

**Between Empiricism and Platonism:
The Concept of Reason in Locke's
Philosophy**

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Abstract

Locke has long been read in the light of the ideas of Hobbes, that is, as a materialist philosopher, endorsing a conventional view of morality. Hobbes does this through an instrumentalist interpretation of the human *reason* and Epicurean naturalism (i.e. the hypothesis that everything is made of atoms). Even though Locke's writings are replete with expressions of his Christian thought, scholars have suggested that Locke is committed to an empirical stance underwritten by these ultimately Epicurean commitments. There is, therefore, a tension in Locke's philosophy between three divergent thought complexes: his empiricism, his commitment to Christianity, and what seems to be a form of scepticism. This tension poses an interpretative problem, especially concerning Locke's claims about morality and theology, and the sincerity of his commitment to God. The Hobbist interpretation of Locke has gained ground in recent years, and as a result, Locke's religious philosophy has been criticised for being either irrelevant or inconsistent.

The purpose of this thesis is to engage in and refute that line of criticism by demonstrating that it is possible to give an alternative and richer account of Locke's intellectual background. By focusing on Locke's conception of reason, I trace new sources through an overlooked history of ideas from the ancient Platonic tradition, the Stoics, and the Jewish Neo-Platonist philosopher Philo of Alexandria, to the so-called Cambridge Platonists. In particular, I reinterpret Locke's definition of *reason* in the light of the Platonist tradition, as containing certain metaphysical and universal traits that are inherently Platonist, and not as something instrumental. The Cambridge Platonists were prominently engaged in a debate against Hobbes, aiming to refute his materialism and arguing for the retainment of a classical understanding of the concept of reason in order to save Christian ethics from Epicureanism and atheism. With this thesis, I show that this debate was very much alive and present to Locke, which he also crucially partook in, and that he in fact sides with the Platonists more so than with Hobbes.

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List of Abbreviations

- Conduct* Locke, J. *The Conduct of Human Understanding*, (Ed., Grant, Ruth and Tarcov, Nathan.) Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1996
- DRN* Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, (Eng. tr. W. H. D. Rouse, revised by Martin Ferguson Smith), Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.
- Essay* Locke, J., *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Clarendon ed. P. H. Nidditch ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975.
- Essays* Locke J., *Essays on the Law of Nature*: 1676. (ed. Wolfgang von Leyden), Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970
- KJV* The Holy Bible, King James Version, Collins Bible, 1958
- LWP* Grotius, Hugo, *De Jure Belli Ac Pacis Libri Tres* [On the Law of War and Peace: Three Books] vol. 2, (trans. Kelsey, Francis W.) Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925
- Opfis.* Philo, *On the Creation*, in Leonhardt-Balzer, Jutta, 'Creation, the Logos and the Foundation of a City', in *Philo und das Neue Testament*, (ed. Roland Deines; Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr), Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004) pp. 323-344
- TCE* Locke, J. *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, (eds., Yolton, John W. and Yolton, Jean S.,) Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989
- TIS* Cudworth, Ralph. *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*, London: Richard Royston, 1678
- TT* Locke, J., *Two Treatises of Government* ed. P. Laslett, Cambridge: CUP, 1960.
- WR* Locke J. *The Reasonableness of Christianity as Delivered in the Scriptures*, in *Writings on Religion*. (ed., Victor Nuovo.) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- DL* Laërtius, Diogenes. *Life of Eminent Philosophers*, translated by R. D. Hicks. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work. All sources are acknowledged in the bibliography and that due credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

Reason is natural *Revelation*, whereby the eternal Father of Light, the Fountain of all Knowledge communicated to Mankind that portion of Truth, which he has laid within the reach of their natural Faculties
- Locke, *Essay* IV. xix. 4

Chapter I

Locke as the ‘Hobbist’

This chapter presents the standard reading of Locke as a Hobbist by drawing on the allegations made by Locke’s own pupil – the Earl of Shaftesbury. Shaftesbury accused Locke of advocating Hobbist materialism and moral conventionalism based on a strong empiricist reading of his epistemology. It shows how on this reading of Locke’s epistemology he is committed to hedonism, voluntarism, and moral conventionalism. The interpretation is prevalent both amongst Locke’s contemporaries and ours.

I.1 Shaftesbury’s Allegations

The third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713) was a Platonist and former pupil of John Locke. In his *Several Letters Written by a Noble Lord to a Young Man at the University* (1716) he presents a series of fundamental critiques of Locke. Shaftesbury argues that in the aftermath of the radical ideas that were ‘set a foot’ by Hobbes it was in fact Locke who struck the ‘home blow’ of these ideas, with his philosophy:

Mr. Hobbes’s Character and base slavish Principles in Government took off the Poyson of his Philosophy. T’was Mr. Locke that struck at all Fundamentals, threw all *Order* and *Virtue* out of the World and made the very

Ideas of these (which are the same as those of God) *unnatural*, and without Foundations in our Minds.¹

Shaftesbury argues that Locke is responsible for hitting home on the radical ideas of Hobbes philosophy, and in these words Shaftesbury epitomises some of the most crucial problems of Locke's philosophy, as seen in both the contemporary and the modern reception. These questions concern how Locke is read in the light of Hobbes, his views of ethics, and of God. Locke's denial of the whole concept of 'innate ideas' caused a chain-reaction of objections and concerns.² By rejecting innate ideas and form of 'common notions', Locke also rejected the fact that concepts, such as those of morality and of God, could also be seen as innate. Making these concepts not intrinsic ideas to the mind, but ideas that come by experience. As Shaftesbury further writes, '*Innate* is a Word he poorly plays upon: The right Word, tho' less used, is *connatural*.' By removing the *innateness* of the concept of 'virtue', Shaftesbury sees that Locke makes ideas of virtue and God dependent upon something external to the mind. According to Shaftesbury, the distinction between moral good and evil had to be natural, and thereby innate, in the sense that if there is a real distinction it must be in the things themselves.

Shaftesbury's main problem with Locke thus hinges upon his rejection of innate ideas: If we are void of internal knowledge or an implanted 'sense' of morality, then how can moral good and evil be known and discerned? I have therefore structure Shaftesbury's criticism in four stages: First, Locke's rejection of innatism, which

¹ Shaftesbury, 1716: 39

² 'Innatism' is the view that knowledge comes from inward reflection of the mind, the human mind is furnished with ideas, knowledge and concepts, in a Platonic sense, where the ideas imprinted upon our minds, or hearts, and corresponds to metaphysical truths, and guaranteed objectivity.

leads us straight to the second problem, *conventionalism*. If morality is not innate, that is, an *internal* entity, it is left to *external* factors such as society and upbringing, which can then be completely relative. As Shaftesbury continues in his offensive – ‘Virtue, according to Mr. Locke, has no other Measure, Law, or Rule than *Fashion* and *Custom*’ – it seems that Locke’s moral philosophy is relativistic and, just like Hobbes, dependent upon internal mechanics and shaped by external, physical circumstances. The third and final problem for Shaftesbury, closely linked to the problem of conventionalism, is Locke’s theological voluntarism. According to Shaftesbury’s reading of Locke he is a voluntarist and thinks of ‘Morality, Justice, Equity’ as concepts entirely dependent upon the ‘*Law and Will of God.*’ He further comments that according to Locke’s voluntarism God is a perfectly ‘*Free Agent,*’ even to will ill and bad things; ‘For if he wills it, it will be made Good; Virtue may be Vice, and Vice Virtue in its Turn, if he pleases.’³ According to this voluntarism, there is no intrinsic good or bad other than what God wills it to be. This objection harks back to the famous ‘Euthyphro dilemma’ (which I will look further at in Chapter 2), That is, good is only defined so in so far as God commands it be good, not because it *is* good in itself. As Shaftesbury continues:

And thus neither *Right* nor *Wrong*, *Virtue* nor *Vice* are any thing in themselves; nor is there any Trace or idea of them naturally imprinted on human Minds. Experience and our Catechisms teach us all!⁴

This question leads us back to the question Shaftesbury’s first line of critique set up: How can we then *know* the distinction between moral good and bad? If we cannot

³ Shaftesbury, 1716: 40-41

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 41

make this distinction, there seems no proper moral foundation for humans to act morally. Shaftesbury continues to argue that if we do not find any ‘trace of Idea of them [the notion of right or wrong] *naturally imprinted* on Human Minds’ it means that ‘neither *Right* nor *Wrong*, *Virtue* nor *Vice* are anything in themselves.’ In contrast to what he saw in Locke, Shaftesbury firmly believed that virtue is ‘something in *itself*’, in ‘the nature of things’ that are good. This means that what is good is absolutely ‘not arbitrary or fractious.’⁵ Instead, Virtue is ‘not constituted from without or dependent on *Custom*, *Fancy*, or *Will*; not even on the *Supreme Will* it-self, which can no way govern it: but being necessarily good, is govern’d by it, and ever uniform with it.’⁶

As stated earlier, Shaftesbury’s attack on Locke exemplifies a crucial line of critique: in the face of his blatant rejection of innate ideas, the logical extension then seems to be that Locke endorses, in the footsteps of Hobbes, Epicurean philosophy and a view of ethics based on costume, fashion, and hedonism, all incompatible with his commitment to Christianity. How can Locke possibly endorse these two positions at once? In summary, the critique amounts to three controversial aspects of Locke’s philosophy: first, his rejection of innate ideas which yields the problem of how to distinguish between moral good and evil, which leads to, secondly, an acceptance of conventionalism, in particular in the light of Locke’s hedonist definition of good and evil. If indeed all is based on sensory experience, it is hard to see how Locke makes room for Christian ethics and knowledge of God. The third problem strikes at his

⁵ Shaftesbury, 1709: 2.iii

⁶ See Grave, 1981: 13 n. 28

endorsement of theological voluntarism and the nature of God. If God's will is arbitrary, then any moral system is contingent and inaccessible in the face of His will. All three of Shaftesbury's allegations can be framed within the consequences of the context of the 17th century revived interest for Epicurean philosophy. Shaftesbury saw that due to this revival, traditional Christian natural law theory had, over the course of the century, taken an increasingly Epicurean cast – thanks to the philosophy of Hobbes – and thus moving away from its original Stoic and Platonic foundations.

Lawrence E. Klein points out that although Shaftesbury never explicitly called Locke an Epicurean, 'it should be clear that Locke was a signal instance for Shaftesbury of the infestation of the best thought of the era by Epicurean motives.'⁷ However, even if Shaftesbury never explicitly called Locke an Epicurean, he certainly directly alludes to Lucretius in this final passage of his charge against Locke:

But Mr. Locke, who had more Faith, and was more learn'd in Modern *Wonder-Writers*, than in Antient Philosophy, gave up an Argument for the *Deity*, which Cicero (tho' a profess'd *Sceptick*) would not explode; and which even the chief of the Atheistick Philosophers antiently acknowledged, and solv'd only by their *primus in orbe Deos fecit Timor*.⁸

The Latin, '*Primus in orbe Deos Fecit Timor*', meaning 'fear first created the Gods of the world', was believed to be a famous Epicurean epitaph. And in *De Nature of the Universe (DRN)* Lucretius's words follows:

⁷ Klein, 1994: 65

⁸ Shaftesbury, 1716: 40

The reason why all mortals are so gripped by fear is that they see all sorts of things happening on the earth and in the sky with no discernable cause, and these they attribute to the will of a god.⁹

According to Lucretius, the fear and superstition caused by things unknown, such as death and the state of afterlife, produces ideas of God and the belief in the ‘comforting’ authority of priests, God’s representatives on earth. However, the Epicurean materialism precludes an afterlife and the very existence of God. Their ethics was instead based on hedonism, the universal pursuit of pleasure and escaping of pain. Therefore, if ethics is understood based on Epicureanism, as according to Hobbes, and the views that Shaftesbury traced in Locke, terms such as ‘good’ and ‘bad’, along with ethics, loses *intrinsic* value. It becomes no longer a matter of the afterlife, and ethics loses its particularly Christian status.

The critique, as we have here seen captured by Shaftesbury, portrays what has also become the ‘standard’ account of Locke, an account of his philosophy as rooted in materialism and empiricism, coupled with elements of scepticism, very far from Christian ethics and the lavishness of Platonism. In short, Shaftesbury highlights a chain of problems for Locke by which we can ask the following questions: First, with regards to the relationship between Locke’s voluntarism and rationalism: Does Locke hold that moral knowledge and obligation stem from the *will* of God or from the practise of our *reason*? How can Locke maintain that there is knowledge of God and an objective morality, in the light of his epistemology and hedonism he presented in the *Essay*? Secondly, if it is true that Locke rejects the soul’s immateriality on the

⁹ *DRN*, 1951: 31

charge of scepticism and agnosticism of the status of substances, then what reassurance do we actually have of there being an afterlife?

On the face of it, it seems likely that Shaftesbury's allegations of a Hobbesian reading of Locke is correct. On a simplistic reading, according to Locke's own epistemology, the only measure of morality therefore either becomes dependent on external physical experiences, such as pain and pleasure, or on convention and opinion. Locke's epistemology seems to make the conception of a traditional natural law theory, revelation and afterlife, utterly redundant or unknowable. Shaftesbury's allegations are, therefore, not without foundation in Locke's text. In the following sections I will outline Locke's empiricist epistemology and show how moral conventionalism, hedonism, and voluntarism are presented in the *Essay*. In this chapter, I will then look at Locke's contemporary reception that was mirrored in Shaftesbury's allegations, and then at Locke's scholarly reception today, that is to a vast extent taken for granted this understanding of Locke as a covert 'Hobbist'.

I.2 Locke's Empiricist Epistemology

In the first book of the *Essay*, Locke argues against the 'received Doctrine, That Men have native *Ideas*, and original Characters stamped out upon their Minds, in their very first being'.¹⁰ By this Locke aims to remove some of 'the rubbish that lies in the way to knowledge', and to give a new account of the nature of our understanding. By 'rubbish' he refers to the doctrine of innate ideas:

¹⁰ *Essay*, II.i.1

It is an established opinion amongst some men, that there are in the understanding certain innate principles; some primary notions, Κοινὰ ἐννοιαί, characters, as it were stamped upon the mind of man; which the soul receives in its very first being, and brings into the world with it.¹¹

With these words Locke endeavours to explain the origin of knowledge by appealing to everyone's experiences, not to 'ready made' ideas. He argues that knowledge cannot stretch any further than of what we can have ideas and the acquisition of ideas in turn depends upon experience. The structure of Locke's argument can be summarised as follows:

1. We have no Knowledge farther than we have Ideas.¹²
2. There are no innate Ideas/Principles.¹³
3. All Ideas originate from observation and experience.¹⁴
4. (Therefore:) All knowledge is founded upon experience.¹⁵

Since Locke rejects the *innateness* of ideas: ideas must be created as a result of our *interaction* with the world. Locke here makes the analogy between the human mind and the 'tabula rasa,' or the blank slate, as he famously states:

Let us suppose the Mind to be, as we say, white Paper, void of all Characters, without any *Ideas*; How comes it by that vast store, which the busy and boundless Fancy of Man has pained on it, with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of Reason and Knowledge? To this I answer in

¹¹ *Essay*, I.i.1

¹² *Ibid.*, IV.iii.1

¹³ *Ibid.* I.iv.1

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, II.i.2

one word, From *Experience*.¹⁶

Since no concepts or ideas can be created *priori* to our interaction and experience of the world, experience is thus, by definition; ‘In that, all our Knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives it self.’¹⁷ But what type of experience is Locke talking about – what is it that we in fact *are* experiencing, and how does that process work? According to Locke there are two things of which we have clear and conscious experience. These he calls the two ‘fountains of knowledge’, that is, our experience is employed either with ‘*external sensible Objects; or about the internal operations of our Minds, perceived and reflected on by our selves, is that, which supplies our Understanding with all the materials of thinking.*’¹⁸ In short these two sources of experience he then calls *sensation* and *reflection*.¹⁹ What Locke means with *sensation* is sufficiently straightforward. Based on a causal theory of perception, our senses interact with those external objects of distinct perceptions then the external objects give to the mind ‘those *Ideas*, we have of *Yellow, White, Heat, Cold, Soft, Hard, Bitter, Sweet,*’ that are therefore wholly dependent upon our senses.²⁰ In contrast to sensation, *reflection* is entirely internal and only concerns ‘the *Perception of the Operations of our own Minds* within us.’ The function of this ‘fountain’ is to:

furnish the Understanding with another set of *Ideas*, which could not be had from things without: and such are, *Perception, Thinking, Doubting, Believing, Reasoning, Knowing, Willing* and all the different acting of our Minds: which we being conscious of, and observing in ourselves, do from these receive into

¹⁶ *Essay*, II.i.2

¹⁷ Op. cit.

¹⁸ Op. cit.

¹⁹ *Essay*, II.i.4

²⁰ See for example, *Essay*, II.i.3

our Understanding, as distinct *Ideas*, as we do from Bodies affecting our Senses.²¹

Therefore, according to Locke, there are two types of ideas: simple and complex.²² The simple ones are directly acquired ideas that come from either sensation and reflection or as a combination of both. According to Locke, they consist in the raw material such as smell, sound, perception of willing, motion and space and these can not be created or destroyed. Once these simple ideas are stored, the mind has ‘the power to repeat, compare, and unite them, even to an almost infinite variety’ and thus create new, so-called complex ideas. For example, the idea of solidity is for Locke a complex idea. All knowledge, therefore, consists in the perceiving, through sense and reflection, of the agreement and disagreement between these ideas.

Locke describes the concept of innate ideas as the soul having knowledge from of original concepts, maxims or propositions naturally, and prior to any interaction with the external world. Locke writes that *if* it was true that there are innate ideas, then either these are known from the very beginning, which means that children cannot be ignorant of them, or, they are known by the time men come to use their reason, which would inevitably lead to universal assent. Locke subsequently refutes both conditions, and concludes that there are no innate ideas:

[A]las, amongst children, idiots, savages, and the grossly illiterate, what general maxims are to be found? What universal principles of knowledge? [...]. A child knows his nurse and his cradle, and by degrees the playthings of a

²¹ *Essay*, II.i.4

²² *Ibid.*, I.ii.1

little more advanced age; and a young savage has, perhaps, his head filled with love and hunting, according to the fashion of his tribe.²³

Firstly, Locke argues that we can find no innate knowledge in children other than what they have been taught through interaction with their closest environment or, as in the case of the Indian, ‘according to the fashion of his tribe.’ This yields a relative status to the acquisition of ideas of ethics and ethical conduct. Locke uses the example of the Indian in order to demonstrate the purity of mind as he thinks that they are, just like children, in a purer and less corrupted state. He continues:

For children, idiots, savages, and illiterate people, being of all others the least corrupted by custom, or borrowed opinions; learning and education having not cast their native thoughts into new molds; nor by super-inducing foreign and studied doctrines, confounded those fair characters nature had written there.²⁴

Locke explains that ‘if they were native and original impressions’ we would see them ‘with most force and vigor’ and ‘appear fairest and clearest in those persons in whom yet we find no footsteps of them,’ that is, with children and Indians. However, this is not the case, for:

Such kind of general propositions are seldom mentioned in the huts of Indians: much less are they to be found in the thoughts of children, or any impressions of them on the minds of naturals.²⁵

²³ *Essay*, I.i.27

²⁴ *Op. cit.*

²⁵ *Op. cit.*

Secondly, Locke writes that principles of universal consent, ‘which is made use of to prove innate principles,’ instead demonstrates the opposite of what it is intended to show, ‘because there are none to which all mankind give an universal assent.’²⁶

Therefore,

Faith and justice are not owned as principles by all men. Whether there is any such moral principles, wherein all men do agree, I appeal to any who has been but moderately conversant in the history of mankind, and looked abroad beyond the smoke of their own chimneys. Where is that practical truth that is universally received, without doubt or question, as it must be if innate?²⁷

It is clear to Locke that if these principles of faith and justice were innately known, history would not be full of disagreement and dispute. As Locke writes:

It is impossible to establish a universal consent [...] there are some things that are grateful and others unwelcome to them; some things that they incline to and others that they fly: but this makes nothing for innate characters on the mind, which are to be the principles of knowledge regulating our practice.²⁸

Locke here seems to adopt a kind of moral skepticism: we cannot conclude that there is a moral law by common consent of people (or indeed a universal concept of God, see *Essay* I.i.3). He uses examples of ‘savage tribes’ to demonstrate that there cannot be a universal moral knowledge. Instead Locke stresses the importance of an active role of perception and interaction with the external world, as he writes, and here I

²⁶ *Essay*, I.i.4

²⁷ *Ibid.*, I.ii.2

²⁸ *Ibid.*, I.ii.3

quote Locke:

If truths can be imprinted on the understanding without being perceived, I can see no difference there can be between any truths the mind is capable of knowing in respect of their original: they must all be innate or all adventitious: in vain shall a man go about to distinguish them. He therefore talks of innate notions in the understanding, that cannot (if he intend thereby any distinct sort of truths) mean such truths to be in the understanding as it *never perceived, and is yet wholly ignorant of*.²⁹

Locke writes here that it would be impossible to distinguish between ideas that are innate and ideas that are perceived. For, as Locke continues, ‘no proposition can be said to be in the mind which it never yet knew, which it was never yet conscious of’.³⁰ Locke refutes innate notions both in nature, from the beginning, and as demonstrated through universal consent. There are therefore, Locke concludes, ‘no *Ideas or Maxims* naturally imprinted on the mind’. I shall now specifically trace the three interconnected problems set out by Shaftesbury based on Locke’s rejection of innatism: moral conventionalism, hedonism, and voluntarism.

Moral Conventionalism

The first point Shaftesbury raises is that Locke seems to support a conventional moral

²⁹ *Essay*, I.i.5

³⁰ *Op. cit.*

theory. Conventionalism is the view that morality is relative to society. Already in the *Epistle to the Reader* of the *Essay* Locke states: ‘several sorts of actions find variously in the several societies of men, according to which they are there called virtues or vices.’ He later explains that moral distinctions are relative to their social context:

Vertue and Vice, in the particular instances of their application, through the several Nations and Societies of Men in the World, are constantly attributed only to such actions, as in each Country and Society are in reputation or discredit.³¹

Locke here refers to the ‘secret and tacit consent’ established in different ‘Societies, Tribes, and Clubs of Men in the World: whereby,’ he continues, ‘several actions come to find Credit or Disgrace amongst them according to the Judgment, Maxims, or Fashions of that place.’³² It would seem that Locke indeed holds precisely what Shaftesbury reproached him for – a moral philosophy as radical as Hobbes’s conventionalism. Locke here also seems to anticipate the ethics of Hume with morality defined as an artificial construct out of *habit* or *convenience* of any given tribe or society, as Locke continues:

They practice them as Rules of convenience within their own Communities: But it is impossible to conceive, that he embraces Justice as a practical Principle, who acts fairly with his Fellow High-way-men, and at the same time plunders, or kills the next honest Man he meets with. Justice and Truth are the common ties of Society; and therefore, even Outlaws and Robbers, who break

³¹ *Essay*, II.xxviii.10

³² *Op. cit.*

with all the World besides, must keep Faith and Rules of Equity amongst themselves; or else they cannot hold together.³³

Locke here points out that even those who live outside society as thieves, or robbers, and thereby also outside common law, must keep to certain precepts, in order to maintain their position contra mundum. However, Locke also points out that no one would say that they do so, by ‘an innate Principle of Truth of Justice’. Therefore, he writes that justice, in this sense, is a ‘practical principle’ and that rules are practices ‘of convenience’ for a society. As it even applies to those who are outside society. Later, in the same vein, Hume also presses upon this close connection between justice and utility, arguing that justice is an artificial concept that equates with what is useful to society and a convenient and comfortable life. According to Hume, justice is to society nothing more than ‘a practical principle’ and ‘usefulness’ is the sole ‘source of moral sentiment.’³⁴ Similarly, Locke later states in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1696): ‘nine parts of ten are what they are, good or evil, *useful* or not, by their education.’³⁵ However, I argue that Locke’s meaning of the term ‘utility’ must be put into relation to, as we shall see, his view of God. Since God has furnished us the way we are by design, as he states in the *Essay*: ‘It is necessary for me to be as I am; God and nature has made me so ...’³⁶

Locke’ Hedonistic Psychology

In addition to Locke’s moral conventionalism, there is an element of hedonism in the *Essay*. This means that Locke’s ethics is driven, instead of by innate ideas, by what is

³³ *Essay*, I.iii.2

³⁴ Hume, 1983: 43 §V

³⁵ *TCE* §1

³⁶ *Essay*, III.vi.4

called a hedonistic psychology. I shall explain this further. Closely connected to Locke's theory of knowledge and perception is the experience of pleasure and pain. If there are no *innate* ideas of good and bad, then our only measure becomes our experience of good and bad in forms of pleasure and pain. As Locke states simply: 'That which is properly good or bad, is nothing but barely Pleasure and Pain.'³⁷ According to Catherine Wilson, Locke had already accepted the basic features of what is called 'hedonic psychology' by 1670s. As he writes in one of his early drafts of the *Essay*: 'the business of man being to be happy in this world by enjoyment of the things of nature subservient to life, health, ease and pleasure and the comfortable hopes of another life when all this is ended.'³⁸ According to this reading of Locke, however, it seems that any mention of the word 'pleasure' is to be equated with hedonism. But why is it called psychological hedonism?

