruction, that their country might flourish in perpetual prosperity. But there would be a calmness of deliberation in the action of a monarch that should retire, because the hand of omnipotence had unfitted him for his high situation, because he foresaw the calamities that might result to the public from his persevering in it, because he felt the impropriety of his retaining possession of a great stake which a moment might induce him, without any fault of his will, to betray or destroy, that would shed upon such a prince a peculiar lustre. It must be an effort of heroic resolution to face the probability of a long period of privacy and obscurity, and calmly to decide in its favour, when power and riches and splendour awaited a contrary determination. And yet may I not add that it seems difficult to adopt a contrary conduct? "I have received all from the choice of my people. I owe all my efforts, and all the energies of my frame, as a just return for the trust they have reposed in me. I would have sacrificed my own ease and gratification through a series of years to their benefit. If then that benefit requires my resignation, can I hesitate? I shall at least carry with me into my retreat, the noblest of all consolations, the consciousness that I have postponed myself to my people; that, being by providence intrusted with a crown, I performed the highest office of a sovereign in preferring the salvation of my country to every inferior consideration."

But I quit the discussion of a remedy, which, at least in the eye of a political speculatist, must appear improbable and visionary. The consideration of it could not indeed have been entirely omitted, consistently with the smallest justice to my subject, because it is calculated beyond any thing that could be devised, to set full before us the painful and alarming nature of our public situation. But having mentioned that, which, as I have already said, is the only perfectly adequate remedy, I must now state to you some of those palliatives, which indeed are far from being sufficient to secure us against the dreadful evils that my anxiety for the future conjures up to my imagination; – of those palliatives which I earnestly hope may be superseded by the precautions of more experienced

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statesmen, but which are among the best that suggest themselves to my understanding.

I am not disposed to place an implicit confidence in any set of political men; but, when I consider the high favour in which the present ministers have been held by a majority of their countrymen, I cannot help presuming, that, if not from a disinterested regard for the people of England, if not from the consideration of their honour as men, and the character they must hold with the latest posterity, at least for the sake of gratitude to the nation that has honoured them with an implicit confidence, they will adopt no precipitate measure for the premature restoration of the royal authority. From the nature of the case, it is not improbable that the deliberation will be thrown exclusively into their hands. Few of those public characters, who conceive that their pursuits and their talents fit them to direct the affairs of government, will be hardy enough to utter indelicate personal truths, which from their nature must wound in the tenderest point the private feelings of the monarch. The country gentlemen indeed are not likely to be warped by the considerations of office and emolument; but the man whose acquaintance with the science of politics is not extremely superficial, will not want to be told, that their forte is not penetration; that they are continually attracted by a frothy plausibility, and deterred by the unprecedented flights of a true political genius; and that in the most important affairs their attention is frequently fixed upon motives of precedency, and rank, and decorum, and gratitude, when the subject required that nothing should be listened to but arguments of immutable and everlasting importance. Were it otherwise, it is the glory of the press, that subjects may in this form be freely discussed, which are too tender and too sacred for the argument of a public assembly. If then few persons would be found, who, by an ill-placed timidity, would not be deterred from committing scruples like these to the press, who shall expect that the salutary argument will be maintained in either house of the legislature?

But if public men should at this time prove silent in their animadversions upon the conduct of ministers, I would not have it imagined that they will be unobservant of their proceedings. I will even suppose, that caution and jealousy will now be laid aside, that a certain ebriety and madness will seize the minds of the nation,

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amidst the sincere congratulations of all men upon his majesty's recovery. Even in that case the delusion will not always last, the day of account will ultimately come, and the retribution will only be the more severe the longer it is deferred. Extraordinary and unjustifiable measures have doubtless in various instances been adopted for the acquisition of that universal idol of all enterprising men, power. But a more unjustifiable and a more criminal expedient was never attempted, than would be the adoption of a hasty and precipitate conduct in a matter that essentially includes so much of deliberation and doubt, and hesitation and diffidence. Can it then be supposed, that men, who have so long worn the garb of principle and decency, can reconcile themselves to the throwing off, without any previous gradation, every veil of plausibility, and boldly launching into a line of dishonour and profligacy, which must immediately detect them to all discerning men, and ultimately expose them to the contempt and scorn of every human being?