Psychological hedonism describes a psychological state of happiness that comes with pleasure and which *motivates* us to act. Wilson further argues that it is in this way that Locke makes room for faith – through a psychological attitude, or expectation of the prospect of happiness that can also be found in the next life.³⁹ Locke writes in a tone that is reminiscent of 'Pascal's wager':

That a virtuous Life, with the certain expectation of everlasting Bliss, which may come, is to be preferred to a vicious one, with the fear of that dreadful

³⁷ *Essay*, II.xxi.61

³⁸ Locke, journal entry for 'Mund. 8 February 1677', in *An Early Draft of Locke's Essay*, ed. Aaron and Gibb, 1936: 88

³⁹ Wilson, 2008: 208

state of Misery, which 'tis very possible may overtake the guilty; or at best the terrible uncertain hope of annihilation.⁴⁰

The virtuous life is certainly more preferred, if rewarded with a condition of everlasting bliss, while a vicious life will be punished with a state of dreadful misery. While the hope for annihilation seems slightly better than the latter (eternal misery), it seems better to act with the expectations of the former (eternal bliss). According to Pascal this reasoning is based on a wager, where the odds that one will suffer eternal misery are lower if one lead a virtuous life now. Locke does not talk of a wager, however, he rather aims to point out the obvious, that it seems to be better to act on the 'safe side', based on experience. And so, Locke's hedonistic psychology corresponds to his empiricist epistemology, where the *experience* of pleasure and pain tells us what is good and bad in terms of having a good or bad outcome. This becomes evident in his definition of good and evil in the *Essay*:

That we call Good, which is apt to cause or increase Pleasure, or diminish Pain in us; or else to procure, or preserve us the possession of any other Good, or absence of any Evil. And on the contrary we name that Evil, which is apt to produce or increase any Pain, or diminish any Pleasure in us; or else to procure us any Evil, or deprive us of any Good.⁴¹

Things that are good or evil can only be discerned as such by correspondence to pleasure or pain. The universality of morality, therefore, does not stem from innately imprinted ideas but reached through common experience of happiness, defined by our

⁴⁰ *Essay*, II.xxi.70

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, II.xx.2

common experiences of degrees of pleasure and pain. In addition to this hedonism Locke also held that physical health was a condition of a happy life, ‘without which no sensual pleasure can have any relish’.⁴² Therefore, our actions, moral or not, are determined by the sensations of pleasure or pain.

Furthermore, in addition to the terms of feeling pleasure and pain, as motivating factors to action, Locke also introduces the concept of feeling ‘uneasiness’. As he states: ‘The chief if not only spur to humane Industry and Action is uneasiness.’⁴³ Locke defines uneasiness as something felt as a result of desires:

The uneasiness a Man finds in himself upon the absence of any thing, whose present enjoyment carries the Idea of Delight with it, is what we call Desire, which is greater or less, as that uneasiness is more or less vehement. For whatever good is propos’d, if its absence carries no displeasure nor pain with it; if a Man be easie and content without it, there is no desire of it, nor endeavor after it.⁴⁴

It is therefore the prospect of pleasure or the pain that comes with the *uneasiness* that determines will and motivates our action: ‘The greatest present *uneasiness* is the spur to action, that is constantly felt; and for the most part determines the *will* in its choice of the next action.’⁴⁵ In this way, it is taken that Locke presents a *mechanistic* account of our will.

⁴² See Maurice Cranston, 1957: 123, and MSS Locke, c. 28, fos. 143–4. British Library

⁴³ *Essay*, II.xx.6

⁴⁴ *Op. cit.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, II.xxi.40

What we have seen in Locke we can directly compare to Hobbes, who writes in the *Leviathan* in his chapter of *Man* on Good and Evil: ‘But whatsoever is the object of any man’s appetite or desire, that is it which he for his part called good; and the object of his hate and aversion’.⁴⁶ Locke appears to continue along the similar lines as he writes:

Morally Good and Evil then, is only the Conformity or Disagreement of our voluntary Actions to some Law, whereby Good or Evil is drawn on us, from the Will and Power of the Law-maker; which Good and Evil, Pleasure or Pain, attending our observance, or breach of the Law, by the decree of the Law-maker, is that we call *Reward* and *Punishment*.⁴⁷

This means that the subjective understanding of what makes us happy, or uneasy, is what motivates us to act. Therefore, in a combination of the experience we have of different levels of pain and pleasure. This links to Locke’s mechanistic theory of ideas since these pains and pleasures (not innate) are affected upon us by external factors and, thereby, determine the *will*, as he writes: ‘Pain and Pleasure are produced in us, by the operation of certain Objects, either on our Minds or our Bodies’.⁴⁸ After presenting a mechanical theory of perception in his rejection of innate ideas, Locke must hold that pleasure and pain, whether of mind or body, must be produced by the operation of bodies on us. Therefore, our actions and will must also be determined in this mechanistic way – through the ideas we get from experience of either pain or pleasure. It appears then that only an object *external* to our body or mind will be able

⁴⁶ Hobbes, 1994: 28

⁴⁷ *Essay*, II.xxviii.5

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, II.xxi.42

to affect our experience of pleasures and pains, which in turn determines our will and thereby determine our actions. On this reading, Locke seems to argue that our actions are determined by the mechanical and physiological experiences of pain and pleasure. This is what is meant by Locke's hedonistic psychology: the physical experience of pain and pleasure becomes also a *psychological* motive, which determines our will and thereby also our actions.

But what role does the faculty of reason play to determine our *will* in this hedonistic system of action based on experience? Unlike the Epicureans, Locke maintained that there *would be* pains and pleasures in the afterlife, as a result of reward and punishment. Pleasure and pain is therefore brought about by attending to our 'observance, or breach of the Law, *by the decree of the Law-maker*', as Locke states, 'this is that we call *Reward and Punishment*.' Perhaps Locke introduces a 'God-given hedonic motive', as Wilson calls it, to support moral obligation, which will also serve to guide us towards happiness in the afterlife.⁴⁹ However, Locke writes that humans:

have reason to be well satisfied with what God hath thought fit for them [...] whatsoever is necessary for the conveniences of life and information of virtue; and has put within the reach of their discovery, the comfortable provision for this life, and the way that leads to a better.⁵⁰

But the questions remain, if pain and pleasure are the definition of good and bad – how do we (a) know what is morally required of us, and (b) why are we obligated to

⁴⁹ Wilson, 2008: 210

⁵⁰ *Essay*, I.i.5

act morally at all? The moral force, therefore, Locke seems to apply to God's will, not, as Shaftesbury also points out, in the intrinsic value of moral actions.

The will of God

In the *Essay*, Locke also writes that virtuous actions are only virtuous if they are in conformity with God's will. He states:

If virtue be taken for actions conformable to God's will, or to the rule prescribed by God—which is the true and only measure of virtue when virtue is used to signify what is in its own nature right and good—then this proposition, “That virtue is the best worship of God,” will be most true and certain, but of very little use in human life: since it will amount to no more but this, viz. “That God is pleased with the doing of what he commands;”—which a man may certainly know to be true, without knowing what it is that God doth command.⁵¹

Following his arguments against innate ideas, Locke argues that the concept of law is not innate either. He argues that nor is the law knowable because it is ‘written in the hearts of men,’ nor does it come from the general consent of men, but grasped by the ‘light of nature’, that is, through the exercise of individual reason furnished with ideas from experience. Locke however, here grants that the notion of law and morality, punishment and reward, is dependent on the immortality of the soul and the existence of an afterlife. However, as law is knowable through the light of reason, morality however appears to stem from the *will* of God, as Locke writes: ‘the true ground of

⁵¹ *Essay*, I.ii.18

morality; which can only be the will and law of a God.⁵² Furthermore, he argues that the concept of law necessarily entails the prospect of some punishment or restraint. The existence of natural law that stands over and above positive law must therefore necessarily presupposes a life after death, in which we will be punished or rewarded. Law also presupposes a lawmaker, judge and executor of the law. The law, Locke argues, must therefore be decreed by the *will* of God. Therefore, ‘the true ground of morality’, Locke continues, ‘can only be the Will and Law of a God, who has in his Hands Rewards and Punishments.’⁵³ This leads us to two issues: Where does our moral obligation stem from? And where do we gain knowledge of the content of the law? First of all, Locke assumes that we are obliged to obey in so far as we are subjects to *God’s* will. Obligation is therefore founded in God and the natural right He has over His creation. Secondly, the law is also bidding through our reason and duty to fulfil God’s purpose for us, which is to make use of our reason and act in accordance with it. But, as Shaftesbury stated, *if* morality and justice depend on the *Will* of God then it implies that God is a *Free Agent*, that is, as we have seen, morality is not something in it self and is thus arbitrary in the face of God’s will. As Locke writes the ‘breach of the Law, by the Decree of the Law-maker is that we call *Reward* and *Punishment*.’⁵⁴ What is ‘good’ is only ‘good’ because God commands it, not because it *is* good, which is the second horn of the famous Euthyphro dilemma. This account of morality as merely dependent upon the prospect of punishment and reward by the *arbitrary* will of God resonates Hobbes’ moral system also based on voluntarism and hedonism. Furthermore, this view raises the problems of how we know God’s will,

⁵² *Essay*, I.ii.6

⁵³ *Ibid.*, I.iii.6

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, II.xxviii.5 cf. II.xxxviii.8

and how we *know* how to act morally if morality depends upon a will that is, by definition, arbitrary.

In conclusion, in the *Essay*, Locke intend to show how people ‘barely by the use of their natural faculties, may attain to all the knowledge they have, without the help of any innate impressions’, and that it is even possible to arrive at *certainty* ‘without any such original notions or principles.’⁵⁵ Locke’s epistemology, however, seems to rule out the possibility of having any knowledge or experience of God by which we could acquire verification of revelation and Christian ethics. Yet, after establishing the mind as a ‘clean slate’, with knowledge limited to what experience and our senses can teach us, Locke states rather curiously that we are still ‘capable of *knowing*’ and even ‘*being certain that there is a God.*’ But if all knowledge and ideas derive from our experience of the external world, how can the mind possibly acquire the right *material* to know God, as Locke describes Him, the ‘eternal, cogitative, *immaterial* Being.’⁵⁶ From his empiricist epistemology it seems that we cannot gain any ideas from anything immaterial, that cannot affect our senses.

Based on what we have seen so far Locke seem to endorse a strictly empiricist epistemology, where only the experience of pleasure and pain constitutes the motivation to act morally. Therefore, ‘good’ and ‘bad’ are terms purely distinguishable with reference to ‘earthly’ and measurable ‘pleasure’ and ‘pain’. And law dependent upon a voluntarist theology as it seems Locke argues that it is up to God’s (arbitrary) will to determine what is right and wrong in the afterlife. Most

⁵⁵ *Essay*, I.i.1

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, IV.x.18, my emphasis.

significantly, as Rogers points out, any theory concerning the knowledge of God and the knowledge of the morality and law would have implied some commitment to the doctrine of innate ideas.⁵⁷ And this we do not find in Locke. The question, rather, is whether his theory progresses the way he intended, without the concept of innate ideas. If not, Locke is as many of his contemporary scholars feared, radical, and as many modern scholars have concluded, inconsistent in his commitment to both empiricism and to Christian revelation.

1.3 Locke's Contemporary reception: 'A very dangerous and absurd resolution to be of no religion.'⁵⁸

In this section I shall give a general overview of some of Locke's contemporary critiques and how they raised a similar line of critique as that of Shaftesbury. The main concern was that Locke shook the foundations of an objective morality, in particular the Christian ethics, and the consequences it had for the notion of natural law. However, at his time, Locke's severest critique emerged from the clergy, and was something Shaftesbury was less concerned with, namely religious unorthodoxy.

The *Essay* was at first well approved of in Oxford the early 1690's, as reported by Locke's friend James Tyrrell.⁵⁹ In the *Essay*'s dedicatory letter to the Royal Society, William Molyneux, another friend and critic of Locke, stated that his work had: 'clearly overthrown all those metaphysical whimsies ...'⁶⁰ Locke's *Essay*, whilst a

⁵⁷ Rogers, 1979: 198

⁵⁸ John Goodman (1684), quoted in Griffin, 1992: 92

⁵⁹ Woolhouse, 2007: 279

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 313

product in the modern spirit, was a rather straightforward critique of anything against ‘common sense’ and thus also slightly ahead of its time. Therefore, it was not long before the consequences of Locke’s philosophy were seen as removing more than just ‘metaphysical whimsies.’ We shall see that the list of Locke’s adversaries is long and repetitive but that they are of similar nature as Shaftesbury’s later attack on the foundations of Locke’s idea of morality and the worry that he was just harping on Hobbes’ dangerous philosophy. Even Locke’s friend, Isaac Newton, once claimed that the *Essay* had ‘struck at the root of morality’ and that he took Locke ‘for a Hobbist.’⁶¹ Though it must be added that Newton was, at that time, in a state of mental breakdown and that he later apologized to Locke.⁶²

The swiftest official response to the *Essay* came from the Platonist and clergyman, John Norris. Early in 1690, he issued a criticism entitled *Cursory Reflections upon a Book called An Essay concerning Human Understanding*. He aimed straight at Locke’s rejection of innate ideas. Norris argued in response that innate ideas are absolutely necessary to explain both ‘Divine and human knowledge.’⁶³ When Norris had attacked Locke’s rejection of innate ideas and his account of the origin of ideas, he quoted Nicolas Malebranche as a source. Locke did not reply to this criticism until Norris published a second edition of *Cursory Reflections* in 1692. In response Lock wrote *Remarks upon some of Mr. Norris' Books, Wherein he asserts P. Malebranche's Opinion of seeing all Things in God and Examination of Malebranche* (1693). Locke’s main objection was directed to Malebranche’s occasionalism, the view that God, as the primary cause of our ideas, directly produced ideas in our minds. Contrary

⁶¹ De Beer, L1659

⁶² Newton claimed that Locke ‘Symbolizes with the Philosopher of *Malmesbury*, in whose steps he affects to tread’, see Turnbull, 1959: 280

⁶³ Johnston, 1958: 554

to this, we have seen that Locke is in support of a causal theory of perception arguing for material and efficient causes on material bodies, via our sensory organs. Locke writes that otherwise the ‘nice and curious structure’ of our organs would have been created by God completely in vain and be wholly unnecessary.⁶⁴

Tyrrell who initially came with good tidings, later reported from Oxford that he had found some ‘thinking men ... dissatisfied’, particularly with what Locke said ‘concerning the law of nature (or reason), whereby we distinguish moral good from evil.’⁶⁵ Tyrrell goes on to suggest that Locke’s theory even implies that morality is relative to culture as it seems to detach morality from the natural law and but reduce it ‘to the praise or dispraise that men give to certain actions in several ... societies’.⁶⁶ And worse yet, Tyrrell points out that it ‘seems to come very near what is so much cryed out upon in Mr. Hobs; when he asserts that in the state of nature and out of the commonwealth, there is no moral good or evil ...’⁶⁷ Along the same lines, William Sherlock expressed his concern that it would benefit the atheists for ‘if all the knowledge we have of God, and of good and evil, be made by ourselves, atheists will easily conclude that it is only the effect of education and superstitious fears.’⁶⁸ Sherlock delivered a sermon denouncing Locke for his rejection of innate ideas, claiming it was not a far from atheism.⁶⁹ The problem of that Locke’s rejection of innate ideas would ‘jeopardize the natural law’, is seen at the heart of further critiques by James Lowde, Thomas Beconsall, Thomas Burnet, and Henry Lee.⁷⁰ Locke’s rejection of innate ideas, coupled with his minimalistic commitments to theology in

⁶⁴ Woolhouse, 2007: 325

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 280 see Tyrrell to Locke in De Beer, L1301

⁶⁶ Cf. de Beer L1301 and *Essay*, I.iii.1, II, xxvii.10-12; II.xxviii.10-12.

⁶⁷ James Tyrrell to Locke, 30 June 1690, see De Beer L1301

⁶⁸ Sherlock quoted in Ashcraft, 1969: 201

⁶⁹ Woolhouse, 2007: 371

⁷⁰ Goldie, 2008: 129

the *Essay*, led Locke's work to be seen as leading to a heretical and sceptical position, thus open for critique by powerful clergy.

In 1694, perhaps in response to the criticism of his *Essay*, but also no doubt of genuine interest, Locke began to thoroughly examine the fundamentals of Christianity, limiting himself to the New Testament, the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles. As a result of his work he then anonymously published *The Reasonableness of Christianity, as delivered in the Scriptures*, in 1695. In the *Reasonableness* Locke enquires what it means to be a Christian and argues that the most fundamental requirement is to believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah. Here, his view accepts the concept of God, as 'one invisible, eternal, omnipotent God, maker of heaven and earth' and that Jesus is the 'son of God.' The belief in these fundamentals, along with obedience and repentance, will lead to salvation. Furthermore, the fundamentals that are, according to Locke, completely in harmony with reason. However, shortly after the *Reasonableness* appeared, John Edwards, an Anglican clergyman, published *Some thoughts concerning the several causes and occasions of atheism* in direct reaction to the 'anonymous' author of *Reasonableness*, with allusions to the Socinianism and atheism. According to Edwards, Locke did not just strike at the fundamentals of morality with his *Essay*, but now also at the very truth and credibility of religious belief and practice. There was no absolute meaning fixed to the term 'Socinian' at this time but it was a heresy primarily associated with rejection of the Trinity and the status *divinity* of Christ. In the *Reasonableness*, Locke omits any discussion on the nature of Jesus Christ, the Trinity and an exposition on the relation between God and Christ other than his mission sent as the Messiah, Son of God. It was also seen as Socinian to deny original sin and the immortality of the soul, something Locke was

accused of as a result of his scepticism presented in the *Essay*. Deism was seen to have similar tendencies, as it was moving towards a ‘natural’ religion and rejected priesthood and the mysteries of Christianity, towards that were only attained through special calling or revelation. This also led to a demise of faith in revealed Scripture.

Therefore, Edwards’ worry was that Locke’s rejection (or at least the consequences of his omission) of the basic teachings of Christian doctrine, such as the Trinity, would lead people to begin to ‘waver about the truth and certainty of the main articles of our religion’, and per extension religion it self.⁷¹ Edwards also highlights another highly contested concern with Locke’s philosophy, which is that if doctrines such as the Trinity are above ‘reason, and natural ideas’, then they are no longer matters of faith, whereupon even the very nature of God comes into question as something beyond reason.⁷² According to Edwards, if those who apply *reasonableness* to Christianity, must by extension be Socinian and even atheist.

Edward’s attack spurred Locke to an in his immediate response and publication of *A Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity* just a few months after *Reasonableness*. He also published *A Second Vindication* in 1697, attempting both to escape Edward’s allegations and defend the seniority of his work in the *Reasonableness* (something I shall turn to further in Chapter 7 when looking more in-depth at Locke’s theology).

During this period significant changes were being made to the legal code in England – for example, the lapse of the Licensing Act in 1695, and the passing of the Blasphemy

⁷¹ Woolhouse, 2007:351

⁷² Op. cit.

act in 1697 – as a result of the publication of John Toland’s *Christianity not Mysterious* (1696). Toland was a young Irish freethinker who, unfortunately for Locke, had taken some of his empiricist epistemology to the extreme. Locke knew of Toland through his correspondence with Benjamin Furley who, in 1693, had described him as a ‘free spirited ingenious man; that quitted the Papacy in Jameses time.’⁷³ However, this letter was written to Locke during the time when Toland was still in training for the ministry by the Presbyterians, and it was not yet apparent to Furley how far he would ‘cut adrift’.⁷⁴

Nevertheless, it was Toland’s publication that spurred Stillingfleet, Bishop of Worcester’s to write *A Discourse in Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity* published also in 1697, in which his criticism is aimed specifically at Locke but in the light of Toland’s radical application of his epistemology. It seemed to have demonstrated what was initially feared by William Sherlock, Locke’s philosophy was dangerous because it could be *used* by those who held more radical views.

Locke was under fire; his work was now associated with with heresies such as Unitarianism and Socinianism, including the works of Toland. Similar to Edwards, Stillingfleet argued against Locke’s view on Scripture, his lack of acknowledgement of the Trinity and the Resurrection. Stillingfleet brought back the debate to Locke’s *Essay* and based his charges on an exposition Locke’s theory of knowledge, specifically on the knowledge of the nature of substance. Stillingfleet brought to attention to the passage often just seen as Locke’s passing remark, which introduces the concept of ‘thinking matter’. According to these passages it appears that Locke

⁷³ De Beer, L1650

⁷⁴ See further in Goldie, 2002: 185

rejects that we have any knowledge of substances, and that he allows God to superadd thought to matter, which means that *matter* can think. These two postulates are directly at odds with the doctrine Trinity, which relies on the concept of *substances*, and the Resurrection of the soul, which relies on being an *immaterial* substance.

Furthermore, Locke's account the soul has long been open to criticism, with particular regards to the doctrine of the Resurrection. As Locke shockingly states in the *Essay*: 'All the great ends of Morality and Religion, are well enough secured without the philosophical Proofs of the Soul's Immateriality.'⁷⁵ Further to this, Locke claims in a later edition of the *Essay*, in presenting his theory of personal identity, that it 'consist not in the identity of substance, but [...] in the identity of consciousness.'⁷⁶ If identity is not placed in a substance then how can it resurrect? Stillingfleet pressed, as an important article of faith, that the Resurrection *requires* also on the identity of the body. Like Stillingfleet, most defenders of the soul's immateriality would concede that the latter is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of the possibility of an afterlife.⁷⁷ Locke does not even accept it as a necessary condition.

Therefore, Locke's rejection of innate ideas coupled with his passing remark in the *Essay* that God can superadd thought to a material substance in IV.iii.6 were two of Locke's most controversial moves. Locke's critics saw this move by Locke as consciously making room for the possibility of a material mind. Locke's concept of 'thinking matter' was thus seen as his final move towards materialism and atheism.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ *Essay*, IV.iii.6

⁷⁶ Woolhouse, 2007: 330

⁷⁷ Thiel, 2012: 95

⁷⁸ Schuurman, 2008: 192

Finally, I think it is worth mentioning an often overlooked critic, Thomas Beconsall, a fellow at Oxford and later a vicar, who, during the time when Locke was preoccupied with the controversy with Stillingfleet, produced a critique entitled *The Grounds and Foundations on Religion*, in 1698. The *Grounds* focuses mainly on the moral theories of Locke's *Essay* and it takes little notice of others of Locke's published writings including his most recent reply to Stillingfleet.⁷⁹ However, Beconsall is drawing a parallel between Locke's *Essay* and the *Two Treatises*, and arguing that his disregard for revelation is due to Locke's arguments being anti-patriarchal. According to Beconsall, Locke's *Essay* was having an outward appearance of being within the natural law tradition, but in practice was instead 'subverting its foundations'.⁸⁰ While Beconsall maintained that moral laws are 'implanted in our hearts' and that there is a conscience that is the 'the candle of the Lord,' he accuses Locke of reducing 'conscience' to being merely a 'consciousness'.⁸¹ And he even disregards both nature and revelation, by which it is a fact, as Beconsall writes, 'that God has ... placed the woman in a state of subjection' to men. This is a vehement attack on Locke's feminism, as Goldie points out, and has often been overlooked. It is perhaps sad that Locke did not respond to Beconsall. Locke's 'feminism' is most prominently seen in *Two Treatises*, which reinterpret Genesis and the creation story, against the establish view defending a patriarchal view, and instead argues for the equality of men and women. Locke thereby had to reinterpret the creation of Adam and argue against the superiority of Adam first by virtue of being a *man*, and then a king and again the patriarchal view of divine right of Kings. In doing this he laid the foundations for his argument against Original Sin, which are further explored in the *Reasonableness*.

⁷⁹ Goldie, 2008: 130

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 129

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 130 Cf. *Essay* I.ii.3 and I.iii.20

Locke's treatment of these important topics in theology is something I return to in Chapter 7. However, my present aim is to conclude that in Beconsall's critique, like Shaftesbury's and so many others, there was a general worry of the *foundations* of Locke's philosophy. The foundations for his moral philosophy and theory of personal identity, foundations for his claim for equality, and in the end, the questions: What are the foundations of Locke's philosophy? Does his philosophy rest on a heretic worldview that relies on materialism and a disdain for Christian revelation? Even if he did not intend his philosophy to disregard Christianity, at the fact of it, his empiricism epistemology seems inconsistent with it. And this, as we shall see next, is what many readers today have concluded, also along the lines of Shaftesbury's critique I initially raised.

I.4 Locke's Reception Today

There is still a tendency within recent scholarship to read Locke as a secular philosopher, primarily as a philosopher of science and epistemology, with the foundations of his philosophy inspired by the Epicurean materialist revival. The term 'Hobbesian' is today no longer seen as derogatory or dangerous. On the contrary, today we congratulate Hobbes for his philosophical system, and view it as an important landmark in our intellectual history that essentially reflects our 'modern' materialist inclinations. The same applies from a political perspective, where both Hobbes and Locke have been seen as the fathers of liberalism. Thus, placing Locke at the footsteps of Hobbes, John Coleman claims that Locke is regarded 'first and foremost as a philosopher of science ...' with the 'intent to provide an epistemological foundation for the scientific discoveries and methodology of his

contemporaries in the Royal Society,⁸² meaning that the foundations of Locke's philosophy were consciously aimed towards scientific enhancement. In this reading it is true, as G. A. J. Rogers states, that Locke is often seen as the 'arch-empiricist,' who is 'decidedly modern.'⁸³ At the same time, there is today a growing acceptance of Locke as a religious philosopher, which yields two opposing accounts of Locke's philosophy that are seemingly irreconcilable, and this continues to baffle scholars.

I shall begin by turning to a significant point in the modern Locke scholarship that began in the 1950s with Leo Strauss' revival of the reading of Locke through the eyes of his contemporary critics, as a follower of Hobbes. This was done in his publication *Natural Right and History* in 1953, which has a particular focus on Locke's psychological hedonism, empiricism, and conventional views of morality and natural law theory. Strauss writes that the non-theological natural science that emerged in the 17th century destroyed the foundations of traditional natural law and signifies a significant break in the 17th century in the conception of natural right.⁸⁴ Hobbes broke with the concept of natural law dependent upon revealed theology, as understood by Thomas of Aquinas, who based many of his arguments on traditional classical ideas.⁸⁵ Strauss, at first, portrays an unbroken chain from Socrates to Richard Hooker. He claims that the Thomistic conception of natural law goes back to the early church fathers who, in turn their turn, 'were pupils of the Stoics and the pupils of the pupils of Socrates.'⁸⁶ He argues that while Hooker is part of the traditional, ancient, conception of natural law, Locke became part of the break into the modern school and must thus be a follower of Hobbes. However, according to Strauss, Locke has done

⁸² Colman, 1983: 1

⁸³ Rogers, 2008: 193

⁸⁴ Strauss, 1953: 165

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 164

⁸⁶ Op. Sit

this cleverly and in disguise. According to Strauss, Locke wrote in an era of prosecution and anyone who was a clever intellectual and did not agree with the established religious doctrines, must have appeared to agree with them. Hobbes fails to do this, but Locke in Strauss view is more successful. Therefore, we must understand Locke as a figure of Hobbes in disguise. In his work *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (1952) Strauss sets out a famous criterion for intellectuals who wrote in an ‘era of prosecution’:

[I]f an able writer who has a clear mind and a perfect knowledge of the orthodox view and all its ramifications, contradicts surreptitiously and as it were in passing one of its necessary presuppositions or consequences which he explicitly recognizes and maintains everywhere else, we can reasonably suspect that he was opposed to the orthodox system as such.⁸⁷

Strauss argues that both Hobbes and Locke were writing in an era of religious prosecution and therefore had to *disguise* their unorthodox writings in a garment of orthodoxy. Hobbes’s *Leviathan* was presented as a more clearly as a *political* system and not as a particularly contribution to religious philosophy or theology. Locke however, Strauss argues, was more successful than Hobbes and so, we must read between the lines.

Furthermore, most significantly according to the Straussian reading of Locke, he adopts Hobbes’s secular outlook on human nature and the individual as an atomic, egoistic, driven by self-interest and self-preservation. This picture of human nature is joined together in a society under laws of convention. As Strauss argues:

⁸⁷ Strauss, 1952: 32

According to Locke, man and not nature, the work of man and not the gift of nature, is the origin of almost everything valuable: man owes almost everything valuable to his own efforts.⁸⁸

Strauss is thereby rejecting the element of there being a 'gift' in Locke's philosophy, a gift by nature that makes the individual indebted to God. Locke's individual is instead, like Hobbes's, self-made and driven only to act in that manner that will constitute his or her *own* happiness, without reference to God or to any other person so wholly unconnected with them. This is atomic egoism, as pointed out earlier by Lawrence E. Klein. This individualism, the Epicurean strand that Hobbes took up, makes the view of society as only coming 'into existence to meet the needs and further the aims of the atomic individuals.'⁸⁹ It is in this light that Strauss interprets Locke's individualism, just like Hobbes', as based on an atomic view of the individual, abstracted from both God's creation and from society. Strauss argues that Locke made the individual ego 'centre and origin of the moral world.'⁹⁰ A view, if true, would allow that the foundation of Locke's morals would be both hedonism and egoism.

It should be noted that a contributing factor to Locke's religious and theological viewpoints was not recognised because his religious writings were not published or readily accessible until the latter part of the 20th century. The Lovelace collection, with an enormous amount of Locke's un-published works, correspondences and

⁸⁸ Strauss, 1953: 248

⁸⁹ Klein, 1994: 67

⁹⁰ Strauss, 1953: 248

notes, was given to the Bodleian Library, and thereby made accessible to the scholarly world in 1947. Nevertheless, this new material was completely ignored by Strauss who went ahead with branding Locke as a Hobbist in disguise. Although Strauss' view has been widely contested since, his arguments still carries a momentum, as in seen in Thomas L. Pangle (1988), Michael Zuckert (2002), and Samuel Zinaich (2006). Straussians, such as Zuckert, Pangle, and other followers of C.B. MacPherson, are united in supposing that Locke introduced an entirely new political philosophy under the guise of orthodox Christian tradition.⁹¹

However, the so-called 'Cambridge School' of history of political thought – with leading Locke-scholars such as John Dunn and Mark Goldie – has now, more or less, broken with the Straussian tradition, particularly through the work of John Dunn, presented first in his *The Political Thought of John Locke* (1969), where he affirms:

Locke's writings on politics [...] derive a single normative conclusion from a theological axiom. The axiom is simply that there exists a benevolent God who provides a set of sufficient rules for the direction of human beings throughout their lives.⁹²

Dunn argued against Strauss's reading of Locke as a covert Hobbist, and instead highlights the importance of the role of God and theology in Locke's political philosophy. Further to this, and more recently, Victor Nuovo's work has focused specifically on publishing Locke's theological writings as he argues that Locke's theology is 'neither peripheral nor pursued merely for the sake of appearances' but

⁹¹ Tetlow, 2009: 169

⁹² Dunn, 1969: 11

instead as ‘one of the main determinants of his intellectual pursuits, so that his various philosophical enquiries inevitably impinge upon or lead back to theology.’⁹³

The problem still remains, however, as Locke’s theology might have a more apparent role within his political writings and in the context of history of political thought, the question is remains is how Locke’s religious convictions squared with his empiricist epistemology, and how we bridge these convictions to how Locke is read in the context of history of philosophy. The heart of this discussion harks back to those questions raised by Locke’s contemporary critics and are here reiterated: if Locke really does subscribe to a traditional conception of natural law theory, while at the same time wanting to commit to an empiricist epistemology, then what does he take to be the source of morality, and how do we come to know it? As summed up by Richard Ashcraft:

What is important is an assessment of the *source* of the information. Is it the product of sense-experience and human reasoning, or is it the word of God? And how shall the priorities be assigned to information from either source?⁹⁴

By finding what Locke would have taken to be the ‘source of information’, we also must find out what the very foundations of Locke’s philosophy are. To this end, it would seem, as Ashcraft concludes, that Locke gives ‘no clear and consistent answer.’⁹⁵ Therefore, there are still two types of divide present in Locke scholarship: first, between those who seek to interpret his political works and those who interpret

⁹³ Nuovo, 2002: lvii

⁹⁴ Ashcraft, 1969: 215, my italics

⁹⁵ Ashcraft, 1969: 215

his philosophical and religious writings; and, secondly, with regards to the apparent inconsistency that *even if* we can create an account of Locke's political philosophy founded upon a theology and traditional natural law theory that stems from the authority of God, how this can be reconciled with his seemingly incompatible empiricism. In response to this problem, Peter Laslett has argued that we should instead distinguish between Locke's writings of philosophy and epistemology on the one hand, and Locke's political writings on the other, as they are more reliant on his religious views. Thereby we should accept them as two separated enterprises and, therefore, *accept* his writings as irreconcilable. As Laslett states: 'Locke is, perhaps, the least consistent of all the great philosophers, and pointing out the contradictions within any of his works or between them is no difficult task.'⁹⁶ For example, as we can see in the incompatibility between Locke's appeal to natural law theory in his political writings and his rejection of innate ideas in the *Essay*. As Wolfgang von Leyden adds, 'Locke simply cannot reconcile the theory of knowledge that he proposes in the *Essay* with the ethical doctrine he proposes in his political works.'⁹⁷

A reading of Locke as an Epicurean would, however, irrevocably place Locke in the same camp where both his epistemology and political philosophy can be related to Hobbes. This reading hinges upon Locke's proof of God's existence where the questions are if, indeed, Locke was aware of the general failure of his own proof, or if Strauss is right, that the mistake was intentional. Bluhm, Teger, and Wintfeild argue that Locke's proof of God's existences is so blatantly unsound that his divinely mandated natural law falls on this proof. Adopting a Straussian reading, these authors claim that Locke's proof even 'constitutes a hidden argument *against* the

⁹⁶ Laslett, 1960: 82

⁹⁷ von Leyden, 1954: 9-10

demonstrability of a divine being’, therefore, Locke’s proof for God’s existence as presented in the *Essay* ‘must be empty words, according to the principles of his epistemology.’⁹⁸ They conclude that, ‘Locke did not think it possible to give a rational proof of the existence of God, and that he could not, therefore, have believed in a divinely sanctioned natural law which can be publicly known.’⁹⁹

Furthermore, Locke's theory of personal identity as presented in the *Essay* also broke with the traditional natural law theory, as he had, according to Michael Ayers, already veered away from his early mind–body dualism, and taken ‘a starting point more favourable to the materialists’.¹⁰⁰ In a similar spirit John P. Wright writes that Locke’s later concept of the soul is clearly anti-Cartesian and suggests that the hypothesis that Locke represents is a modification of a 17th century Epicurean account of the soul.¹⁰¹ Locke was presenting an Epicurean view of the soul in the *Essay*.

This is something also argued by Catherine Wilson, who writes that ‘Locke could be understood as raising the possibility that we are atomic thinking machines that generate, in addition to delusory ideas of ourselves as immaterial substances, delusory ideas of God and a life beyond the grave.’¹⁰² This treatment of Locke’s theory of the soul is dependent upon his scepticism towards substances. Wilson’s view is also plausible in the light of his minimal theology and apparent heterodoxy. Further to this scepticism, John Yolton argues that Locke’s hypothesis of the soul is that it *might* be material; at the very least he argues that it inspired a whole new generation of

⁹⁸ Bluhm et. al., 1980: 416

⁹⁹ Op. cit.

¹⁰⁰ Ayers 1991: 255, vol II

¹⁰¹ See Wright, 1991: 240

¹⁰² Wilson, 2008: 217

materialism.¹⁰³ And recently, Torrey Shanks specifically uses the Epicurean revival of materialism ‘to approach Locke’s claim to experience and rhetorical thought.’ She argues that Epicureanism is a solution to the inconsistencies we find between Locke’s ‘circular, rambling manner’ in his works and their theoretical merit. Therefore, ‘situating Locke in relationship to Epicurean materialist culture invites us to give proper attention to the interplay of style and substance in the *Essay*.’¹⁰⁴

As Epicureanism was part of a theological shift from ‘a pessimistic view of terrestrial human happiness to a hedonic conception of earthly pleasure,’ as earlier described by Sheppard, the focus of pleasure and happiness became gradually less concerned with the uncertainties of afterlife, but more so with the temporal existence here on earth.¹⁰⁵ This shift, as we have seen, was also one from being concerned with the ends of religion, which lies in the afterlife, to the ends of science, which works in a more apparent way for the bettering of this life, as opposed to the afterlife. Hylarie Kochiras writes that Locke's reaction to this shift is on the one hand conservative, as he ‘retains as an ideal the notion that scientific knowledge is demonstrative and certain, an ideal he shares with the two main targets of his *Essay*, the Aristotelians and the Cartesians.’ But it is, on the other hand, more progressive: ‘Impressed by empirical methods and cognizant of their poor fit with the Aristotelian ideal, he defines a distinct kind of knowledge, one inferior to genuine scientific knowledge but appropriate to human sensory capacities.’ In so doing, Kochiras concludes that

¹⁰³ Yolton, 1984

¹⁰⁴ Shanks, 2014 see *Introduction*

¹⁰⁵ Sheppard, 2015: 3

Locke's philosophy of science develops an epistemological basis for the new, experimental philosophy.'¹⁰⁶

Again, the sources of the epistemological basis that Locke proposed has often been attributed to those along the Epicurean strand, a stand that owed much of its revival in the 17th century to Gassendi. Therefore, the link between the Epicurean strand and Locke has often attributed to the influence of Gassendi. For example, Locke's statement that we cannot know the nature of substances sounds like scepticism, in particular like that of Gassendi. As Lennon points out: the Sceptics are those who even deny that there is a criterion of knowledge, they even doubt the senses, since there is a lack of connection between the experience the senses have and the nature of the thing in itself. Therefore, even if we know the taste of honey as sweet, there is no way of knowing if that is a property intrinsic to honey itself. As Gassendi writes: for, 'if honey were sweet in itself and according to its own nature, it would appear as such to all who have the power of tasting honey.'¹⁰⁷ Locke's discussion on primary and secondary qualities is regarded as the most significant advancement of Gassendi's theory. In Chapter 8 of Book 2 of the *Essay*, Locke argues for a corpuscularian hypothesis that bodies can only act on impulse.

Lennon writes that the background to the 17th century may be summarized under two headings: scepticism and the emergence of the 'New Science.'¹⁰⁸ According to Richard Popkin, Gassendi was the accomplisher 'of one of the more important

¹⁰⁶ Kochiras, Hylarie, 2014 "Locke's Philosophy of Science", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/locke-philosophy-science/>>. Last accessed. 9 Feb. 2018

¹⁰⁷ Gassendi cited in Lennon, 1991: 263

¹⁰⁸ Lennon, 1991: 259

revolutions of modern times, the separation of science from metaphysics.’¹⁰⁹ With a reading of Locke in this context, it is hard to see that any Neo-Platonist thought would have at all influenced Locke. Indeed, Platonism is entirely an omitted branch of study in this depiction, and no wonder that as a result the Cambridge Platonists have often been overlooked or seen as irrelevant. While he acknowledges that scepticism is a result of the recovery of classical texts, and in some sense the Reformation, this narrow depiction of the 17th century background is exactly what I am arguing against.

Therefore, there is still a prevalent view that accepts Locke’s empiricist epistemology, and psychological hedonism as presented in the *Essay*, as inconstant with his religious writings. It is indeed on Locke’s epistemology that his religious philosophy stands or falls. However, we cannot read Locke as a secular thinker when he, in fact, was not. Margaret Osler points out, that underlying theological assumptions that continued to be most significantly reflected in the epistemological and metaphysical orientations that were incorporated into different versions of the mechanical philosophy.¹¹⁰ For example, Descartes’ mechanical philosophy and rationalist epistemology are vested in his theological commitments. Osler writes further that, ‘the differences between Gassendi’s and Descartes’ versions of the mechanical philosophy directly reflected the differences in their theological presuppositions.’¹¹¹ I argue that this should also be the case for Hobbes and Locke, whose theological assumptions continue to be reflected in their views on mechanical philosophy. I argue, therefore, that the question we should ask is not *if*, but rather *how* Locke squares his philosophy with his theology, and rather, to what *extent* theology informed his philosophical system. In

¹⁰⁹ Popkin, 1979: 143

¹¹⁰ Osler, 1994: 221

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 222

particular, with all the access we have to Locke's material today, including drafts, correspondences, and private notebooks that span over his entire life, it should be possible to find a concordance between his private and public thinking.

Victor Nuovo has been responsible for much of the crucial publication of Locke's religious writings and manuscripts, aiming to recognize and understand Locke's theology and his 'religious side'.¹¹² But while scholars such as Jeremy Waldron, John Marshall, Kim Ian Parker, and Timothy Stanton¹¹³, more recently contributed greatly to this recognition, their the main focus has been on Locke's political writings.¹¹⁴ Therefore, there is still a lack of recognition in Locke's philosophy with regards to the *Essay* as his empiricist epistemology still has not been squared with his Christian thought apparent in other parts of his writings.

1.5 Conclusion and Chapter overviews

Therefore, the task remains at hand: Is it possible to reconcile the divergent readings of Locke's philosophy into a more coherent philosophy, and does Locke succeed to endorse a philosophy that accounts for both scientific and religious speculation? I shall argue that it is possible, if we reread the foundations of his philosophy. In order to do this we need a new intellectual background, which is not dependent upon the

¹¹² Nuovo's publications on Locke's religious writings: *The Reasonableness of Christianity as Delivered in the Scriptures*, (1997); *John Locke: Writings on Religion* (2002) an edited volume, *John Locke and Christianity: Contemporary Responses to Reasonableness of Christianity* (1997)

¹¹³ See Tim Stanton's *Locke and the Politics and Theology of Toleration*, *Political Studies*: 2006 Vol. 54, 84-192. See Stanton and Williams debate in *Political Studies* and John William Tate's *Locke, God, and Civil Society: Response to Stanton*, *Political Theory*: 2012 Vol. 40, 222-228 and *Dividing Locke from God: the Limits of Theology in Locke's Political Philosophy*, *Philosophy and Social Criticism*: 2013 Vol. 39, 133-164

¹¹⁴ See for example Waldron (2002), Marshall (1994), Kim Ian Parker (2004)

Epicurean strand that was taken up by Hobbes, but rather a Platonic strand that was adapted by the early Church fathers and is most prominently seen in the Cambridge Platonists in the 17th century. In Chapter 1 I have presented the reading of Locke as a Hobbist.

Chapter 2 argues that if we read Locke as a Hobbist, he must be part of the intellectual background which Hobbes was operating in. This chapter gives an account of some of the intellectual background of Hobbes' philosophy. First by looking at the origins of Epicureanism, followed by the related debate between theological Voluntarism and Rationalism and how it relates to the famous Euthyphro dilemma. Finally I give an account of the Epicurean revival in the 17th century. Epicureanism was made popular particularly through the works of the French philosopher Gassendi. The Epicurean revival fitted well with the rise of materialism, mechanism, and the New Science. Gassendi was responsible for much of the revived interest in Epicureanism, as he was particularly interested in how it fitted with the New Science and atomism; he also attempted to couple with theological voluntarism and scepticism. Finally, I look at how these ideas culminated in Hobbes' radical philosophy. I argue that Hobbes, through his materialism and an instrumental conception of reason, makes a controversial break with the traditional Stoic and the Christian Neo-platonic conception of natural law. This break ultimately leads to a conceptual break between God and human nature.

Chapter 3 demonstrates that alongside the Epicurean revival there was also an opposing Hellenistic influence at work in 17th century thought. As a preamble to the 17th century context in chapter 4, this chapter examines some crucial aspects of

Platonism in the Hellenistic period, then the Stoic Logos and the development of these two schools in the work of Philo of Alexandria. With a particular focus on how Philo combined Platonism with the Stoic Logos in his interpretation of the Old Testament, I highlight that Philo was a significant source to the Early Church Fathers and therefore an important transmitter of Hellenistic thought into Christianity.

Given the background on Plato to Philo that we have seen in Chapter 3, Chapter 4 aims to link Philo to Locke through tracing the Philonic concept of *right reason* in Hugo Grotius' theory of natural law. Grotius was crucial for the revival of natural law theory in the 17th century and sparked a debate that was taken up in England by both Selden and Hobbes, who both argued for an *instrumental* account of reason. The Cambridge Platonists then responded to Hobbes by arguing for the retention of the classical understanding of reason as not merely instrumental. This chapter also highlights that there was a significant growing philo-Semitic sentiment at that time and that the debate concerning the two interpretations of reason was very much alive at the time that Locke lived.

In Chapter 4 I this chapter aims to demonstrate the link between Philo and Locke through looking at Philo in the 17th century context. I shall do this by tracing the Philonic concept of *right reason* in Hugo Grotius' revival of the natural law theory. This revival sparked a debate that was taken up in England by both Selden and Hobbes, who both argued for a contrary view of reason as *instrumental*. This chapter shall then look at the Cambridge Platonists who responded to Hobbes by arguing for retaining the classical understanding of reason as not merely instrumental. In the context of Philo's indirect revival in the 17th century, this chapter also highlights that

there was a significant philo-Semitic sentiment growing at that time. It concludes, as it aims to demonstrate, that the debate *concerning* the two interpretations opposing of reason was very much potent and present at the time that Locke also lived.