The gradations from madness to sanity are the most difficult to be traced of almost any thing that can fall under the examination of the human mind. We frequently associate with a man for days together, and entertain not the remotest suspicion that he labours under any disorder of his intellects, when perhaps without any previous preparation he bursts upon us with the most incomprehensible absurdities. How difficult is it frequently found in the business of a testamentary bequest, a mere feather in comparison of the slightest public concern of a great nation, to settle from the minutest evidence in a court of justice, whether the faculties of the testator were in such a state as to render him competent to a disposition of his property? It is a trite observation, that a man shall be disordered upon a particular subject, and upon all others shall reason with the most perfect propriety and judgment. A masterly representation of such a character is exhibited by Dr. Johnson in his celebrated work of the Prince of Abyssinia.⁵ In the well-known case of lord Ferrers, though deliberately tried before the greatest court of justice in the

⁵ Godwin alludes to the character of the astronomer, a man of learning and benevolence whom Rasselas and his companions meet on their travels, who suffers from the delusion that he controls the regulation of the weather and the seasons. (Samuel Johnson (1709-84); his *The history of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia* (1759), chs. 40-44.)

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world, is it not to this day the opinion of numbers, that a man of rank was condemned to the most ignominious punishment for an action perpetrated when he was incapable of moral agency?⁶ Is it not almost the universal opinion that lord George Gordon is a maniac? And yet under this general prepossession, was he not a few years since tried for his life; and is he not now suffering under one of the severest sentences that was ever awarded in a civilized country?⁷ Let it be remembered, that in these cases there was no great and weighty interest operating upon the minds of a number of men, and stimulating them to take measures to ascertain the malady. Let it be remembered that the person last mentioned never laboured under the known and unquestionable symptoms of lunacy, and that it has on that account been the more difficult to establish a strong presumption or a cogent body of evidence in proof of the imputation.

Taking into our minds all these considerations, it seems absolutely necessary that a long quarantine or course of probation should be performed in any case of a similar nature that should be deeply interesting to the national welfare. It is not a few days, or a few weeks, that should be deemed sufficient to satisfy a whole people, who have every claim to the most scrupulous solution of their doubts. The monarch, as soon as it should be thought proper to prepare the way for making the state of his health a subject of national consideration, should be sedulously exhibited to the curiosity of his people. His levees should be renewed; he should frequently resort to the usual places of public amusement, long

⁶ When in 1760 Laurence Shirley (1720-60, fourth Earl Ferrers 1745), was tried by the House of Lords for shooting and fatally wounding his steward, he pleaded not guilty and entered a plea of 'occasional insanity of mind,' but failed to prove that he was not responsible for his actions and was hanged for the murder.

⁷ After Lord George Gordon (1751-93), President of the Protestant Association, presented a petition for the repeal of the Catholic Relief Act (1778), which led to the 'No-Popery' riots of 2-9 June 1780, he was tried for high treason but acquitted (because there was no proof that he approved the riots). In January 1788, he was sentenced to five years imprisonment in Newgate for libels on the British government and the French court.

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before his period of convalescence should be considered as closing, or he should think of resuming the reins of government. Such an event should not take place, till it was loudly called for, not by a giddy and unthinking multitude, but by the voice of all that was, wise and discerning, and respectable among us. In the mean time his physicians should undergo an examination more accurate than any that has preceded, and such as the anxious scrutiny of so momentous an interest must unavoidably dictate. From this proviso it follows, that nothing should upon any account be ultimately decided but in parliament, and that the single step which might prove necessary previously to that decision, should be the act of an open, full and ungarbled privy council.

An idea has floated among the evanescent rumours of the day, which for that reason I shall mention, though upon no other account is it entitled to the smallest notice. It is, that the first act of the sovereign will be to appoint a temporary regency, intended to continue till the complete re-establishment of his health. It may be remembered for the consolation of the true friends to their country, that this idea was started as a matter of doubt by Mr. Sheridan in the late debates upon the regency bill, and unequivocally contradicted by the chancellor of the exchequer, the master of the rolls, and the attorney general.⁸ By these authorities it was expressly affirmed, that the king had in no case the power to delegate his authority while he remained within the realm. Are we then to