In Chapter 5, I specifically examine where we can find this influence on Locke. I first look at what scholarly work has found so far on Locke's connection to Platonism (which is not much). I then demonstrate how we can trace both Philo and philo-Semitism in Locke's intellectual context through looking at his work in Oxford, his manuscripts and his particular reading of the Cambridge Platonists. I cover Locke's general encounter with the Cambridge Platonists, and then I focus particularly on Locke's relation to Whichcote, Cudworth, and Lady Damaris Masham, the latter being Cudworth's daughter and one of Locke's closest friends. Locke's connection to the Cambridge Platonists establishes that the Platonists' debate and response to Hobbes was very much a live issue and accessible *at* first hand to Locke through his significant encounters with the Cambridge Platonists.

In Chapter 6, I uses the new sources from Philo to the Cambridge Platonists to reinterpret two crucial and particularly puzzling parts of Locke's philosophy as presented in his *Essay*: his proof of God's existence from book IV.10 and his 'passing remark' that God might have superadded thought to matter in a remark made in passage IV.iii.6. By examining Locke's concept of reason in this particular context of *right reason*, I argue: first that Locke's definition *fits* the Platonist interpretation of reason; second that the Platonist interpretation of reason explains puzzling aspects of Locke's proof of the existence of God as his general rebuttal of materialism; and third

that Locke's passing remark on 'thinking matter' only furthers his rebuttal of materialism.

Therefore, having established my theory that Locke is not a materialist and that he has a Platonist concept of reason can also be applied on to other aspects of his thought. In the light of our new understanding of Locke's conception of reason, I argue in Chapter 7 that we can also draw a clearer link between his theory of personal identity and his theology. If we accept Locke's rejection of materialism and his Platonic conception of reason, it follows that Locke also favour of a stronger theory for the immortality of the soul. The first part of this Chapter examines Locke's theory of personal identity as presented in the *Essay*. I argue that we can again trace an influence from the Cambridge Platonist Cudworth, in particular through the term 'consciousness'. In the second part I give an account of Locke's unique take on theology, with focus on his Christology. I conclude that there is a clear continuum between Locke's view of the individual, his theory of personal identity as based in *consciousness*, and his Christology. I conclude by some reflection on Locke's affinity with Philo, that continuum between theory of identity and Christology can also be framed within his ethics and epistemology.

Chapter 2

From Epicureanism to Voluntarism and Hobbism

in the 17th Century

2. 1 Epicurean philosophy

[W]hen we shall perceive that nothing can be created from nothing, then we shall at once more correctly understand from that principle what we are seeking, both the source from which each thing can be made and the manner in which everything is done without the working of the gods.¹¹⁵

The two main sources of Epicureanism is Diogenes Laërtius's *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* c.a. 300 BCE and Lucretius's work *De rerum natura*, written in 49 BCE. The latter is based on Epicurus's long-lost treatise 'On Nature.'¹¹⁶ The Epicurean natural philosophy sought to give a rationalised materialistic hypothesis explaining physical phenomena, with the purpose to relieve the fear produced by dogmatic, religious opinion. With their philosophy the Epicureans originally set themselves out to challenge Platonism, amongst many, with its metaphysical, otherworldly concepts of Ideas, Forms and divine providence. However, the Epicureans were later seen as also opposing Stoicism, who heavily criticized Epicurean hedonism and conventionalist conception of ethics.

¹¹⁵ *DRN*, 1992: i. 146–59.

¹¹⁶ See Wilson, 2008: 2 and Hutton, 2015: 61

Epicureanism follows a Democritian atomistic world-view, where the world is constituted by an infinite number of atoms. These atoms, varying size and weight, move with equal speed as long as they ‘meet with no obstruction.’¹¹⁷ The creation of life and nature are made through the complete random occasions when these atoms collide. Epicurus modified Democritus concept that everything is constituted of atoms, buy introducing the concept of the ‘swerve’ (kilynàmen).¹¹⁸ The swerve is describing the atom’s motion. While the natural movement of the atom is downwards movement, but it is, according to Epicurus, the swerve that causes atoms to collide and in a sense create order out of chaos. This order is what we can then observe, measure, experiment and theorise about. According to this mechanical explanation of the world, there are no hidden metaphysical causes, no hidden knowledge or mysteries. Since the world was not created by an intelligent creator or with intention, Epicurean philosophy is also in complete absence of transcendental divine principles and the possibility of divine intervention. If gods did exist they were just like other things constituted of atoms, and they simply did not care or have the power to intervene.

Epicureans condemned all forms of religious eschatology and argued instead for a hedonistic and fearless existence.¹¹⁹ They also rejected the concept of an immaterial, immortal soul. Death, the Epicureans said, is just the dissolution of the compositions of atoms; it is inevitable and final. Since all pain that is experienced is ultimately connected to the body, there is nothing to fear after death.

¹¹⁷ *DRN*, 1992: i. 146–59.

¹¹⁸ Orsucci, 2002: 12

¹¹⁹ Rosenbaum, 1986: 217-225, cf. the famous Roman Epitaph often associated with Epicureanism *non fui; fui; non sum; non curo*, ‘I was not, I am not, I do not care’

According to the Epicureans death is but the dispersion of the atoms and a return to a state of being nothing. There is therefore nothing to fear after death. In other words, death according to the Epicureans “is nothing to us, seeing that, when we are, death is not come, and, when death is come, we are not. It is nothing, then, either to the living or to the dead, for with the living it is not and the dead exist no longer”¹²⁰ Because all *experience* would be gone, as Wilson explains: ‘experience depends on the integrity of the human body and its sensory organs, death and its aftermath will not be experienced. The atoms composing the soul will drift away, and we will no longer sense, or feel, or be anything at all.’¹²¹ Thus, the epicurean maxim is that ‘Death is nothing to us’: ‘for the body, when it has been resolved into its elements, has no feeling, and that which has no feeling is nothing to us.’¹²²

The main benefit of understanding and accepting this condition of being ‘nothing’, they argued, is that it will *free* the mind from superstitions and fears that are created by the imposed authority of the gods through the prospect of punishment and the uncertainties of the afterlife.¹²³ These fears of the afterlife and punishments are mere inventions made by those who belong to the clergy or ruling class in order to exercise and maintain their power by promulgating religious superstition.¹²⁴ The only benefit from people freeing a divine punishments, is that the fear it self can be used by authorities to coerce people; they are simply made up in order in order to secure the clergy’s or ruling class’s private or priestly privileges.

¹²⁰ *DL*, X.123

¹²¹ Wilson, 2008: 4-5

¹²² *DL*, X. 139

¹²³ Nuovo, 2011: 212

¹²⁴ Wilson, 2008: 7

Furthermore, the Epicureans held that God is just created as a mental figure, representing an artificially created threat. In other words, God is just an ‘proleptic’ idea that has ‘spontaneously’ arisen in the human mind, as Wilson further explains, ‘rather than a being who had impressed an idea of himself on the human mind’, as in Platonism.¹²⁵ The main objective of human life should instead be to reach a state of freedom from pain in this life, both from bodily pain as well as freedom from ‘the fears of the mind’ that causes mental pain and suffering. Their definition of the ‘good’ is therefore characterized by *hedonism*, that is, the term ‘good’ can only be defined in terms of a materialist framework and the natural pains and pleasures that is *experienced* by the body. This definition however, according to Wilson, opens a more ‘realistic’ account of the temporal and fragile state of human life and happiness.¹²⁶ Most importantly, Epicureans can be seen as ‘realistic’ because their understanding of pain and pleasure, and the state of death, leads to a shift in the focus from finding happiness in the afterlife to finding it instead in the present life. According to the epicurean perspective, the present life, should not be understood, or fabricated by illusions of the religious threats. There are no gods, to serve or please, the conception of *ethics* becomes a completely non-congenital and conventional, self-serving system.

In this context and due to the absence of interference of divine will, the Epicureans have been seen as empowering the human individual will. This tenet of empowering free will is in contrast to Stoicism, which has often been interpreted as removing human freedom. The Stoics held that in the material world is governed by divine providence is always above human choice and action and that divine providence

¹²⁵ Wilson, 2008: 8

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5

could therefore always interfere.¹²⁷ In this way, the Epicureans hold that human action is not driven by an internal virtue and morality, but only by what is pleasurable to the individual. Virtue and morality is nothing *in itself*, apart from what is pleasurable. According to this view, the theory of there being a divinely ordained, so-called ‘natural law’ would be just a non-existent entity. Nor does the concept of reason play the role of discovering virtue, as in the traditional conception of natural law theory. Even though Lucretius defines reason as having the power of breaking down barriers, i.e. withholding the truth and uncovering ‘the march of events throughout the whole of space,’ reason only extends as far as the material universe itself.¹²⁸ The Epicurean conception of reason is not something reflected in the divine mind, able to transcend and discover metaphysical, other worldly truths, simply because there aren’t any to be discovered. In the same way, reason cannot discover any moral truths, ultimately because there is no objective morality.

The Epicureans held that ethics is an entirely conventional concept. Legal institutions are established due to the mental fear that is produced by the prospects of a potential punishment and the shame that follows after being punished. Therefore, the Epicureans were strongly opposed to any form of law and punishment, both **as** positive and divine because they would yield the same type of unnecessary fear. Instead, the Epicureans put a strong emphasis on friendship, which rested on the idea of the benefits that come with ‘mutual happiness.’¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Osler, 1994: 81

¹²⁸ *DRN*, 1992: iii.13-17.

¹²⁹ Wilson, 2008: 10-11

Epicurean naturalism is incompatible with all Christian doctrine; there can be no miracles, no room for prayer, no doctrine of original sin, the immateriality of the soul, or resurrection of the body in the afterlife. Instead, Epicureans laid the foundations for a conventional ethical system that relied on a form of individualism and hedonism, based on the mutual benefit between individuals as free agents independent of religious authority and convictions. Their ethics is based on a materialistic outlook, where the role of the status human nature is nothing over and above the animal life; it is driven by physical desires that arise from marital causes to serve material ends. Life is as ephemeral as the atoms that constitute it.

In conclusion, even if gods do exist, the Epicureans held that they were also just material beings like humans and would be not at all concerned with human life or existence. It is within this inaccessibility of the gods that Epicureanism later became compatible with theological voluntarism held by Gassendi and Hobbes. For even if everything is designed by God's will, will is per definition arbitrary, and there is no way of God's will. Gassendi's voluntarism became an opening door for Hobbes' particular use of the Epicurean account of justice, while still placing it within the rubric of a Christian commonwealth.

However, it is not necessarily the case that God's will and his reason are mutually exclusive. The question is whether God's creation was or was not connected to a rational or intellectual structure. In other words, if the world reflects such structure in its apparent rationality, or if it is only one of the different ways he could have created it. In the former case, God's freedom seem to be limited somehow, because he cannot change the rational structure of the world, as for instance the fact that $2+2=4$. The

point is the absence of rational and bounding structure, as for instance Plato's ideas. Therefore, before explaining how Epicureanism was revived in the 17th century, I shall first briefly explain the two strands as two opposing explanations of God's creation and participation in the universe.

2.2 Voluntarism and Rationalism: Plato's Euthryphro's dilemma

Following the influence of ancient Greek philosophy in the 12th to 13th century, there was a development of two strands of theological commitments explaining the relationship between God and creation: whether God's act of creating the world was to be ascribed to his will or to his reason.¹³⁰ These two strands are commonly known as 'voluntarism' and 'intellectualism' or 'rationalism.' As summed up by Margaret Osler:

[V]oluntarism is the view that the creation is absolutely contingent on God's will and Intellectualism is the view that there are some elements of necessity in the creation.¹³¹

The first strand, voluntarism, holds that the world is created out of God's *will*. God's will is immanent in the world, as his will can directly affect the world. However, so far as the world is dependent upon what he chooses, God's will is arbitrary because God may will to create some parts of the world in one manner, other parts in another manner, and so forth. This makes creation contingent upon God's arbitrary and unpredictable will. This is why voluntarism became a theology easy to combine with the ethics of the ancient Epicureans. God's will, as an arbitrary force in nature, can easily be replaced by any arbitrary power, for example materialism with its contingent

¹³⁰ Osler, 1994: 17

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 11

collision of atoms in motion, as held by Epicurean philosophy. As a result, human reason cannot be expected to know the meaning and nature of creation: it becomes inaccessible, just like God.

According to the second strand, *rationalism*, creation is sapientistic, meaning that the world is created out of God's reason. God's reason is equated with wisdom. This means that the world is created rational, and so human nature and the human reason must therefore correspond to divine reason. This view was held by Plato and the Neo-Platonists. Because of this correspondence between God's rationality and human rationality, the patterns of reasoning in one's own mind could be expected to be similar in some way to the patterns of reasoning in God's mind. As a result, the entire creation is made fit to be explained and understood within the limits of human reason. One could, therefore, expect to understand the nature of creation through introspection and through the exercise of reason and intuition. In this case, God is separated from creation by necessity since he cannot *change* by *will* what his reason has created. God creates the world out of the necessity, that is, out of his own rational constitution. This also means that God cannot change the laws of nature because he is also subject to them because he is not part of nature. If God was part of nature, he would in a sense be material.

Furthermore, the two strands have implications which leads to two different ethical systems that describes the relationship between moral agents *within* the creation and to their creator. According to voluntarism, the definition of the concept of the 'good' and moral right and wrong becomes arbitrarily dependent on God's *will*, while in the second case, God's will is dependent upon what is already *necessarily good* by the

rational pre-established order. Rationalism holds that there is a primacy of God's reason and there is an organized continuum between God's rationality and the rational order of the world. The very concept of God's reason can be replaced by the concept that nature is acting according to a certain set of rational laws. God's reason can therefore be replaced by the rational order of nature, and similarly, so too can an individual human, as a rational and social being, achieve law and order without God's existence or interference. These two strands are also the two horns in the famous 'Euthyphro dilemma' as presented in Plato's dialogue *Euthyphro*, which I shall briefly address now.

The Problem of Euthyphro

Plato's *Euthyphro* is a dialogue between Socrates and Euthyphro, where the latter claims that 'the pious is what all the gods love'.¹³² Socrates questions this statement by asking: 'Is the pious being loved by the gods because it *is* pious, or is it pious because it is being loved by the gods?'¹³³ That is, Socrates highlights the difference between intrinsic and external factors. As he continues explaining, 'One is such as to be loved because it is being loved, the other is being loved because it is such as to be loved.'¹³⁴ These two views gives rise to the two horns of the so-called 'the Euthyphro dilemma'. According to the first horn, something is being loved due to an external – arbitrary – factor, i.e. of being loved. In the second horn of the dilemma, something loved is dependent on the property of being loved as intrinsic to the thing itself. This has been translated into Christian theological terms of God's will as an *external*

¹³² Plato, 1997: 9-11 (9e)

¹³³ Ibid., p. 9-11 (10a)

¹³⁴ Ibid., (11a)

power or force versus God's rationality as an *intrinsic* principle or force, which highlights and corresponds to the two distinct theological positions of God's nature and his relationship to the creation.

According to the first horn, the problem is that everything that happens in the world is dependent on the will of God. The problem is that this creates an understanding of the universe and morality as arbitrary in the face of God's *personal* will. There is therefore no way of knowing God's goodness or intentions, as his will might change. In the same way, we cannot know what is morally right and wrong because that too might change in the face of God's will.

According to the second horn, God creates the world out of necessity. Ultimately, the second horn questions if the 'good' is good because it gains the property from God's will or is the property of 'goodness' something intrinsic to the good thing itself, that is, something independent of God. This issue puts into question God's providence; can he act otherwise and override or change the rational structure of the creation? If we view goodness as something intrinsic to the creation, then not even God can affect or change it. Thus, Plato's Euthyphro dilemma highlights two different understandings of the relationship between divine power and the natural order that God has created.¹³⁵

In short, the first horn highlights the problem that as God's will is arbitrary it is also unknowable. In order to answer the question 'how can we know anyone's will?,' creation must therefore be seen as contingent in the face of God's arbitrary and, to us,

¹³⁵ Osler, 1994: 17

unknowable will. It was an easy way to explain miracles, since God has the power to at any moment override the laws of nature. However, since we cannot know God's will, the world, including human society, is left to its own device – within an apparent but ever changing state of affairs. The second horn produces the problem of a deterministic creation, which cannot be changed even by God's own will-power. If the world is created out of God's rational plan, it is following this plan like clockwork, viz. according to certain sets of laws and circumstances that neither God's will nor any human will can affect or change. Therefore, there is a correspondence between God's rationality and the laws of nature, which are according to his rational plan. In this case, it seems that we can easily replace the concept of God with the idea of a natural rational order which is independent of God, as it follows the rational laws and since *not even* God can change them.

With rationalism, therefore, the moral law is accessible through reason because all rational beings are, by nature, partaking in the divine reason through their own individual reason. In this way, individuals come to know the law, that is, the word of God. The law is therefore not dependent upon the arbitrary *will* of God, or even open to any arbitrary interpretations by priests reading the scripture. In short, term 'God' can therefore easily be replaced by 'nature.' As was later done by Spinoza.

Conclusively, the two positions, voluntarism and intellectualism, became even more pertinent to scholars in the 17th century, who tried to understand the relationship between God and creation in the face of the staggering development of natural sciences, mechanism and experimental philosophy. There was a revival of ancient philosophy in the 17th century, where rationalism was often seen as compatible with

the strand of Platonism, and voluntarism was as of the 17th century revival made, initially by Gassendi, to be compatible with Epicureanism. Albeit, I admit that this is an oversimplification of the two terms. I merely intended to give a general overview so that we can proceed into the next section. In the next section I examine how Gassendi and Hobbes both combined Epicurean naturalism with theological voluntarism.

2.3 The Epicurean revival in the 17th century

In 17th century Europe, along with a growing rejection of scholasticism, there was the rise of experimental philosophy by which the world became empirically examined, measured, calculated and thereby more tangible. This led to a gradual shift from seeking to answer the often more metaphysical ‘why?’ question to the more practical and mechanical ‘how?’ question. As a result of this gradual philosophical shift, an epistemological tension became more pressing in the intellectual milieu between staunch religious beliefs and the practice of the natural sciences, i.e. between belief and empiricism. The *explanatory causes* were now found *within* the physical objects and in the relation *between* objects that are measurable and tangible, as opposed to being formulated in metaphysical otherworldly terms and in relation to God. The world therefore began to emerge as contingent and without an intrinsic purpose.

The Protestant Reformation, the Copernican revolution, and later Galileo’s *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems* (1632), and all contributed to the steering away from ‘infallible’ interpreters. Certainly, objectivity and truth was to be found in

nature rather than within the ever-conflicting interpretations of Scripture. Indeed, Galileo's own reaction was that his science was, in fact, incompatible with Scripture. This in turn initiated a long-term humanist project that led towards an intellectual humanist project of human 'emancipation' from God. That is, the project was a break from the absolute authority of the Church, mystery and metaphysics, which is similar to the Epicurean project. There was a growing desire, in Bacon's words, 'to extend more widely the limits of the power and greatness of man.'¹³⁶ These limits and powers were up to the human individual to define, not God.

Furthermore, in the aftermath of Galileo's discoveries, the universe itself became a more tangible and autonomous entity, that is, it no longer depended upon on metaphysical and theological assumptions about God.¹³⁷ 'God' was beginning to no longer be necessary for explaining material causes and was a term gradually replaced by mechanistic theories of matter. Simultaneous to this 'emancipation', there was a growing concern for the Christian status of morality. Christian ethics are conceptually dependent upon the undisputed *truth* of Christian *revelation*. In the 17th century, for example, the very conception of Law and order in society were perceived to be in danger of dissolving into social conventionalism, no longer dictated by the word and will of God, but by the arbitrary and subjective will of humans themselves. 17th century Britain was in a turbulent state between religion and politics, and new explanation emerging from the ever-evolving New Science.

During the Enlightenment, the elevation of reason played a significant role in the conception of human nature being capable and able to move above their present

¹³⁶ See Willey, 1986: 137

¹³⁷ Butler, 2001: 33

condition, i.e. able to discover, understand and explain the world empirically and physically *without* the assistance of revelation. Thus, there was a grave concern amongst the established authority of intellectuals – mainly theologians and prominent bishops – that the new science, embedded within theories that favored materialism and mechanism, would lead to immorality and, worst of all, atheism. Religious authority was threatened. If reason is sufficient, then what was the need of revelation? Rationalism coupled with materialism was seen as licensing hedonism and atheism. These were the views of which Hobbes became the emblem.

Alongside its controversial aspects, Epicureanism had still a particular appeal to the intellectuals in the turbulent 17th century as it offered a tangible alternative way to approach ethics and science. Epicureanism combined the physical and living world with a system of ethics, and as Wilson writes, had its ‘reappearance, in a period of civil unrest and religious controversy’ and neatly ‘coincided with the emergence of ambitions to transform the material world to suit human interests.’¹³⁸ And so Epicurean ethics and naturalism became an attractive alternative to the 17th century development of natural and experimental philosophy. Along with atomism, however, Jon Parkin, argues that the appeal of the Epicurean philosophy was in particular due to the *moral* agenda that lay behind its use of natural philosophy.¹³⁹ Epicureanism offered an alternative account of morality that was not dependent upon revealed theology. This also made it easier for Gassendi to make his interpretation of Epicureanism fit his theology and Christian ethics.

¹³⁸ Wilson, 2008: 2

¹³⁹ Parkin, 1999:144

The Epicurean revival also led to a new conception of the ‘individual’, which contributed the humanist liberation and, as I call it, ‘emancipation’ from God. Humanism was thus coupled with the Epicurean natural principles. In this way, Sheppard writes, that the epicurean philosophy contributed to a world view where everything is ‘eternally existing, infinitely numbered, infinitesimal atoms in the void of space’. This world view contributed to an increased *abstraction* of the human condition which constituted of individuals now seen in isolation from society just like atoms. This so-called ‘atomic individualism’ made human individuality an irreducible entity.¹⁴⁰ However, this new individualism also became crucial to the developments and revived interest in natural law, in particular in the way Epicurean philosophy was applied and developed in Hobbes philosophy.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, as Wilson points out, the traditional Christian picture of ‘uniqueness’ of the role of human nature within the creation, associated with divine providence and predestination, was removed by Epicureanism, and humans no longer had a ‘special status of human beings vis-a`-vis other animals.’¹⁴²

Although Epicureanism denounces the concept of God and the idea of an afterlife, many 17th century religious intellectuals and theologians took a keen interest in Epicureanism, most prominently seen in the works of the French theologian Pierre Gassendi. M. B. Foster writes that many of these religious intellectuals saw the compatibility between the voluntary activity of God, the contingency of the created order and the requirement that science must be empirically based.¹⁴³ It seemed possible to combine the Epicurean idea of nature as contingent with theological

¹⁴⁰ Sheppard, 2015: 31

¹⁴¹ Wilson, 2008: 4

¹⁴² Op. cit.

¹⁴³ Foster, 1975: 294–315.

voluntarism, and it could leave scope for empirical studies that would not interfere with religious matters. Therefore, the combination of divine voluntarism and Epicurean naturalism became central to the development of the empirical sciences. The early ‘neo-Epicureans’ were sensitive not to detract from Christian virtues whilst wanting to find an explanation of ethics that was compatible with the new science.

Gassendi and theological voluntarism

Gassendi is famously said to have revived and ‘baptized’ Epicureanism with theological voluntarism.¹⁴⁴ Gassendi tried to clear Epicurus himself of atheistic charges, arguing that his detractors had misunderstood his philosophy.¹⁴⁵ Gassendi subsequently traced these misinterpretations to Sextus Empiricus and Cicero, and he exonerated Epicurus from charges of atheism and immorality. Instead, Gassendi developed an account of Epicurean philosophy as ethically rich and compatible with contemporary scientific investigations.¹⁴⁶ In this way, Margaret Osler writes that Gassendi produced a Christianized version of Epicurean philosophy ‘in order to provide metaphysical foundations for the new science’, and that he thereby, ‘introduced the physics and ethics of this Greek atomist into the mainstream European thought.’¹⁴⁷

In doing this, Gassendi took a particular interest in Epicurean atomism. Gassendi turned to Epicureanism as an alternative to Aristotelianism, and in particular he used

¹⁴⁴ Osler, 1994: 36 and Parker 1999: 146

¹⁴⁵ Hutton, 2015:62

¹⁴⁶ Joy, 2002: 132

¹⁴⁷ Osler, 1992: 179

and revised the Epicurean conception of the atom.¹⁴⁸ He did this by retaining properties of the Epicurean concept of the atom that are fundamentally compatible with mechanistic theory such as size, shape, weight, and solidity, but he also attributed motion to the atoms.¹⁴⁹ At the same time Gassendi introduced the Epicurean concept of the mortal soul as an intermediary between the immortal, immaterial soul. He also distinguished between the souls of animals and souls of humans, where the animal soul was produced from some power within the animals and the human—rational—soul was created by God.¹⁵⁰ In this way, Gassendi differed from Descartes, by replacing the pineal gland with a sensitive soul, and from Hobbes, by accepting both a mortal and immortal soul.

Furthermore, Gassendi coupled Epicurean naturalism with scepticism, to the extent in which humans could have definitive knowledge of the world. Gassendi's epistemological scepticism is also compatible with his theological voluntarism, where he believes that our knowledge of the natural world is insufficient because it is at the mercy of the unfathomable and incomprehensible nature of God's *will*. He made voluntarism compatible with a view of nature's contingency; just as God's will is arbitrary, so too the natural world is contingently dependent on his will.

Gassendi had great influence on the Royal Society in England and on prominent thinkers such as Robert Boyle and Thomas Hobbes. In particular, English philosophers who also shared the same voluntarist theology acquired his theological

¹⁴⁸ Hutton, 2015: 61

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 62

¹⁵⁰ Osler, 1992: 71

formulation of Epicureanism.¹⁵¹ Gassendi's work was well received in Oxford in the 1650s and 1660s, and we know that Boyle read Gassendi at an early point in his study of natural philosophy.¹⁵² Boyle was influenced by Gassendi and developed his own corpuscularian theory, presented in *The Origin of Forms and Qualities* (1666). Like in Gassendi, the heart of Boyle's theory also rested on a solid voluntarist conception of God's relationship to creation that the laws of nature, as explained by Osler, 'are what they are because God created them so; it is not the case that he created them because they are true; and he can alter them at will.'¹⁵³ Boyle thus explains divine miracles through theological voluntarism. He saw miracles, as *evidence* of God acting freely since nothing, not even the laws of nature, can obstruct God from exercising his will freely. This statement can be contrasted with Hugo Grotius, who claimed that not even God could change 'the fact that two times two makes four.'¹⁵⁴ In contrast, Grotius' conception of natural law thus fitted within a rational order of the universe, so that *not even* God could not change the natural laws by his will. This type of rationalism, as we have seen in the previous section, puts limits on God's power but not on his wisdom. Therefore, God's wisdom is in some degree attainable to humans, through their own reason which somehow partakes in the divine reason. This, however, has Stoic and Neo-Platonic roots, and is something that I shall explore further in Chapter 3 and 4.

¹⁵¹ Parkin, 1999: 146

¹⁵² Hutton, 2015:62

¹⁵³ Osler, 1992: 185

¹⁵⁴ *LWP*, I.X.5: 'Just as even God, then, cannot cause that two times two should not make four.'

Epicureanism in Hobbes

Finally, let us turn to Hobbes, who personally met with Gassendi and took the revived interest in Epicureanism to a further extreme. It was a result of Hobbes' *Leviathan*, published in 1651, that England began to take a hostile response to Epicureanism and realise the dangers it posed to Christian ethics. The perceived dangerous consequences attributed to Epicurean philosophy, were precisely in those terms it has initially the Epicureans had set themselves out to be: against priest-craft, anti-authoritarian, liberal and atheistic.¹⁵⁵ While Hobbes political philosophy is hardly anti-authoritarian, at least not on the surface, he is still championed as one of the main founders of liberalism. Regardless of what Hobbes really thought about God and religion, his political system and view of the State hold even if Christianity is not true as a secular artificial entity, created by the individuals that generate and uphold it.

Crucial to Hobbes' system is his concept of the individual, which is similar to the Epicurean conception of the individual. In the *Leviathan*, Hobbes writes that human beings are fundamentally driven by self-preservation, and that society is the artificial—physical—framework that will enable us to best secure our preservation. Hobbes based this idea of self-preservation on a mechanistic system because individuals are nothing more than atomic particles moving freely in space: they knock and repel when their interests clash, thus creating a 'a war of all against all' in the natural state, which is the state of nature without a government or external force to direct and protect individuals from themselves and for themselves. Hobbes' human being is therefore by nature an anti-social being, driven into society by their own desire to

¹⁵⁵ See Sheppard, 2015: 92; and Wilson, 2008: 8

self-preservation.¹⁵⁶ It is therefore only through cooperation that individuals can secure their own safety and egoistic wants and needs. Albeit mechanical, the drive towards self-preservation is, according to Hobbes, so fundamental that it can be called a right by nature. In this way Hobbes shaped a view of peace, order and morality that would stand independently of interference of God, church and priest craft.

In this context, I argue that Hobbes most crucial move was his break with the traditional, classical conception of reason as the Logos. This particular understanding of reason I shall expand upon in the follow chapter. But what does this mean for Hobbes? It means that his definition of reason no longer has a metaphysical connection to God. It has by essence nothing intrinsic, other than an instrumental function. Because of this, reason, according to Hobbes, carries in itself no moral content. To understand this conclusion, Hobbes's endorsement of voluntarism is crucial: if moral obligation stems from the will of God, it becomes unknowable; that is, in the same way as we cannot know God's will, we cannot not know what is morally required. Selden and Hobbes both critiqued Grotius for his concept of right reason. This critique and the concept of right reason are things I shall explore further in Chapter 4. As Alexander Rosenthal writes with respect to the tension between rationalism and voluntarism: 'If however the natural law proceeds solely from divine will, then there is nothing intrinsic to any given act to make it good or evil – it derives its moral character solely from the divine command.'¹⁵⁷ According to Hobbes, God is completely distant and unknowable, and therefore he claims reason carries no objective knowledge of morality in itself.

¹⁵⁶ On Hobbes's anti-social definition of human nature see further Klien, 1994: 67

¹⁵⁷ Rosenthal, 2008: 290

Therefore, instead of subjectivism, Hobbes looked for something more fundamental in nature, such as the physical, material and mechanical causes inspired by Epicurean philosophy. They have in common a shared influence of Democritean atomism, where the conception of morality is based on an ‘atomic property’, as Kenneth Butler writes, by thus ‘denying the Logos as a source of morality.’¹⁵⁸ With Hobbes’s philosophy, God seemed no longer necessary to give morality force. Morality, according to Hobbes, stems from our mechanical nature with only two components, matter and motion, driven by self-preservation directed by *external* forces. Hobbes thus engineered a form of Copernican shift of the focus of ethics and politics from the metaphysical and otherworldly afterlife towards the more immediate affairs and aims in this life.¹⁵⁹

In conclusion, through Hobbes radical position and application of mechanism, Parkin writes that ‘the stigma of atheism’ was attached ‘to any project involving the study of matter and motion.’¹⁶⁰ That is, any form of ‘scientific’ and empirical activity was accused of ‘Hobbism’. Similarly, as we have seen, Locke’s rejection of universal innate ideas lead to a conventionalism and ‘psychological hedonism’, which appeared to his contemporary readers to echo Hobbes’ controversial philosophy. However, I argue that there is another side to the story, as Epicureanism was not the only important classical revival of the 17th century. In the following chapter, I shall give an overview of Platonism and the concept of the Stoic Logos, two classical schools that were both fused and used as a way to interpret Old Testament Scripture and law by

¹⁵⁸ Butler, 2001: 32

¹⁵⁹ Oakley, 2005: 92

¹⁶⁰ Parkin, 1999: 140

Philo of Alexandria, who in turn had an immense influence on the Early Church Fathers and the revival of natural law in the 17th century.

Chapter 3

From Platonism to Philo of Alexandria: Reason as the Logos

3.1 Platonism: on the Soul and the Roots of Innatism

When the soul uses the body as an instrument of perception, that is to say, when it uses the sense of sight or hearing or some other sense, she is dragged by the body into the region of the changeable, and wanders and is confused; the world spins round her, and she is like a drunkard, when she touches change.

But when she contemplates in herself and by herself, then she passes into the other world, the region of purity, and eternity, and immortality, and unchangeableness, which are her kindred, and with them she ever lives, when she is by herself and is not let or hindered; then she ceases from her erring ways and being in communion with the unchanging is unchanging. And this state of the soul is called wisdom.

Plato, *Phaedo*, 79c-d¹⁶¹

The fundamental role of the soul is significant to Plato's philosophy. From the doctrine of the soul follows a dualism between the material, physical world and the world of true forms and ideas. The soul, trapped in the body, is bound to this physical world, but in it the soul partakes of the true forms. The highest faculty of the soul is reason, and only through the exercise of reason, which is an inward reflection and

¹⁶¹ In this passage I have chosen a translation by Livingston, 1927: 43

introspection, can the soul transcend its temporal, physical state and rejoin the eternal, immutable and immaterial realm of the forms. The realm of the forms signifies the truths, of which all existing in the physical world is merely a bad copy or a deficient representation. The purpose for the soul is to return to, and therefore transcend, its bodily, physical and limited existence and reunite itself with the higher, eternal truths.

In the *Phaedo*, Plato describes the soul as constantly distracted by the physical, sensible world. Only through ‘inward contemplation’ can the soul be set free to reach a higher stage of freedom, enlightenment and truth. Plato divided reality into a strict separation between ‘Being and Becoming’. The order of Becoming is the ever changing, and the order of Being is the constant, incorporeal Forms or Ideas, which are the objects of rational understanding and are only comprehended by intelligence.¹⁶²

In the *Timaeus*, Plato presents the relationship between the true Forms and corporeal objects as a model-copy relationship, that is, between the Forms as immutable models that produce the imperfect copy, and the corporeal reality that we experience.¹⁶³ The world is created in the image of the perfect, eternal model. Plato defines creation as ‘that which is always becoming but never is.’¹⁶⁴ The world of matter is ephemeral and ever changing; it is a mere copy of the eternal and perfect world of forms. In the *Timaeus*, he describes the sensible world as a product of an intelligent action of its creator, the ‘creator God’ or *demiurge*, which in Greek literally means ‘craftsman’. Furthermore, Plato defines this creator God as benevolent since he would create the

¹⁶² Hillar, 2012: 19

¹⁶³ Leonhardt-Balzer, 2004: 326

¹⁶⁴ Plato, *Timaeus* 27a

best possible world. The sensible world is therefore directed by intelligence for a good purpose. It was formed and created by the demiurge from pre-existing material. These are the original models or so-called Forms.¹⁶⁵ The Demiurge is described in various terms, such as God, Father, Maker, Craftsman, Divine architect, One, or Mind.¹⁶⁶ Plato sometimes describes the demiurge simply as the creator God since it carries the particular status of craftsmanship. Plato's demiurge is not an object of worship like the gods of the Greek pantheon, such as Zeus, or the personal, omnipotent Yahweh of the Jews and the Christian Old Testament. The Platonic demiurge is the creator even of all the traditional Greek gods, who were worshiped by the Greeks but subordinate to the demiurge. In this way the universe is a work of craftsmanship, fashioned after an eternal model.¹⁶⁷ So according to Plato, there is a *rational* and purposeful *design* of nature. Furthermore, Plato believed in a 'world soul', which is an intelligence that penetrates the whole world and is necessary for the continuation and regulation of the visible world and the heavenly bodies.¹⁶⁸

Since the realm of the original true forms and divinity is transcendent, we cannot attain any definite knowledge about this world because empirical knowledge is uncertain and insufficient. Empirical knowledge can only tell us temporal truths, but nothing about the *eternal* truths of the realm of the forms. Therefore, true knowledge can only be apprehended through our minds. When Plato introduced the distinction between the corporeal, material world and the incorporeal world of ideas, he initiated the famous distinction between the transcendent forms and matter,

¹⁶⁵ Plato, *Timaeus*, 27a 28–29 p.1234-1235

¹⁶⁶ Hillar, 2012: 19

¹⁶⁷ Plato, *Timaeus* 29a6–b1

¹⁶⁸ Op. cit.

We also find in Plato a doctrine of the soul, and the distinction between the immaterial soul and the body. As Marian Hillar explains:

One as permeating the universe and the other as imparted from the transcendent deity. In Plato's metaphysics, the superior part of the human soul has a divine nature, and in this way humans partake of the divine Mind.¹⁶⁹

Plato describes the body as temporal and the soul as eternal. The eternal soul is thus partaking in the true, divine nature, and the soul enables us to pass 'into the other world, the region of purity, and eternity, and immortality, and unchangeableness.'¹⁷⁰ Since the human soul has a divine nature and can partake of the divine Mind, human beings are by creation also deified creatures. Through their inward contemplation in the soul, they can partake in the divine, eternal truths. This journey of the soul, Plato describes in the *Republic* using the analogy of the cave, where the rational part of the soul can make a journey from a state of captivity in the cave to a state of freedom, light and truth, outside the cave. The cave also symbolises the soul's captivity in the body, through which *inward* reflection the soul will be able to join the eternal, immaterial, true forms. By inward reflection is meant that one must apply *reason*, the highest faculty of the soul, and *contemplate* 'in herself and by herself', in order pass 'into the other world, the region of purity, and eternity, and immortality, and unchangeableness', that is, this is the state called *wisdom*. Plato writes further that this is the 'upward journey of the soul' and wisdom is the state of seeing the sun, outside the cave.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ Hillar, 2012: 21

¹⁷⁰ Plato, *Phaedo*, 79c-d

¹⁷¹ Plato, *Republic*, 517b

Because of the way that knowledge is attained in Plato's system, it proposes that the temporal realm only gives us shadows of the truth, and the true forms are imprinted in our mind and soul as ready-made ideas of truth. The further we contemplate these ideas in our minds, the closer we can get to the transcendental realm of true knowledge. When turning to the Stoics, we find a similar conception of the soul but a different solution to the duality of nature.

3.2 The Stoic Logos

The Greek term *logos* (λόγος) literally means 'word', but the concept of the Logos has a much wider connotation such as the word of God, thought, reason, speech, statement, discourse, refutation, ratio, proportion, account, and explanation.¹⁷² It also denotes themes such as light, truth, wisdom and divine creative power. The Logos is not to be confused with the grammatical term for "word", in which *lexis* (λέξις) is used. However, both terms derive from the Greek word *legō* (λέγω), meaning to tell, to say, to speak, or to count.¹⁷³ As we have seen, the Logos was first given its philosophical metaphysical meaning by Heraclitus and was later adopted by the Stoics. The Logos is a concept that is immensely important, because it has been seen as both the starting point of creation and the upholding force without which the world cannot remain.

¹⁷² Hillar, 2012: 6

¹⁷³ Op. cit.

The Stoic school was founded by Zeno of Citium (334–262 BC).¹⁷⁴ In contrast to the Platonic dualism between matter and form, the Stoics introduced a pantheistic worldview. For the Stoics, the divine mind, called the Logos, is not transcendental but immanent in the world. They transformed the concept of the Logos into a power, force, or law within reality. The Stoics world-view recognised two fundamental structures of nature, matter and form. Matter constituted a passive, indeterminate principle, and form was the governing, active principle constituting the nature of beings.¹⁷⁵ This form is the active creative force in nature that governs the thought and structure of the world, which was considered ideal because of its orderliness.¹⁷⁶ Drawing on Heraclitus, the Stoics assumed that it is one and the same principle as the Logos:

Fire, by the Logos and God which arrange all things, is turned by way of air into moisture, the moisture which acts as seed of the world-forming process and which he call “sea”; then out of this, earth comes into being and heaven and everything enclosed by it.¹⁷⁷

Stoics took the ideas of the Logos and the seed and translated it into a moral, intelligent force. In this way the cosmic Logos is the seminal Logos (seed) in the natural world. Through our intellect, the Logos partakes of all souls and bodies.¹⁷⁸ As Hillar explains, the divine Logos is thereby present in the mind and soul of each individual ‘as a reflection, a part of the divine mind, present since the earliest generations of men and enabling them to love, and to have knowledge, a proper

¹⁷⁴ Inwood, 2003: 9,14

¹⁷⁵ Hillar, 2012: 35

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 5

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 11

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 145

community of life, and a standard of law and justice.’¹⁷⁹ Similar to the Platonic relation between the individual soul and the creator God, however, the Stoics replaced the transcendent creator God with nature, and thereby combined it with concept of *law*. This was the Logos.

The Logos, according to the Stoics, is the rational principle that permeates the entire creation. In contrast to Plato’s God, who created the world as an *external* artisan, the Stoic Demiurge of the universe is an *internal* force, penetrating and pertaining to all physical matter. This force according the Stoic definition of Logos, Logos *is* God’s creative reason, a cosmic rational principle that partakes of everything that contains the world. This notion was anticipated by Plato’s world-soul.¹⁸⁰ The later neo-Platonists were able to draw upon this Stoic elaboration of the doctrine of the world soul, which was even later built into the Christian concept of the Logos, as the word of God and also the concept of the ‘second God’, or Second Adam, with reference to Jesus as being the law, or the word, incarnated.

This rational principle, the Logos, is also the *pneuma*, meaning breath or spirit, or simply representing God, fate, and providence. In spite of their naturalism, the Stoics’ rational organising principle or the Logos is not empirically detectable. Because of this understanding of the Logos, the world was considered to be deterministic.¹⁸¹ In the light of the immanent force of God, the Stoics are often taken to support causal determinism, but as emphasised by Susanne Bobzien, Stoic determinism is extremely complex. As everything in the world exists because of, and is constantly partaking in,

¹⁷⁹ Hillar, 2012: 146

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 25

¹⁸¹ Op. cit.

the world soul, the world soul thus constitutes its natural, true state. Thus, everything strives to realise this nature. Bobzien explains that, in this way, the relationship between the Logos and the world is not so much about connecting events with events but rather a form of active, participating force.¹⁸² This relationship is in contrast to the Epicureans, who held that reason is only instrumental, limited to the physical, material structure of the world. The Stoic concept of reason, however, is only limited insofar as it is already pre-determined by the divine Logos.

Furthermore, the Stoics were the first in antiquity to develop a fully-fledged theory of causal determination.¹⁸³ Though the Stoics are often held to be compatibilists, this has been subject to much debate. The Stoic picture of universal determinism is different from modern theories of mechanical, casual determinism.¹⁸⁴ The point of divergence is in the treatment of the relationship between determinism and moral responsibility. The Stoics held that, although there is providence, fate and causally determined conditions, it is still up to each individual to assent or not assent to their actions. A.A. Long explains that the divine providence warranted them to believe that human lives have a purpose within the design of creation. It is through the Logos, as a divine causal principle that we have been benevolently equipped to live also to live this life well. This Stoic theory of justice and happiness are thus seen as entirely compatible.

A. A. Long gives us three important points in order to further understand the Stoic Logos. First, in following Heraclitus, Stoics held that everything in the world happens in accordance with the Logos. Second, the Logos has an ethical application whereby it

¹⁸² Bobzien, 2004: 33

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 33

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 32

applies to both ‘right’ and ‘wrong’. From a personal perspective, a person’s ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ actions are seen as a consequence of his or her own personal harmony or disharmony with the Logos, i.e. living accordance to their right reason. From the universal perspective, without the cosmic Logos or universal law the distinction between right and wrong could not exist. Third, Long writes that it is thoroughly misleading to label Heraclitus’ Logos as ‘metaphysical’ and the Stoic Logos ‘moral’ because in both systems the Logos is a principle of being, regardless of whether it is physical or metaphysical, and in both systems it is thereby also a principle of morality.¹⁸⁵ Chrysippus states that one should be ‘living correctly in accordance with Logos’ and that this is the natural life for human beings: ‘For the Logos supervenes as the craftsman of impulse.’¹⁸⁶ The Stoic Logos is, as Long describes, a ‘moral imperative that human beings can coherently disobey.’¹⁸⁷ Thus, the Logos is a principle of both being created and a principle of morality. The two principles are connected.¹⁸⁸ Hence, the Logos can also be described as a Natural Law. The moral activity of the Logos corresponds to a human being’s individual rationality as a governing principle or fundamental ‘collection of general concepts and preconceptions’.¹⁸⁹ This is why the Natural Law is said to be accessible through reason: the power of reason is the same as Logos, and Logos is the Law.

The Stoic Logos is therefore not an otherworldly, external force, but like God, it is to be found in, and as a part of, nature. As nature and God are the same, there is therefore no problem of dualism in the Stoic philosophy. Since humans also have a mind, the principle of Logos is therefore identical with God and the faculty of the

¹⁸⁵ Long, 2001: 50-51

¹⁸⁶ Quoted in Long, 2001: 208, see also Diogenes Laertius vii.86

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 50, quoted in Diogenes Laertius vii.86

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 51

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 100

intellect. Hillar explains that the human soul was regarded as ‘an offshoot of God.’¹⁹⁰ Rationality, in this way, makes human beings like little gods.

Most importantly, the Logos constitutes the link between God and man since the Stoics thought human reason (the Logos) partakes in the divine Logos. Therefore, every individual is in direct contact with the law of God or the so-called Natural Law. This law governs both our physical nature and inspires our moral nature. Since there are no other worlds but the one created by God, man is by nature also part of God’s nature, reason and morals. Therefore, the Stoics speak of the ‘Seminal Reason’ as the life-giving, constitutive factor of all existence.¹⁹¹

In the next section we shall see how Philo of Alexandria, combined Platonism with the Stoic concept of the ‘Logos’ in his interpretation of the Old Testament. In this way Philo was the first to use Hellenic sources to interpret Scripture and, though he was a Jewish theologian and philosopher, he was later adopted as ‘bishop’ Philo by the Early Church Fathers, who also incorporated his works and interpretation of the Old Testament into their interpretation of Christianity.

3.3 Philo of Alexandria – the Adopted Bishop

Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 b.c.–50 a.d.) was the first to use Hellenistic philosophy to interpret the Hebrew creation story. In doing so, Philo merged the Platonic notion of a *transcendent* creator and artisan God with the Stoic pantheistic worldview of the *immanent* Logos. Philo’s work became most significant to the Early Church Fathers,

¹⁹⁰ Hillar, 2012: 25

¹⁹¹ Barrett, 1987: 262

such as Clement of Alexandria and Origen, who in turn adopted Philo's philosophical approach to their interpretation of Christianity.

Philo's Logos

In this section I describe the three aspects of Philo's conception of the Logos. Philo held that there was three levels to the Logos first, as transcendent, in a Platonic sense, secondly as immanent and part of human rational nature, and finally as the bridge or *mediator* between these two realms human and divine nature. Furthermore, Philo was particularly drawn to use the term 'Logos' because it corresponds well to the Old Testament concept of 'the word of God.'¹⁹² Philo mainly applied the concept of the Logos to the statements in scripture concerning the Word of God, but he also used it in terms of the Word of the Law.¹⁹³ In this way, he united the Platonic concept of Divine Transcendence, which corresponds to the Biblical transcendent creator God, with Stoic pantheism of the immanent Logos. Thus, Philo's Logos is located both in God's transcendent mind *and* in the physical realm.¹⁹⁴ Runia writes that Philo bridges the gulf between the physical and the intelligible (or corporeal) reality in a way that makes it 'possible to systematize Philo's conception by distinguishing between a transcendent and an immanent Logos.'¹⁹⁵ There are therefore three functions of the Logos in Philo. First, it is the human reason created in the *image* of God; secondly, it is realised through an down-up perspective of the experience of the world with the human minds working gradually towards the divine; and thirdly, the Logos is also the mediator between the earthly and the divine realms.