⁸ Cf. *Parliamentary Register*, 25:475-76; *Parliamentary History*, 27: 1254 - 55; *New Annual Register... for 1789*, 10 (1790), 133 (reporting the House of Commons debate of 12 Feb. 1789). Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816, Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1782, Secretary to the Treasury 1783, Treasurer of the Navy 1806-7) acted as a confidential adviser to the Prince of Wales during the Regency Crisis. His parliamentary opponents were William Pitt the Younger (1759-1806), Chancellor of the Exchequer (1782), and Prime Minister from 1783 to 1801 and from 1804 to 1806; Sir Richard Pepper Arden (1744-1804, Baronet Alvanley 1801; Solicitor-General 1782-83 and 1783-84, Attorney-General 1784), who became Master of the Rolls in 1788; and Sir Archibald Macdonald (1747-1826, seventh Baronet of Sleat 1813), eflle who was Attorney General from 1788 to 1792.

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suppose, that he will be advised to quit the kingdom for the express purpose of colouring the exercise of so unjustifiable an authority? Or is parliament to bring in a bill, declaring, that, "In consideration of the sovereign's not being in a capacity to exercise the ordinary functions of the executive government, he is hereby authorised to exercise the most unprecedented and important function that can possibly be vested in the hands of an individual?" Or, lastly, shall we imagine, that the king will send a message to the parliament, and that the intended regency will thus be the joint act of an incapable sovereign and a senseless parliament?

The delegating into the hands of others the royal authority, is, of all the functions ascribed by our constitution to the sovereign, that which is pre-eminent and paramount. It is so because it is the extract and sublimate of all the rest. Whatever there is that is great, momentous and comprehensive in the rest, is here concentrated and united. Were we to adopt this proceeding, we should fall at once without temptation, and with our eyes open, into the worst and most ruinous of the measures of Charles the Sixth. What, when the sovereign is said to be recovered, is his first measure to consist in drawing a veil between himself and his people, in retreating from their examination, and demanding from them a blind and implicit faith, beyond all the examples of folly that popery ever exhibited?

Till the king is completely recovered, and in all respects capable of resuming the reins of government, he has, in the eyes of sound policy and common sense, not even existence. He is incapable of expressing in a public and constitutional manner, the most insignificant of his wishes; and, if we attend to his wishes conveyed in any other way upon any important topic, we barter all that is valuable to man for a motive fit only to influence a nurse or a dotard. To the last moment therefore of such a situation, a free people will feel what it is that belongs to them, and act for themselves. They will not relinquish a power they have so lately vindicated, that of providing for the necessity of the country; and will say firmly to every one that shall wish to disturb the majesty of their proceedings, "We are superintending the welfare and the peace of millions, and can pay no attention to the supposed feelings of an individual, which, if they should happen to interfere with this object, would be capricious, rash and disgraceful."

Reflexions on the Consequences of his Majesty's Recovery

I have said, that, in the present instance, I am disposed to confide in the actual ministers of the sovereign. This confidence is certainly not entirely voluntary on my part. It is the only refuge I have in the prospect of the most dreadful of all calamities, and therefore I acquiesce. I regard it as an additional misfortune in the present gloomy period, that in the four months that have already elapsed of the regal incapacity, we have not established a full, liberal and comprehensive provision for the vicissitudes of convalescence and relapse, so peculiarly incident to the malady in question. But doubtless the first measure now to be adopted, a measure ten fold more important than the variable question of a regency and restrictions, ought to relate to this business. It will perhaps be an advantage, if, in consequence of the new complexion of the affair, ministers should think fit to suspend the progress of the regency bill. Whatever may be deemed to be the merits of that bill in other respects, the provisions it suggests on this head are extremely superficial and inadequate. The view of the subject that now forces itself upon us should teach us new anxiety and caution. The convalescences, which before existed only in idea, and respecting which we must have been uncertain whether they would ever occur, have actually displayed themselves. For a case that is now in existence, and may again recur in the course of a few uncertain months, we cannot provide with too enlightened a vigilance.

It was my original intention to have entered now into the consideration of the heads of which such a system ought to be composed. But I have done enough. The seeds of such a system are contained in my preceding arguments. In the mean time my object has been rather to awaken the true principles of understanding in others, than to specify the conclusions from those principles, and to point out the channel into which the general activity should flow, than to sound the depths of the channel, and measure the course of the stream. It will be better to suffer the thoughts of men gradually to ripen, and their minds to feel their force in this momentous business, than to attempt to forestall that established progress of the human mind, without which true excellence was never attained.

FINIS.

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