¹⁹² Williamson, 1989: 104

¹⁹³ See Old Testament Isa. 2:1, Jer. 1:2 and Ezek. 3:6

¹⁹⁴ Leonhardt-Balzer, 2003: 329

¹⁹⁵ Runia, 2001: 142

First, Philo's concept of human reason traces back to the Platonic idea of the Demiurge as a craftsman of the universe, modelling the human upon the true Forms. Philo echoes this in his understanding of the term 'image' in Scripture. By directly referring to Genesis 1:27, which states, 'God created man in his own image', Philo writes:

This is the doctrine of Moses, not mine; when in the following, writing about the creation of Man, he explicitly declares that he [i.e. the Man] was formed after God's image.¹⁹⁶

The Logos for Philo, in a Platonic sense, represents the archetypal idea of all ideas; the archetypal form or seal is formed in God's mind and contains God's mind but is also imprinted on everything that is created thereof in its image. And since Genesis 1:27 states that we are created in God's image, then so is our reason. Our human reason is thus the image of God's divine reason – the Logos. According to Philo, the formation of the visible world started with the unformed matter that was created in the mind of God. The Logos is thus an archetypal model for creation.¹⁹⁷

Second, Philo adopts a 'down-up' perspective, whereby it is only through our own experience of the world and reason we can gradually reach God. As he writes,

¹⁹⁶ *Opif.* 25 [See Leonhardt-Balzer, 2004: 334]

¹⁹⁷ Hillar, 2012: 57

Only men who have raised themselves upward from below, so as, through the contemplation of his works, to form a conjectural conception of the Creator by a probable train of reasoning.¹⁹⁸

According to Philo, the sense-perceptible cosmos is the gate into the intelligible world. Runia explains that Philo argues that ‘from a perspective within the cosmos itself it is perceived as a higher duplicate of the experienced world’, any knowledge of this ‘can only be attained through the activity of the mind.’¹⁹⁹ Runia calls this the ‘down-up perspective’, and he claims it is also characteristic of the Stoic philosophy²⁰⁰ since the Logos for Philo represents the mind or the reason of God, which also includes his creative powers and wisdom. In this way, the reason of God corresponds to the faculty of the human reason. It is through human reason we can reach God. Since we are created in God’s image, then so is our reason. Our human reason is thus the image of God’s reason – the Logos.

Therefore, it is through both our experiencing the sensible and the use of reason that humans come to reach towards God. However in our earthly state, Philo thinks that nothing positive can be said about the nature of God, but we can come into contact with his attributes *through the exercise of our own* reason. That is why a person can arrive at a vision of God through ‘philosophy’, that is, through gaining experience and understanding of the nature of the world, seen as an emanation of God’s light. Although, humans may also arrive at such a vision directly, as Moses did.²⁰¹ It is therefore through reason that God communicates with man. Human reason is defined

¹⁹⁸ Hillar, 2012: 62

¹⁹⁹ Runia, 2001: 138

²⁰⁰ Op. cit.

²⁰¹ Passmore, 2000: 62

as a gift from God, emanating from God's own divine reason. However, the gift of revelation is not bestowed arbitrarily but only on those who have proven themselves ready to receive it. According to this view, Moses received the revelation specifically because his rationality was *worthy*. As Philo writes:

Strictly speaking the human mind does not choose the good through itself, but in accordance with the thoughtfulness of God, since He bestows the fairest things upon the worthy.²⁰²

This worthiness can only come through an individual's own endeavour to practice and execute their power of reason. Reason is therefore not only in harmony with God's reason, but it is also a golden measurement by which our closeness to it defines our virtue.

Third and finally, the Logos according to Philo is also the mediator. The Logos has the position of a tool of God that is used as the divider and harmoniser, or mediator between God and the world, as the perpetuator of the whole creation.²⁰³ Philo holds that it is also the power *within* nature that keeps everything that exists alive and perpetual; it is the natural law. The third attribute of the immanent Logos is God's will in the cycle of nature, 'thereby immortalizing the kinds, and giving them a share of eternity' and as Philo continues in *Opif.* 44:

On this account he not only guided and urged the beginning on towards the end, but caused the end to turn back to the beginning. Out of the plants

²⁰² Fragment from *Legum Allegoria*, Philo cited in Wolfson, 1948: 442

²⁰³ O'Brien, 2007: 60

emerged the fruit, as an end out of a beginning, while out of the fruit that encloses the seed within itself the plant emerges again, as a beginning out of an end.²⁰⁴

Wolfson remarks that Philo is here again ascribing to the Stoic, immanent Logos, and distinguished by making clear that the Logos is not the ultimate cause of the generation of plants and animals in the world or even the creation of the world itself. This is because God is always prior to everything.²⁰⁵ Hillar explains that Philo in this way ‘transformed the Stoic impersonal and immanent Logos into a being who was neither eternal like God nor created like creatures, but begotten from eternity.’²⁰⁶ Philo’s Logos can thus be understood on three levels: the Divine creator, the mediator, and the upholder of nature, as the law of nature and perpetuity of the species.²⁰⁷

The concept of the Logos, as compatible with the Christian Word of God, gave the idea of a world with a natural order and structure. In this world, man stands in contact with God, and can therefore also participate in Him. Neither humans nor nature are instrumental to participation in God’s creation. Participation in God’s creation is therefore a matter of ‘combination between sense and reason.’ The more we experience, think for ourselves and learn, the more our consciousness grows. Thus we can refer back to Plato, who writes in the *Republic*: he had compared seeing with looking at the sun, Plato describes the ‘upward journey of the soul’ where ‘good is the last thing to be seen, and it is reached only with difficulty.’²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ Wolfson, 1948: 343

²⁰⁵ Op. cit.

²⁰⁶ Hillar, 2012: 67

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 342

²⁰⁸ Plato, *Republic*, 517b

Chapter 4

Philo and Platonism in the 17th Century Intellectual Context:

From Grotius to the Cambridge Platonists

Part I

4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to give an alternative account of Locke's intellectual context than just the Hobbist and Epicurean background. This chapter presents how the alternative revival of Platonism, Philo and the concept of right reason as part of the revival of natural law theory is very much present in the 17th century and was thereby also a live option to Locke. Hugo Grotius was crucial for the rival of natural law theory to Selden and Hobbes and the Cambridge Platonists response to this. I aim to demonstrate in what way the concept, definition and language concerning 'reason' changed over these thinkers and that it plays a focal point in the definition of human nature. This chapter also highlights that there was a significant growing philo-Semitic sentiment of that time.

The revival of natural law theory and a growing of so-called philo-Semitism that occurred in the 17th century can be argued to go hand in hand. Philo-Semitism, as Katz coined it, refers to the positive attitude towards Semitism that blossomed during this time and meant that Christian scholars took a particular interest in Jewish literature and sources during the 16th century and early 17th century.²⁰⁹ Furthermore,

²⁰⁹ Katz, 1994: 114

natural law theory was developed out of a discussion on law, informed by both Mosaic and Hellenic sources. This section intends to highlight a richer context that includes Philonic and Neo-Platonic sources and why there would have been a Platonist influence on Locke and, by extension, why Philo would have played a significant role in Locke's intellectual landscape when it comes to the issues that he shared with Grotius, Hobbes and the Cambridge Platonists.

4.2 Philo and Philo Semitism in the 17th century.

As we have seen in previous chapter, Philo of Alexandria was an important source, in particular as his work played a significant role for the development of Christian theology from the early formation of the church to later Christian ethics. It is worth noticing that Josephus and Philo, who were both Hellenized Jews, were contemporary to Christ and therefore regarded as sources *on par* with the ancient Greek philosophers. And because the Greek philosophers and Philo predated Christianity, they could simply be *excused* for not being Christian. Reading Philo and Josephus even became 'common practice' and was 'regarded as mark of good learning.'²¹⁰ In the 17th century, Philo's interpretation of law became an important source in the revival of the theory of natural law. Of particular significance was Philo's concept and understanding of reason as *right reason*. It has even been argued that the term 'natural law' started to appear more frequently among scholars after it was appropriated and used by Philo.²¹¹ While the concept of natural law is often attributed to Stoic philosophy, and later through Cicero, it is arguably equally indebted to Philo

²¹⁰ Haviry, 2017: 117

²¹¹ For a comparison between Philo and Cicero, and the significance of Philo over Cicero, see Horsley, A. Richard, *The Law of Nature in Philo and Cicero*, 1978

because it was through Philo that Stoic philosophy, as well as other Hellenic sources, was transmitted to early Christianity. In this way we can say that Philo is the *tertium quid* between Platonism and the revival of natural law.

As part of the break with Scholasticism, Judaic sources, both pre-and post the formation of Christianity, inspired and influenced theologians and early natural law theorists such as Grotius and Selden. Apart from the revival of natural law, the 17th century reading of Philo is set in connection to a growing philo-Semitism, which was of increasing scholarly interest in Hebrew and Judaic sources. Some of the greatest Hebraists of the mid 17th century were John Edward Poccoke, John Lightfoot and John Spencer. Among others were John Selden and Ralph Cudworth. Bernardini points out that the Hebraic scholars of the 17th Century died out without leaving much heritage, many disciples or any particular schools.²¹² This is perhaps why much of their work and other ancient Jewish sources such as Josephus and Philo have been over shadowed by the Enlightenment era, which has been portrayed as a triumph in science rather than theology, and leading to toleration, liberation and progression into ‘modernity’. Indeed, from a perspective of the history and evolution of ideas, the transformation of Christian theology – a transformation that led to political and religious toleration as well as secularism and the separation of powers between church and state - is as much indebted to inspiration and the revival of Jewish as well as to Hellenic sources.

Among the significant ideas that contributed to peace (or at least the theoretical hope thereof) and religious toleration in the 17th century was a shift in the understanding of

²¹² Bernardini, 2016: 66

what constitutes human *rationality*. The new world view was opened by Columbus, Copernicus and Galileo that was now being, as Willey writes, ‘controlled, sustained, and agitated’ by laws ‘that were in some way akin to those of human reason’. These new laws were ‘no longer at the mercy of nature, no longer to be encompassed by arbitrary mystery’, and lead to great benefits which were, as Willey explains, ‘accompanied by the great new gift of power, power to control natural forces and to turn them into Bacon’s phrases, to the ‘occasions and uses of life’ and the ‘relief of man’s estate.’²¹³

Life’s magical mysteries were being replaced by the sense of function and utility. The ‘new gift’ was a realisation that human rationality had the capacity to understand, develop and control natural forces. This solitary perception of human nature with a capacity to reason for itself was the starting point of a gradual emancipation from religious oppression, priest craft and eventually God himself. In moving away from the scholastics, there now grew a new conception of what reason was. With Hobbes we see the most clear and drastic break with the traditional concept of ‘right reason’ as something metaphysical, universal and ultimately connected to the divine. In Hobbes we find instead reason as an instrument of the individual’s subjective desires. Thus the worldview of a divinely rational world order within God’s organic playing field was gradually replaced by the view of the world as a great machine constituted by a material system of ordering, and human reason as mechanical, like a mere spring in the great machine of the body. In the meantime, the Cambridge Platonists maintained the classical concept of ‘reason’ as something divinely gifted that mediates between God and the individual and guides her. However, they had to

²¹³ Willey, 1986: 13

respond to these changing times. While they maintained the original use of the term ‘right reason’, they Christianised its context, but within the revived influence from Philo and ancient Greek thought.

What is further crucial in this chapter is Grotius’ Philonic definition of *right* reason as seen in the Cambridge Platonists. This definition of reason was something both Selden and Hobbes consciously abandoned. It is therefore important to know Philo’s concept of ‘reason’ in order to understanding this abandonment. Locke, as I argue throughout this thesis, shares his outlook more with the Cambridge Platonists and Grotius, and therefore also with elements of Philo. With this purpose in mind, I first focus on Philo’s role in the development of natural law theory in Grotius. I then give an overview of Selden and Hobbes’s response to Grotius’ concept of right reason. Lastly, I introduce the Cambridge Platonist and how they took a keen interest in Jewish and Hebraic sources and their concept of reason.

4.3 Grotius, Philo, and the revival of Natural Law

The Dutch theologian Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) is regarded as the founder of the revival of classical natural law theory, with his works being ‘the first of its kind’.²¹⁴ This section traces Grotius’ concept of ‘*right reason*’ to Philo.²¹⁵ One can question how such an influence as Philo changes the way we can reflect the work of Grotius, but the aim here is not to reinterpret Grotius but to demonstrate Philo’s influence as part of the intellectual background of Locke.

²¹⁴ See Parkin 1999: 65. See also Richard Cumberland’s appraisal of Grotius in his introduction to *De legibus naturae* (1672)

²¹⁵ See more in Hillar (2012) on ‘The Logos in Judaism’

Grotius had his breakthrough with his ideas on international law, first with *Mare Liberum* (1609) and then with his most famous work the *De Jure Belli ac Pacis* (1625). In each of these works, Grotius argues for a system of international peace based on the universal theory of natural law. Traditional Natural Law theory assumes there is an eternal and immutable law directed by either God's will or reason, which human nature partakes in and realises *through* their reason, called *right* reason. Grotius reintroduced both the theory of natural law and the term '*right reason*'. What is particularly intriguing is that Grotius' main reference to the term *right reason* is Philo.²¹⁶ When Grotius first introduces the definition of the law of nature in *De jure*, he writes:

The law of nature is a dictate of right reason, which points out that an act, according as it is or is not in conformity with rational nature, has in it a quality of moral baseness or moral necessity; and that, in consequence, such an act is either forbidden or enjoined by the author of nature, God.²¹⁷

Here Grotius states that human nature can either act in deformity or conformity with nature, that is, with God's command. Acting according to the natural law is therefore done through acting in accordance with *right* reason. Under '*right reason*', Grotius added a footnote with a specific reference to Philo's definition of the term. Grotius' reference is citing Philo's work '*That Every Virtuous Man is Free [chap. Viii]:'* and here he quotes Philo at length: 'Now the law that deceives not is right reason; and this law is not mortal as devised by this or that moral, not lifeless as writ on leaves of

²¹⁶ For more on Philo's influence on Grotius see Meirav (2013)

²¹⁷ *LWP*, I.X.I

paper or on columns that are without life, but incorruptible, since it has been imprinted on mortal nature on an immortal intelligence.²¹⁸ Philo describes *right reason* as the ‘fountainhead’ of all law engraved by ‘the immortal mind’:

And right reason is an infallible law engraved not by this mortal or that and, therefore, perishable as he, nor on parchment or slabs, and, therefore, soulless as they, but by immortal nature on the immortal mind, never to perish.²¹⁹

Based on the creation story in Genesis 1.1, which states that man is created in the *image* of God, Philo interprets humans as also carrying the maker’s stamp. God has therefore engraved the moral law in our minds and on our reason, and the law can thus be attained and followed through the use of *right* reason. This is what makes right reason divine and universal. It is ‘not mortally devised’ means it is not arbitrary or man-made because the law comes from God. The fact that it is imprinted on all human beings through their reason makes it universal. In *de Jure*, Grotius therefore argues for a universal moral core that stands over and above religious dogma, sceptics and the radical antinomians (those who renounce Christian moral law for the faith in God’s grace). Grotius also argues that peace and freedom of the individual is only gained if all nations act in accordance with the natural law. Grotius’ *de Jure* is replete with references to Philo, and Philo is most referenced author in the book.²²⁰ Therefore, we can see how the revival of natural law theory was indirectly taken from Philo in Grotius’ concept of right reason.

²¹⁸ *LWP*, I.X.I fn. 1

²¹⁹ Philo quoted in McKnight, 2016: 175

²²⁰ Meirav, 2013: 340

By arguing that Natural Law derives from God's *command*, Grotius meant not through his arbitrary *will*, but through his creative intelligence, that is, his command, as being His *reason in action*. Grotius' conception of natural law fits the Platonic idea of a rational order to the world, which is a rational order *not even God could arbitrarily change* through his *will*. However, God cannot change rational circumstances like the fact that two times two makes four: 'Just as even God, then, cannot cause that two times two should not make four.'²²¹ This type of rationalism puts limits on God's power, but not on his wisdom or power in the role of a creator. God dictates what is good, but he cannot change the order his reason has created. The human reason aligns with the divine reason, which corresponds to Philo's teaching.

It is worth mentioning that in Grotius we find a complex stance between rationalism and voluntarism. At first he states that 'the Law of Nature is so unalterable, that God himself cannot change it.' As he explains, 'For as the Being and Essence of Things after they exist, depend not upon any other, so neither do the Properties which necessarily follow that Being and Essence' and therefore, 'God suffers himself to be judged of according to this Rule, as we may find, Gen. xv'.²²² Genesis 15 is the chapter entitled 'The LORD's Covenant With Abram.'²²³ Grotius is also admittedly taking a voluntarist standpoint, stating that: 'The other kind of Right, we told you, is the Voluntary Right, as being derived from the Will, and is either Human or Divine'.²²⁴ Human law is the State of which he defines as a complete 'Body of free Persons, associated together to enjoy peaceably their Rights, and for their common Benefit.' In this way, natural law stems from human nature for their benefit, but it is

²²¹ *LWP*, I.X.5: 'Just as even God, then, cannot cause that two times two should not make four.'

²²² *Op. cit.*

²²³ cf. KJV Genesis, XV.18: 'In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram'

²²⁴ *LWP*, I.XIII

aligned with the rational design of God. In chapter XV of *de Jure*, Grotius defines divine law as ‘The *Divine voluntary Law* (as may be understood from the very Name)’:

[I]s that which is derived only from the Will of GOD himself; whereby it is distinguished from the Natural Law, which in some Sense, as we have said above, may be called Divine also...GOD does not *will* a Thing because it is just; but it is just, that is, it lays one under an indispensible Obligation, because GOD *wills* it. And this Law was given either to all Mankind, or to one People only: We find that GOD gave it to all Mankind at three different Times.²²⁵

It is important to emphasize that Grotius’ conception of natural law enables him to make the argument for universality, that is, his concept of natural law works as the foundation for a universal moral law that transcend religious – Christian or otherwise – dogma and is therefore applicable on both a national and international level. In this way, Grotius aimed to find a way to secure international peace, unity and justice in the face of the religious and political unrest and division that raged over 17th century Europe.

4.4 Selden and Hobbes response to *right reason*

Across the pond in England, John Selden (1584-1654), Sir Robert Filmer (1588-1653) and Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) were closely following Grotius’ footsteps in his

²²⁵ *LWP*, I.XV

project on reviving the theory of natural law. There is evidence that they were all reading Grotius around the same time his theories of international law were being debated in Parliament in 1628.²²⁶

With Grotius, Selden, Filmer and Hobbes shared the same concern for achieving peace, political and religious stability, and freedom for the individual. In achieving this conceptual liberation of the individual, crucial disputes over the origins of political right and legitimacy, the relationship between the individual and the state, or more specifically, between human nature and the divine, had to be defined and resolved. All these thinkers subsequently identified that there is a crucial tension between the individual's inherent rights, as it were, and the authority of the sovereign state, and that leads to a further problem of the origins of moral obligation. What is the basis for moral obligation? And who is the judge of morality? If we grant freedom to the individual *will*, then who has the *right* to rule, that is, the right impose their will on others? In short, who *is* right and how do we know that those who are right are right? However, while Selden, Filmer, and Hobbes shared a similar outlook of this political (and religious) 'peace' project and the intellectual challenge set before them, their solutions differed drastically. What Grotius, Filmer and Hobbes have in common is that their solutions serve towards an ultimate justification of patriarchy and a stability based on a *transferring* of rights, from the individual to the absolute authority of one sovereign (that is, a king or a tyrant, such as Cromwell during the Interregnum). This was something that Selden, and later Locke, argued against.²²⁷ However, crucial for my present purpose, both Selden and Hobbes share in what I call a decisive break with Grotius' platonic rational outlook, and – as I also argue – the

²²⁶ Haivry, 2017: 195

²²⁷ Ibid., p. 193

Philonic definition of *right reason*. Let me explain this further by first turning to Selden and then to Hobbes.

Selden was the first to adopt Grotius' ideas and make them popular in England.²²⁸ Selden had a family background in farming and was an auto-didact intellectual. He was educated at Oxford, after which he pursued law and twice became a Member of Parliament, first in the 1620s and then later in the 1640s. Selden wrote and published on history, literature, and law, with a particular emphasis on international law as a critical response to Grotius. While England was at the time in competition with the Dutch for domination of the seas and world trade, Selden opposed Grotius' ideas of open seas, and argued instead in his *Mare clausum* (1635) for a 'closed sea' and British sovereignty over the waters around the British Isles.

Selden's perhaps most important work, *De Jure Naturali et Gentium juxta Disciplinam Ebraeorum*, was first published in 1640. This work is, as described by Rosenblatt, 'the most genuinely philosemitic works produced by a Christian Hebraist in early modern Europe'.²²⁹ Selden was well received as a Hebraist, and at times he was referred to as 'Rabbi Selden'.²³⁰ As a Hebraist, it is clear that it was from the old Judaic tradition that he gained inspiration, sources and historical foundation to his claims about the law. Selden's *De Jure Naturali et Gentium* had the unusual purpose to examine the classical Jewish account of the laws of nature, and in doing this, Selden demonstrated his proficiency in a wide range of Hebrew literature. But his

²²⁸ Hutton, 2015: 64

²²⁹ Rosenblatt, 2006: 161

²³⁰ Haivry, 2017: 322

principal, and most controversial, source was the Talmud.²³¹ Selden departed from Grotius on this point. While Grotius argued that the natural law was given universally to mankind by virtue of having *reason*, Selden claimed that natural law was given by God at a special *historical* moment in time, and is therefore not apprehended by reason only. He based this on the Talmud and the Seven Laws of Noah, which predates the laws given to Moses (and was therefore not only given to the Jews). Selden argued that the laws given by God to Noah were applied to *all* the decedents of Adam, not just the Jewish people, which makes them universal. Selden became renowned for his proficiency in the Jewish traditions and laws, and he was widely acknowledged among Christian Hebraists in England and across Europe. Therefore, it was basically Selden's writings that popularised the Talmudic traditions among Christian scholars in Europe in the Early Modern Period.²³²

Selden's engagement with Talmudic and post-Talmudic ideas brought him both fame and admiration. But this engagement was also seen by many scholars as controversial because of the fact that the Jewish Talmudic traditions had originated *after* the Jewish rejection of Christianity.²³³ On this point, Selden differed from his other contemporary natural law theorists such as Grotius, Cumberland and Puffendorf.²³⁴ He was greatly admired by John Lightfoot for his proficiency and use of ancient Jewish sources. Lightfoot was a rabbinic scholar with a particular interest in 'philosemitism'. Ralph Cudworth also praised Selden for his insights and particular understanding of the Seven Laws of Noah (also called the *Noahide Laws*), as seen in his letter to Selden concerning the *De Jure Naturali* in 1643: 'youre incomparable

²³¹ See Tuck, 2008: 524

²³² Haivry, 2017: 322

²³³ Ibid., p. 323

²³⁴ Op. cit.

Discourse, upon ye Precepts of Noah, the Scope and use whereof is by too many, (I thinke) wch read it, not understood'.²³⁵ While admiring Selden's insights in Jewish pre-Christian writings, Cudworth also admitted he agreed with Selden's suggestion *on the keeping of agreements* as the most fundamental natural law. Coincidentally, this was a precept that inspired Hobbes in his definition of the natural laws in the *Leviathan*. Therefore, before saying more about Cudworth and his relation to the Jewish and philo-semitism, let us first look a little closer at the relationship between Hobbes and Selden and their response to the revival of natural law in the light of the understating of the term 'right reason'.

As Hobbes is believed to have been a close friend of Selden, a large intellectual exchange has hastily been attributed to this friendship. However, Haivry has recently pointed out that there is little evidence for this and that it may, therefore, have been exaggerated.²³⁶ Selden and Hobbes only became acquainted after Hobbes had published the *Leviathan*, which was not long before Selden's death.²³⁷ Therefore, Hobbes cannot really have influenced Selden's work, at least not on a personal level. However, there is no doubt Selden made his mark on Hobbes.

It is clear that both Selden and Hobbes denied Grotius' concept of *right reason* as they both saw it being the immense problem, and perhaps flaw, in Grotius' argument. The problem was the idea that an individual's reason can by itself be a universal dictate of the moral law and the basis of moral obligation. As Selden pointed out of the term 'right reason' (or 'Recto Ratio' in Latin):

²³⁵ Cudworth quoted in Haivry, 2017: 250

²³⁶ Haivry, 2017: 190

²³⁷ Op. cit.

When the School-Men talk of Recto Ratio in Morals, either they understand Reason as it is governed by a Command from above, or else they say no more than a Woman, when she says a thing is so, because it is so; that is, her Reason persuades her 'this so.'²³⁸

The point Selden is making here is that if we rely on 'recto ratio' as the reason of an individual person, it means that the law is entirely subject to that *individual's* judgment. Therefore, it seems arbitrary what the individual thinks his or her judgments tell. It is 'no more than a Woman, when she says a thing is so, because it is so', using the then-standard example of 'a woman' to illustrate the fickleness of relying on any person's own judgment as no more than relying on their mere opinion. Therefore, there is no way of making a distinction between the concept of reason and opinion. In Selden's view, there is no way of calling reason 'the judge' (as Locke does!), that is, there is no way of distinguishing between what is held to be persuasion by the so-called *right* reason and what is persuasion by mere *opinion*.

Following Selden's point, Hobbes makes a crucial distinction between natural *right* and natural *law*. In *De Cive*, he writes that self-preservation is 'a requirement of right reason, i.e. of natural right,' meaning that the most fundamental *right* humans have is the right to self-preservation. From this claim, it follows that it is the task of 'right reason' to judge whether a particular action serves or does not serve towards an individual's given *self*-preservation.²³⁹ According to Hobbes, any *right* by nature is basically the right to do what any individual agent genuinely *believes* to be the right

²³⁸ Selden, 1927: 125

²³⁹ Hobbes, 1998: 28

thing to do, in so far as it is conducive to his or her self-preservation. In this way, Hobbes makes sense of and joins together the terms of individual opinion and the term *right reason*. He accepts that it is something natural, but instead of serving a universal moral function, it is merely serving as instrumental to the individual's desires and most crucially to his or her self-preservation. Therefore, Hobbes argues that simple *right reason* does not command the natural law or make it obligatory. Therefore according to Hobbes, the only binding force must be super imposed by the civil power; that is, by *the keeping of agreements*, as initially suggested by Selden.

According to Hobbes, the institution of society and morality is only to meet the immediate aims of the individual's self-preservation – in this life – as opposed to nourishing a future state of affairs in the afterlife. Hobbes is here anticipating modern society today that is now more focused on the present state, and not the future state (e.g. Augustine's *City of God*). In this way, Francis Oakley explains to us:

Hobbes was responsible for engineering some sort of Copernican shift from a moral universe revolving around the obligatory and community-orientated prescriptions of the natural law to one centered on the free and individualistic exercise of one's natural rights.²⁴⁰

This means Hobbes moved from a definition of *reason* connected to the divine that, if exercised correctly through *right reason*, would ultimately discover something objective and *universal*. Hobbes defines reason instead as something serving only subjective aims of the individual, which highlights the Hobbesian notion that society

²⁴⁰ Oakley 2005: 92

and morals are constructed by convention, by individuals in order to further their own egoistic aims. This also stands in contrast to Grotius, where natural law proceeds from divine *reason* (although also from his will), so a given act may be good or evil in virtue of its own God-given intrinsic nature, which is knowable through our human reason and corresponds in nature to the *divine* reason.

As a voluntarist, Hobbes argues that natural law proceeds solely from Divine *Will*.²⁴¹ The Divine Will is both unknowable through reason and unreachable, in a sense that *we cannot know what God wills*. Hobbes must, therefore, find a different route to implement the laws of nature. According to Hobbes' negative theology, we cannot know anything about God, as he argues that rational knowledge of natural causes teaches us nothing about the nature of God or the motives of his actions. As he states, 'The nature of God is incomprehensible; that is to say, we understand nothing of what he is, but only that he is', God is therefore, the first cause of nature not nature itself.²⁴² He argues that the natural laws are instead instantiated through the generation of the *Leviathan*, that is, the *sovereign*.

The main problem for Hobbes, as he illustrates with his 'state of nature', is that each individual is *claiming* his or her right. Each individual must therefore (realised through for the sake of their own self-preservation) consent to give up all his or her rights in, and thereby 'generate', the Leviathan, which then enforces the laws of nature as protection. The laws of Nature are therefore only implemented *de facto* through the sovereign, who is God's representation on earth. The laws of nature defined by Hobbes are not laws intrinsic to human nature but something that can be

²⁴¹ See my earlier discussion in Chapter 2

²⁴² Hobbes, 1994: 263

externally enforced to implement security and further the egoistic aims of the individual. How ‘natural’ we can actually call these laws, and how arbitrary they would then become in the light of the arbitrary will of the sovereign, is a separate matter. What is crucial here is that Hobbes’s conception of reason carries no content other than the instrumental way for the individual to seek ‘peace’, that is, in the name of an entirely selfish preservation from the otherwise ‘nasty, brutish, and short’ life. This can be summed up in Hobbes’s words:

And when men that think themselves wiser than all others, clamour and demand right reason for judge, yet seek no more but that things should be determined by no other men’s reason but their own, it is as intolerable in the society of men as it is in play after trump is turned, to use for trump on every occasion that suite whereof they have most in their hand. For they do nothing else, that will have every of their passions, as it comes to bear sway in them, to be taken for right reason, and that in their own controversies, bewraying their want of right reason by the claim they lay to it.²⁴³

Hobbes hereby argues that right reason is the subjective reason, and whatever passion an individual has, their reason ‘comes to bear sway in them’. This is a sentiment later echoed in Hume, who stated more forwardly in *A Treatise on Human Nature*, 1738: ‘reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions’, (II.3.3 415). Hobbes then defines reason as an instrumental, a calculative tool:

²⁴³ Hobbes, 1994: 23 see specifically, I.5.3 *Of Reason, and Science*

When man *reasoneth*, he does nothing else but conceive a sum total, from *addition* of parcels, or conceive a remainder from *subtraction* of one sum from another; which (if it be done by words) is conceiving of the consequence of the names of all the parts to the name of the whole, or from the names of the whole and one part to the name of the other part.²⁴⁴

Hobbes seems to evoke an element of ‘industry’ similar to individual endeavor associated with the Cambridge Platonists, as he states ‘reason is not, as sense and memory, born with us; nor gotten by experience only, as prudence is; but attained by industry.’²⁴⁵ However, in Hobbes there is no metaphysical basis for this industry, nor is it actualized by internal ‘spiritual’ workings of the mind, nor is it working towards a greater, divine *purpose*, other than that of the individual. There is no inner sense, that in some way deifies human nature. When reason is defined as instrumental in Hobbes, it functions only on a mechanistic level, not metaphysical, i.e. as on a spiritual level, it can therefore not give any divine content.

For Hobbes, reason need not be more than the ability to be able to make additions and subtractions, as he concludes ‘in what matter soever there is place for addition and subtraction, there also is place for reason; and where these have no place, there reason has nothing at all to do.’²⁴⁶ Hobbes’s mechanical definition of reason is based on his mechanistic outlook on human nature as a whole; the most fundamental principle of this outlook is self-preservation. As Hobbes states, ‘every one may use his own reason in time of danger to save his own life, either by flight, or by submission to the enemy,

²⁴⁴ Hobbes, 1994: 22

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 23

²⁴⁶ *Op. cit.*

as he shall think best.²⁴⁷ The notion self-preservation is therefore vested in his material and mechanistic outlook of life as constituting of only matter and motion. As Hobbes writes, ‘for seeing life is but a motion of limbs’; even the human heart he defines as ‘but a spring’.²⁴⁸ God, according to Hobbes’s materialistic universe, is either wholly disconnected from it or fully material. Hobbes thus rejects dualism and the immateriality of the soul. Instead, Hobbes creates a form of ‘atomic individualism’ in which society, including justice and ethics, is part of an artificial convention created by humans to further their own egoistic aims. As a result, human individuality became an irreducible entity, and out of this thinking, the concept of individuality turned decidedly anti-social.²⁴⁹

Having established Hobbes’s definition of reason and his indebtedness from Selden, I want to conclude with some brief points on Hobbes’s connection to Hebrew scholarship in the light of Selden’s apparent philo-Semitism. First, it should be said that Hobbes was not a Hebrew scholar, and it has been noted that we do not have any evidence that he was particularly well read in the Talmud or other ancient Jewish sources. However, there are a couple of cases that might be worth noting: one is his reference to Josephus and Philo in the *Leviathan*, and the second is that Hobbes had a clear stance in favour of the Hebrew Bible, which is notable because his biblical references in the *Leviathan* are in fact mostly from the Old Testament. Now, these are two minor points but might be worth exploring briefly.

In the first case, it furthers my earlier point that Philo and Josephus were both regarded as part of good learning. There might be several reasons for Hobbes’s

²⁴⁷ Hobbes, 1994: 132

²⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 3

²⁴⁹ As argued by Klien, 1994:67

reference, as he remarks ‘we have extant the works of Philo and Josephus, both Jews, written by them eloquently in Greek.’ He compliments them on their writing, but it also sounds like he wanted the reader to *think* that he was familiar with these works and had read them. Another reason might be the influences from the general acceptance that came with philo-Semitism and influences from Selden. Hobbes, like Selden and Grotius, must have been familiar with these works.

In the second case, Hobbes asserted Christ’s legacy of Moses by literally referring to Jesus as ‘the king of the Jews’, an interpretation that he also shares with Machiavelli in his *Discourses* (1:12). Beiner argues that Hobbes’s civil religion is thereby a form of ‘judaicizing’ of Christianity.²⁵⁰ Hobbes specifically argues that Christianity, as founded by Christ, is the same religion as found in the Old Testament where Christ himself is the direct successor of Moses. Furthermore, it is obvious that the Old Testament contains elements that fit Hobbes’ over all political purpose. For example, even the Leviathan itself is taken from the mythological figure in the Book of Job, described as a sea monster ‘when it rises up, the mighty are terrified’ and ‘the sword that reaches it has no effect’, for ‘Nothing on earth is its equal—a creature without fear. It looks down on all that are haughty; it is king over all that are proud.’²⁵¹ Also, God in the Book of Job is represented as a tyrant: all-powerful, fearful, erratic, unpredictable, testing and yet forgiving and benevolent.

²⁵⁰ Beiner, 1993:628

²⁵¹ *KJV* Job. 41.33-34

Part II

4.5 The Cambridge Platonists

In this section I first introduce the Cambridge Platonists and then look their relation to philo-Semitism and Philo, in particular though the works of Ralph Cudworth. Primarily, this section aims to give an account of their unique definition of reason and how it relates to both the concept of logos and Christ. Finally, I explain how this understanding of reason fits with their theology and epistemology.

The Cambridge Platonists, as they were later coined, were a group of theologians based at the University of Cambridge. They included Benjamin Whichcote, who is seen as their founding father, Henry More, who was the most prolific writer of the time, Ralph Cudworth, John Smith, and in the periphery Nathaniel Curverwel, who wrote mainly on natural law. The Cambridge Platonists did not see themselves as belonging to a specific group as such, but what rather unified them was their shared legacy of Platonic, Stoic and Neo-Platonic philosophy, which saw a significant revival in the 17th century (Hutton, 2015:136). In particular, the Cambridge Platonists developed their theology and philosophy from the philosophy of the ancients, from Plato to Neo-Platonic sources, such as Plotinus and Philo, the Early Church Fathers, such as Augustine and Origen, and the 15th century thinkers of Florence like Marcilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola.²⁵²

²⁵² Hutton, 2008: 3

In addition to the ancient sources, the Cambridge Platonists also shared a form of religious individualism, vested in their conception of human nature as having freedom of mind and freedom of conscience. Particularly, this religious individualism hinges upon their emphasis on the individual's use of reason in religious matters, by which they aim to highlight the individuals' *own* capacity to reason and discover religious truths. In this respect, the Cambridge Platonists were regarded by some of the earliest so-called Latitudinarians (Martin and Griffin, 1992: 4).²⁵³

In their work, the Cambridge Platonists endeavoured to respond, on the one hand, to the growing anti-intellectualism of the religious sects that were called 'enthusiasts', who were famous for dispensing with rationalism and the concept of reason within religion in favour of a more emotional response to religious worship. On the other hand, the Cambridge Platonists wanted to respond to the threat of materialism and atheism that surfaced as a result of the philosophy of Hobbes, who, on the other extreme, narrows the concept of reason down to a form of material *instrument* with consequences for the established Christian ethics. The Cambridge Platonists therefore aimed to refute irrationalism as well as Hobbes' materialism and atheism by defending an eternal and *moral* Christian world-view.²⁵⁴ The uniqueness of the shared philosophy of the Cambridge Platonists is thus vested in their particular emphasis on the role of *reason* in religion and the fact that they are located between the two extreme religious worldviews: that of Hobbes and that of the religious enthusiasts.

²⁵³ The term 'latitudinarian' was first associated with contempt and suspicion due to its connection to the Arminian notion of justification and tolerant attitude towards episcopacy. The term 'latitudinarian', or the 'latitude men', was later attributed to all those Anglicans who were particularly concerned with religious toleration. As they 'allowed a great freedom both in philosophy and divinity', they were basically seen as too liberal. See further, Martin and Griffin, 1992: 4

²⁵⁴ Cragg, 1950: 61

This definition of reason, as taking a middle way between these extremes, is what I aim to extrapolate in this section.

Furthermore, the Cambridge Platonists, like Plato, were substance dualists. This means they saw the spiritual and intellectual mind as superior to the material and physical realm. However, although they were ‘innatist’ and believed the mind carried a certain innate *a priori* knowledge, Sarah Hutton points out that it should not be overlooked that they also endorsed the early modern interest in natural philosophy, that is, they accepted the post-Galilean science, advocated an atomistic theory of matter and did not deny knowledge and experience from the senses. This combination places the Cambridge Platonists in a position of epistemic humility, which made it possible for them to argue that rationality is compatible with Christianity and not a threat to it. They held that the same *light of reason* that was used in natural sciences was also used to understand religious matters. This epistemic humility and role of reason therefore affects the way they approach both science and theology.

On the basis of this epistemic humility, the Cambridge Platonists argued against the established Roman Catholic Church and rejected the idea of an infallible interpreter in religious matters. In doing so, they sought to eliminate dogmatism and excessive emphasis on authority and literal readings of Scripture because they believed these were all against reason. Whichcote, referring to his ultimate source, Socrates, writes that he aimed to overthrow ‘Enthusiasm and superstition; when he taught men to receive no Doctrine, against or without reason’²⁵⁵ The rational is therefore by

²⁵⁵ Whichcote quoted in Patrides, 1969: 24

definition the most humble approach. In doing this, the Cambridge Platonists also inspired a new reading of the Bible that was less literal and yielded a more open and liberal approach to Scripture. As Patrides points out, the Cambridge Platonists ‘wished not to dispose with organised religion but to *reform* it!’²⁵⁶ Therefore, in order to understand how this relation between the spiritual and rational works, we must understand what that reason or the rational actually *is*. The role and concept of reason is crucial to their philosophy, their theology and their understanding of Christianity. Furthermore, as Louise Hickman has recently pointed out, the Cambridge Platonists were concerned with harmonizing their Platonism with a Christology of the incarnate Logos.²⁵⁷ This means that reason is, like Jesus Christ to mankind, the individual logos of each human being. There is, therefore, also a close relationship between their rationalism and theology, especially their complex understanding of the theology of works and faith. I shall therefore also look at how the Cambridge Platonists’ definition of reason fits with both their theology and epistemology. But before I move on to this, I first look at their relation to the context of the 17th century philo-Semitism and sources from Philo.

The Cambridge Platonists and Philo-Semitism

The Cambridge Platonists took what is called a ‘syncretist’ approach, meaning they attempted to synchronise or fuse Christian thought with ancient Hellenic and Hebraic sources.²⁵⁸ In doing this, they placed ‘reason’ as the central and universal commonality of human nature, the unifier of people between these times and

²⁵⁶ Whichcote quoted in in Patrides, 1969: 24

²⁵⁷ Hickman, 2017: 57

²⁵⁸ See Levitin 2015: 171

traditions. They did not argue that reason is entirely sufficient to reach the truth, that is, without Christian revelation, rather it is at least possible, through the *use* of *right* reason, to reach degrees of truth that are compatible with the truths given by revelation. It is perhaps most striking in this context that Cudworth himself was one of the most famous Hebraist of the time, becoming Regius Professor of Hebrew at Cambridge in 1645.²⁵⁹ Cudworth also frequently corresponded with Selden, who held him in highest regards and admired his knowledge of Hebrew sources.²⁶⁰ However, Cudworth only mentions Selden in passing in his main work the *True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678), as part of ‘some learned men amongst us’ who had interpreted Pythagoras’ *Tetractys*, which is significant to the study of Kabbalah. Furthermore, Haivry points out that both Cudworth and Curverwel took a keen interest in Selden’s critique of Hobbes’s account of *obligation*, in particular on keeping one’s promises.²⁶¹ But Curverwell points out that Selden’s position on morality is something depending on tradition rather than on the human inner enlightenment.

Further to his Hebrew scholarship, Cudworth was a pioneer in introducing explanations for Mosaic rites based on Maimonides contextualism into English scholarship.²⁶² For example, Maimonides was the most influential Jewish scholar in the middle ages and a prominent interpreter of the Torah. Cudworth was also involved

²⁵⁹ The most famous Christian Hebraists of the time were John Spencer, Ralph Cudworth and George Bright, the editor of Lightfoot’s work – all scholars were affirming that Isaac Abendana had done his job properly, see further in Katz, 1989: 40

²⁶⁰ Cudworth writes to Selden: ‘I cannot sir, but compromise with your opinion in every thing; but I must confesse I haue a good while since, entertained these thoughts, that under ye Christian State, there is scarcely any thing of Ius Divinium besides the Universall and Catholick Law of Nature except only the nómos tês pístevs The Law of faith.’ quoted in Haivry, 2017: 250

²⁶¹ Op. cit.

²⁶² See further in Katz, 1989

in the Mishnah translation project run by Issac Abendana. Issac Abendana was a Hebraist and a book collector, and as a learned Jew, he was approached specifically to come to England to translate the Mishnah from Hebrew to Latin. The Mishnah is the core text of the Talmud and contains the oral tradition that was first established by the earliest Rabbi scholars. Cudworth co-supervised the project together with John Lightfoot, who was also at Cambridge, and Edward Pococke, who was Chair of Arabic Studies at Oxford and Locke's tutor of Arabic and Oriental studies. Abendana was initially invited to England by Lightfoot, but he went straight to Pococke in 1662 to start the project.

The philo-Judaic sentiment of the 17th century was in general pre-conversionist, meaning that as the Jewish religion came before the conversion into Christianity; there was still a hope that all the Jews would, eventually, convert to Christianity.²⁶³ However, according to Marshall, this pre-conversionist approach was also sensitive to an underlying anti-Islamic sentiment. For example, More wrote in the 1680s that the Turks were 'monsters' who were 'made up of a horse and a man...and have tails' and basically hoped that 'the Satanical Kingdom of Mahomet' would eventually be conquered by Jews who would *then* convert to Christianity.²⁶⁴ This statement by More is here aimed to demonstrate how he saw that there was a form of succession of ideas, leading towards Christianity and thereby, according to his perception, towards the true religion.

In the light of this, however, it is worth mentioning that there was in fact also a flourishing scholarly *positive* attitude towards the Arabic culture, particularly

²⁶³ Marshall, 2006: 388

²⁶⁴ Op. cit.

championed by Edward Pococke at Oxford. In his work *Specimen Historiae Arabum* (1650), Pococke famously unlocked ‘the treasures of the East’ to his contemporary readers.²⁶⁵ Robert Boyle, who later became a mentor of Locke, praised the study of the Arabic scientific texts as being useful against dogmatism and ‘groundless traditional conceptions’.²⁶⁶ Even Isaac Barrow, the Latitudinarian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge, argued that Arabic was necessary for the advancement of science and subjects such as ‘physicke, astrologie, rhetoricke’.²⁶⁷ However, as earlier pointed out, the main purpose for the 17th century studies of Hebraic and Jewish sources was specifically to give a *historical* foundation and trajectory to Christianity as part of a mission to prove the true universality of Christianity. While showing that certain sentiments of Christianity were the true and superior religion, it illustrated the inclusive and tolerant attitude of the theologians and Christian philosophers, such as the Latitudinarians. The Latitudinarians rejects the Puritan notion of predestination, instead they hold a view of Christianity as universal, inclusive and is in this context not favouring one *people* over another. This is also something that stands in clear contrast to both the Jewish and Muslim religions who both see themselves as superior to one another. To the Latitudinarian Christians, Hebraic sources and scholars of the Old Testament were valued as ‘forefathers’, giving both evidence and support for the New Testament. In this respect, Islam was also ‘forgiven’ because it also accepted what was regarded as historical parts of Christianity. This communality is particularly pointed out in Whichcote’s words:

²⁶⁵ Marshall, John, John Locke, *Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006: 390

²⁶⁶ Op. cit.

²⁶⁷ See also Marshall, 2006: 390

[T]he *Mohametans* themselves did never charge *Moses*, or *Christ*, as being impostors. For they acknowledge *Moses*, as we do, for a true prophet, and go along with us in the history of Christ...²⁶⁸

According to Whichcote, the ‘Mohametans’ actually agree with Christians – up to the point of departure of John 14.16.²⁶⁹ Here Whichcote refers to John 14.17, ‘the spirit of truth’, as the dividing point.²⁷⁰ The ‘Mohametans’ agree with the *history* of the gospels but not with its *spiritual* content, that is, their spiritual *meaning*. Further to this point, however, Marshall makes the point that the Mahometans and the Jews also joined the Christians in worshipping the same ‘creator’, which was seen as providing support for the ‘historical’ existence of the belief in (the Christian) God.²⁷¹

This compatibilism between Judaism and Christianity can also be seen in Christian Knorr von Rosenroth, the German Christian Hebraist who published *Kabbalah Denudata* (the *Kabbalah Unveiled*) in 1678. The *Kabbalah Unveiled* contained the first Latin translation of Zohar, and in 1684 Knorr also published two further volumes focusing on the so-called Lurian Kabbalism based on writings by Isaac Luria. Both Knorr and van Helmont believed that, specifically, the Lurian Kabbalism was actually compatible with Christianity. Even More, who was generally sceptical of the Kabbalah, was sympathetic towards Knorr’s work, his advocacy of immortality and the idea of the pre-existence of the soul.²⁷² And, as we shall later see, Knorr’s work eventually reached Locke. But before turning to Locke in the next chapter, I look

²⁶⁸ Whichcote, 1751: 33

²⁶⁹ Op. cit.

²⁷⁰ KJV John 14.17: ‘Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.’

²⁷¹ Marshall, 2006:390

²⁷² Op. cit.

more in-depth at the Cambridge Platonists' definition of reason. In doing this I am not taking a chronological approach by looking at what each has written, but instead, my aim is to highlight the general important themes they all have in common, the red thread, if you like, in order to make clear their common, and particular understanding, of *Reason*. I further aim to explain why the concept of reason is significant to understanding the Cambridge Platonists' philosophy and theology, and how these two are closely interconnected.

4.6 The Cambridge Platonists on Reason: The Candle of the Lord

Now, let us turn to the Cambridge Platonists' definition of reason. As earlier stated, the novelty in their opposition against the sentiments of the enthusiasts, Catholics and 'Hobbits' alike lies in their particular conception of reason. So what is so special about it? In contrast to Hobbes' instrumental reason, the Cambridge Platonists gave reason a special metaphysical status, primarily seen as a light or gift coming *from* God to the *individual*. This gives reason a particular transcendental status that in some way connects God with the individual. In explaining this, they used various terms interchangeably such as breath, spirit, soul, light or 'intellectual light'. However, they based this particular understanding of reason on Proverbs 20.27: 'The spirit of man *is* the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.' (KJV). Here the term 'reason' is interchangeable with 'spirit', meaning that reason per definition *is* the 'candle of the Lord' within each human being. That is, the Cambridge Platonists held that reason is the spirit, gifted by God to mankind to guide them through their lives, and to guide them from this life to the next. Though the question follows that if reason is defined as *spirit*, then what form of spirit is it, meaning does

it constitute the individual's soul? Or has God gifted it as a part of himself, and in this way 'implanted' a seed as a part of God himself? While these understandings are not exclusive, the latter means that a part of God literally inheres in each human being, making them 'God-like' or at least having a seed which carries a God-like potential.

I therefore argue that it is possible to identify the Cambridge Platonists' conception of Reason through the four following interconnected definitions or principles: **1.** it is a universal *endowment* by God, **2.** it has a *mediating* function between God and the individual since the Cambridge Platonists held that it is both directly through and to reason that God speak and communicate, reason is thus not contrary to revelation but necessary to receive it, **3.** as something implanted by God, reason can be seen as a Godly 'seed'. This corresponds to the creation by 'copy and pattern' as we have seen in Plato and Philo, and Genesis, where humans were created in the *image* of God. Reason can, therefore, be interpreted as part of a form of natural, by creation, 'deification' of the human beings. Since mankind was created *in the image of God*. **4.** Reason contains the capacity of being a '*guiding light*' since it contains the potential to be guided back to God, both in terms of knowledge and capacity to reach Him, which is constantly leading humans towards knowledge, truth. I argue here that the first and the last principle correlates in the fact that reason is endowed by God, and just as true religion derives from heaven, it is constantly *moving towards heaven again*, that is to God the creator. The second and third definitions of reason have a mediating function, and because both are a 'seed', they are both interconnected in that God must *speak* or communicate to mankind since he has made them part of himself. It is through the nature of this connection that his communication, the fourth definition of reason as the guiding light, works. It is in this way the Cambridge

Platonists' definition of reason differs from the instrumental understanding of reason as it carries divine light and content.

1. The Gift

According to the first principle as I identify them, the Cambridge Platonists' definition of reason is that it is a *gift* from God. This is already established by Patrides, who writes that, as Christians, the Cambridge Platonists 'regarded the candle of the Lord as a God-directing *gift* of God.'²⁷³ This is seen, for example, in Smith, who claims that reason is 'a Beam from God, *as every good and perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning...*'²⁷⁴ The intellectual faculty, reason, is 'the Eye' of our understanding, as Smith states further in the *Select Discourses*: '*which indeed all have, but few make use of it.*'²⁷⁵ In this way, reason is a *universal* gift from God. According to the first principle, reason is also a gift by God that has the capacity to guide the individual back towards knowledge, understanding, and truth, towards discovering God and, as reflective faculty, ourselves. As Culverwel writes:

*God hath breathed into all the sons of men Reasonable souls, which may serve, as so many Candles, to enlighten, and direct them in their searching out their Creator, in the discovering of other inferior beings, and themselves also.*²⁷⁶

²⁷³ Patrides, 1959: 18

²⁷⁴ John Smith, from *The Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion*, quoted in Patrides, 1959: 147-8

²⁷⁵ Smith, 1660: 17

²⁷⁶ Culverwel, 1661: 110

Here we can see *reason* as something being *breathed* into all humans as a *universal* light to direct and help each individual discover their own person, the world around them and God. The term ‘breath’ is used as an analogy for God’s own spirit that has been, in some way, transferred to the individual. The questions that follow are: if indeed reason is a *gift* from God, what does it mean and what function does reason then aim to fulfil? By viewing reason in the light of a combination of the second and third principles, that is, both as a form of mediation and seed, it means that reason gives humans a particular quality *from* God through which God is able to mediate his own nature and thereby give humans the potential of deification.

2-3. Reason mediation and the seed of God

The interpretations of reason as a having both a *mediating* quality or being the *seed* of God is based on the concept ‘image’ from the Old Testament passage in Genesis 1.27, which states, ‘So God created man in his own image’²⁷⁷ This is the idea that humans are created as part of God’s great design, and as such are constantly partaking within it for God’s set purposes. In this way, the Cambridge Platonists hold that the human reason is, as Patrides explains, ‘a living image of God, and a partaker in the essences of the Divine Mind.’²⁷⁸ When God created humans in his image, the particular image that represents God is not constituted through a representation of arms and legs, but the image that humans carry of God is that very thing that makes us thinking, intelligent, conscious and creative beings, that is, reason. According to the Cambridge Platonists, it is through the gift of *reason* the individual human being has been given the *ability* to act in the imitation of their first creator. In this sense, reason, being the

²⁷⁷ KJV

²⁷⁸ Patrides, 1969: 11

image of God, is what *deifies* human beings. It makes them, according to this definition, basically ‘little Gods’.

This particular deformity of human beings is based on the interpretation of the act of God’s creation. It is one of the most evident Platonic influences in the Cambridge Platonist’s interpretation of reason, I think, as the idea of the ‘copy and seal’ or ‘copy and pattern’ in creation. As we have previously seen, the ‘copy and pattern’ analogy is present in both in Plato’s *Timaeus* and in Philo, who is directly drawing on Plato’s philosophy in his interpretation of Genesis and thereby viewing the entire sense-perceptible world as ‘an imitation of the divine image’. According to Philo, ‘it is plain that the archetypal seal [...] the archetypal idea of the ideas, [is] the Logos of God.’²⁷⁹ In short, the Logos *is* the creative wise mind of God, the archetypal idea of ideas, the light and the spark that all humans are created in the image of and carry within them.

Philo’s interpretation of Genesis is taken one step further in Cudworth’s *A Sermon Preached before the House of Commons*, (1647), in which he states that the Logos is *incarnated* in Christ as the ‘second Adam’. *The Logos of God* incarnated would, through Christ, ‘convey, such as an *imortall seed* of Grace into the hearts of true Believers, as may prevail still more and more in them [...]’ because Christ ‘was nothing, but Divinity Dwelling in a Tabernacle of flesh, and God himself immediately acting a humane nature’. Cudworth is here referring to both John 1.1, which assumes that God and the Logos are the same, stating: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God’; and to John 1.14, which continues;

²⁷⁹ *Opif.* 25

‘And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.’ (KJV). To further explain Cudworth’s view on the nature of Christ and the relation between Christ and the Logos, it is worth citing him at length:

[Christ] came into the World to kindle here that Divine life amongst men, which is certainly dearer unto God, then any thing else whatsoever in the World; and to propagate this Celestiall fire, from one heart still unto another, until the end of the world. Neither is he, or was he ever absent form this Spark of his Divinity, kindled amongst men...²⁸⁰

Cudworth argues that by virtue of being *created in the image* of GOD, each human being was *already* partaking in his nature (through the ‘Celestiall fire’); however, the benevolent God also had to send Christ, or his word down amongst them, in order to *propagate* this ‘Celestiall fire’. Christ is thus defined as a divine spark, an inherent, or given fire *within* man. Christ therefore literally, as Cudworth states, ‘came into the World to kindle [...] Divine life amongst men’. Further to this, Cudworth defines God as,

[T]he standing constant inexhausted Fountain, of this divine Light and Heat; that still toucheth every soul that is enlivened by it, with an outstretched Ray, and freely lends his Beams, and disperseth his influence to all, from the beginning to the World to the end of it.²⁸¹

²⁸⁰ Patrides, 1969: 104-105

²⁸¹ Patrides, 1969: 105

What is important here is that if man had not already been created in the image of God, they would not have been able to receive the word amongst them. As Cudworth clearly states, ‘And God forbid, that *God’s own Life and Nature* here in the World, should be forlorn, forsaken, and abandoned of God himself.’²⁸² In this way, God and human nature was never separated from each other after the creation, nor can they ever be.

Furthermore, by virtue of having been given *reason*, humans then receive assistance through the *revelation* that came with Christ’s incarnation. We can begin to see how the Cambridge Platonists held that reason and revelation are seen as *complementary* (a point I shall stress further when looking at their theology). According to the Cambridge Platonist’s view, the individual is *capable* of acting in the imitation of their creator by developing their reason and understanding when receiving the revelation from Christ. Whichcote explains that ‘God expects, Man should Do; as He makes him capable’.²⁸³ This enlarging or nurturing of reason is possible if we also understand Reason as the *seed* of God that is either ‘gifted’ or *implanted* by God in human nature at creation. And just as a seed carries the potential to grow into the form of its creator, so does human reason carry the potential to grow into the form of its divine creator. Humans are created in the image of God as deiforms. The analogy continues by saying that any seed will grow if it is properly nurtured, and the nurturing of reason requires both *individual* actualisation and the benevolent *revelation* from God. This is because of the fact that humans are *created* as individual thinking beings, but still dependent upon the infinitely wiser and stronger power of God. This analogy of the seed is also illustrated through the Platonic concept of

²⁸² Op. Sit.

²⁸³ Whichcote, Aphorisms, §927, 1969: 334

creators ‘copy and the pattern’ in the image of God. In this way reason is the Logos or *the Word of God* implanted in each human individual. Given that human nature has the *seed* of God, The human reason, is thus the same as the seed of God which *is* the image of God’s *own* mind. Given that humans have the divine seed, they are deformed. The seed analogy is also seen in Philo’s concept of the immanent Logos, which is God’s will in the cycle of nature ‘thereby immortalizing the kinds, and giving them a share of eternity’, as we have earlier seen from his *Opif.* 44:

On this account he [God] not only guided and, but caused the end to turn back to the beginning. Out of the plants emerged the fruit, as an end out of an beginning, while out of the fruit that encloses the *seed within itself* the plant emerges again, as a beginning out of an end.²⁸⁴

What Philo means by *seed within itself* ‘as a beginning out of an end’ is God who is at the beginning and the source of all things also plants His *seed within* the creation itself, the seed also constitutes the motion *within* the creation that brings it back to the source, God who is the ‘beginning out of an end’. This is why Logos is also understood as the principle of perpetuation within the creation, as we have seen was also held by the Stoics.

Now, the question of what function reason actually aims to fulfil is still unanswered. Hickman points out that the Cambridge Platonists understood both deformity and the ‘seed’ of God in highly *ethical* terms.²⁸⁵ In my definition, this is inherited from the concept of right reason, as we have seen in Grotius’ definition of natural law,

²⁸⁴ *Opif.* 44, my emphasis.

²⁸⁵ Hickman, 2015: 57

originally from Philo, which means that reason *itself* carries an ethical value. This means that the Cambridge Platonists' concept of reason is more than just an instrument, as in Hobbes, for it has a stronger, *ethical* purpose to fulfil. Reason in the Cambridge Platonists' view is not a passive instrument, but rather best defined as an *active power*. In this way, this particular quality of reason as also being a *moral* judge leads us to the fourth and final principle, as I call it, the '*guiding light*.'

4. The Guiding Light

The fourth principle of the Cambridge Platonist's concept of reason as a 'guiding light' depends on the definition of reason as carrying an *ethical* connotation. As stated, here we get to the crucial point where the Platonist definition of reason differs most clearly from that of the Hobbesian instrumental interpretation of reason. But it is also the guiding and directing principle that separates them from the religious enthusiasts. It is paramount to the Cambridge Platonists that there *is* a guide, and not just a pure, spiritual, unguided infusion of emotion or general spirituality. It is reason that connects and guides the human individual in an ethical life and back to God. By the very fact that it is symbolised by a candle, reason has also the capacity to *guide* and illuminate the world around us, just like a candle in a dark room. However, as earlier stated, reason is something that requires being actualized by individual effort, endeavour and intention. The last principle therefore highlights two aspects of the Cambridge Platonists' definition of reason. First, reason carries a power *in itself*, and thereby has the ability to guide human beings in life towards knowledge, wisdom and love. But secondly, this also means that by virtue of having this power it must also be

actualised and made *use* of by the individual. It is these two aspects in which the Cambridge Platonists differ from the instrumental, powerless reason, which has no inherent, power in it self, or a set direction. The ends instrumental reason is used for become arbitrary, just like the efforts of the person who uses it, since it is arbitrary what they use their reason for.

The activation of this power, according to the Cambridge Platonists, happens only through individual and conscious direction. There is a strong connection between individual free will and reason, which I shall turn to more in full when looking at the application of the concept of reason in their theology. Furthermore, this means that the power that reason contains is something in itself, and not merely instrumental. To use more Platonic allegories, the power of reason is like a torch of light in a dark cave that can be used to enlighten and unravel the path. However, it won't shine unless the individual bearing the torch moves it and makes use of it. More describes reason in *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness; or a True and Faithful Representation of the Everlasting Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (1660) as 'a *Power or Facultie of the Soul*.²⁸⁶ However, one can question why the path in the cave is not already lit, and why reason requires so much effort in order to unravel knowledge. More further explains this very well, I think, by comparing the world we live to a fantastic 'theatre':

The Theatre of the world is an exercise of Man's wit, not a lazy *Polytanthea* or book of Common places. And therefore all things are in some measure obscure and intricate, that the sedulity of that divine Spark of the Soul of Man,

²⁸⁶ More, 1660: 51

may have matter of conquest and triumph when he had done bravely by the superadvenient assistance of his God.²⁸⁷

According to More, all things are to some degree made ‘obscure and intricate’ so that humans are *able* to *exercise* their reason. As he calls it, life is an exercise of the human ‘wit’ or a ‘divine spark, as we have seen it defined. However, nothing can be done without ‘the superadvenient assistance of his God’. Therefore, it is a mutual relationship between God and the individual. If the knowledge and understanding of things had been made easier and more straightforward, there would be no need for the *individual* to *develop*, that is, no need to develop the powers of sedulity, diligence, the perseverance and the rewards that come with exercising one’s own wit. (This also accounts for the knowledge of God and God’s nature that remains hidden.) Without the *individual’s* exercise of reason, there would be no ‘conquest and triumph’ ‘bravely’ achieved. Basically, according to More, humans are actors in the world’s theatre in order to actively exercise reason. This is a great individual opportunity that has been gifted by God to the individual through reason. Reason is the *power* that enables us to be individuals and experience the world.

However, this definition of reason, as something that unravels truths and knowledge, and makes sense of experiences in an otherwise dimmed existence on earth from which God remains almost completely hidden, takes us back almost to the mystical. As Patrides explains: ‘It is accentuated because the candle of the Lord was said to enable man to attain an almost mystical awareness of God at the point where the rational and

²⁸⁷ More, *Seraitim*, quoted in Patrides, 1969: 262

the spiritual merge.²⁸⁸ However, I would emphasise the difference here between the Cambridge Platonists' definition of reason as non-instrumental and the way that the enthusiasts completely expel reason from their discourse. The Cambridge Platonists held that the spiritual is not opposed to the rational, as Whichcote firmly acclaimed: 'I oppose not rational to spiritual; for spiritual is most rational!'²⁸⁹

It is also through the exercise of reason that sin is rectified. Because of the fact that each individual possesses the candle of the Lord, they also possess a sense for moral direction, as best explained in Whichcote's words, 'which kindles a secret Sympathy in Human Nature, with Virtue and Honesty; with Fairness and good Behaviour.'²⁹⁰ Through the exercise of reason, individuals will not only acquire a greater understanding of things, but it also means that the ability to acquire a greater moral understanding of virtue, honesty, and even good behaviour is in some way natural through the inherent power of reason. In this way, it is through our reason, through our rational *awareness* of Christ, that our nature is also partaking in the benevolent nature of God. It enables us to understand sympathy and therefore *act* upon it as *conscience* and the moral judge.

This property is also, just like the seed, what makes reason able to guide mankind *back* to God. This is how the candle analogy works: it shines and enables the individual to reach back to the original source. Cudworth states in *A Sermon Preached before the Honourable House of Commons at Westminster*: 'We all receive of his fulnesse, grace for grace, as the stars in heaven, are said to light their Candles

²⁸⁸ Patrides, 1969: 17

²⁸⁹ Whichcote, quoted in Patrides 1969:11, cf. Aphorisms §1183 'what is most spiritual is most Rational'

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 38-39

at the Suns flame.’ Here he cites John 1. 16 ‘From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.’²⁹¹ He continues, stating that: ‘For though his body be withdrawn from us, yet by the lively and *virtuall Contact* of his Spirit, he is always kindling, cheering, quickening, warming, enlivening hearts.’²⁹² By ‘*virtuall Contact*’, Cudworth is emphasising the transcendent nature of the connection between God and the individual. We are connected to God through our spirit or reason, not through arms and legs. Speaking of deiformity, Cudworth further states: ‘Nay, this *Divine life* begun and kindled in any heard, whosoever it be, is *something of God in flesh*; and, in a sober and qualified sense, *Divinity incarnate*.’²⁹³

Certainly, where-ever it is, though never so little, like a sweet, young tender *Babe*, once born in any heart; when it crieth unto God the *father* of it, will pitifull and bemoaning looks imploring his compassion; it cannot chuse but move his *fatherly bowels*, and make them yerne, and turn toward it, and by strong sympathy, draw his compassionate arm to help and relieve it. Never was any tender Infant, so dear to those Bowels that begat it as an *Infant new-born Christ, formed in the heart* of any true believer, to God the father of it.²⁹⁴

The argument here refers back to creation in the image of God, in that, as humans move so tenderly and compassionately to their own children, so too shall God. The image bears more than just the ability to think for oneself; it bears the spark of God’s wisdom and compassion. As Cudworth points out, humans are God’s true spiritual

²⁹¹ KJV

²⁹² Cudworth, 1647: 33

²⁹³ Ibid., p. 33-34

²⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 34

offspring and ‘ingenerated by his own beams in mens hearts’.²⁹⁵ In this way, God’s very own spark partakes within each individual ‘s heart, forming a direct link between the individual and God.

Therefore, the first and the last principle merge by virtue of being a *gift* of light from God, as the light also helps to guide us back to its source. Furthermore, it is in this way, the Cambridge Platonists’ concept of reason carries what can be called *innate* knowledge of truths and morality; it is the tool that, when exercised, awakens the ideas that the soul are already born from truth, morality, and its ultimate source: God. This is summed up in Whichcote, who defines reason as ‘A Candle lightened by God, and serving to this Purpose; to discern and discover God.’²⁹⁶ It is in this way that the purpose of this guiding light is the endeavour and pursuit of God through study, here referring to Simplicius, one of the last Neo-Platonists, who wrote: ‘Our knowledge is intended only to qualify us for action, and lead us to it; and therefore the practice of virtue and a good life is the ultimate design of all study.’²⁹⁷ The gift is an opportunity to come back to God on one’s own accord, and only when making that choice is the individual actualised in the ultimate truth, love and wisdom of God. For without God, there would be no such thing as choice and individuality in the first place. As we shall see, the Cambridge Platonists hold that there is a connection between their concept of reason and individual *free will*. This means that the power that reason contains is something in itself, and not merely instrumental. Reason is an *individual* power, which can only be actualised by and for the individual. I shall now turn to the theological implications of the Cambridge Platonists’ concept of reason.

²⁹⁵ Cudworth, 1647: 34

²⁹⁶ Whichcote, *Sermons*, p. 440 and cf. *Aphorisms* §916 (see Patrides, 1969: 334;18)

²⁹⁷ See Patrides 1969: 18

4.7 Theology in the Cambridge Platonists: Reason and Grace

The Cambridge Platonists' particular conception of reason has a prominent role in their unusual theological stance that attempts to avoid Hobbes' voluntarism and the irrationalism of the enthusiasts. In particular, their understanding of reason as the candle of the Lord becomes vital in their understanding of grace and free will. The concept of grace was much debated in the 17th century. The basic idea behind grace lies in the combination between God's inherent goodness (his benevolence) and purpose in creating the world and the most crucial question of *salvation*. As the entire purpose of God sending Christ was to *save* humans from their present condition, the theological question is just *how* are they saved? Specifically, after Christ's coming into the world, do humans rely for their salvation on God's grace through their faith alone or through deeds (works) as well? This further questions if humans have the capacity to thereby *affect* their *own* situation and salvation through their individual efforts through *works*, or if they are doomed in any case and can only be bettered through *faith*, which is only bestowed by God. The answer to this issue depends upon how much freedom and free will humans are given. For example, St. Augustine stated 'It is impossible for him to believe, unless he is willing',²⁹⁸ implying that faith as well as works are based on a *freedom* of choice. The Cambridge Platonists take a complex theological stance that combines *justification* by *both* works and faith. The role of *reason* in matters of grace and freedom helps them again to find a middle position that fall between the two opposing traditions of Scriptural interpretation of the Calvinists and the Catholics.

²⁹⁸ Linwood, 1995: 193

On the one hand, the Calvinists held that grace—also called ‘irresistible grace’— is only applied to those God has *predetermined* for salvation. Predetermination cancels any human individual free choice in the matter of salvation. Salvation of the individual therefore depends solely on the *will* of God. However, those opposing the Calvinists, such as the Lutherans, the Arminians and the Latitudinarians, held that grace was given to all human beings and not arbitrarily judged by the predetermined will of God.

Furthermore, the Calvinists held that all sin is derived from the fall of Adam, and they believed in the total depravity of mankind except for a few select who would receive God’s grace and be saved through faith. This view that original sin and the total depravity of human nature is justified/saved only through faith is based on St. Paul’s statement in the Ephesians 2:8-9: ‘For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.’²⁹⁹ The statement ‘*not of yourselves*’ implies that it is not up to the individual to be saved, but up to God alone. Faith is therefore given by the *grace* of God. Due to the total depravity of mankind, no works could possibly save them. This also means that the individual is powerless and cannot change his or her situation in the face of God’s grace. Therefore, this deprives human nature of the power of their *free will*; it makes the individual’s moral worth something outside of the scope of their freewill.

On the other hand, the Roman Catholics held that grace is only received through good works. This view, conflicting with Paul, is based on passages from James 2.24: ‘Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only’, and further in

²⁹⁹ *KJV*

James 2.19: 'Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.'³⁰⁰ These passages are implying that since even the devils *believe* in God as they accept that God exists yet defy him, simply believing can not be enough to be saved and therefore *both* faith and works are crucial: 'For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.'³⁰¹ The individual must therefore *believe* as well as *act* in order to be saved. However, the Catholic Church accepts indulgences as well as good works, which was something the Cambridge Platonists could not accept.

The Cambridge Platonists accepted faith and works through grace, a stance which is directly related to their concept of reason. As we have seen, just like the earlier Neo-Platonists, the Cambridge Platonists held that reason was key to the union between the human individual and the Divine. However, the difference between their conceptions of the concept of reason is that Plotinus, for example, asserted that humans received union with the Divine *unaided*. But it was Philo who brought the philosophical thinking of Plato together with biblical revelation. For Philo, revelation is about receiving the Law. But Moses first received the Law because of his reason, which made him *receptive*. It could therefore not have been given to anyone, and God therefore *chose* Moses. Although they held a uniquely strong emphasis on reason, the Cambridge Platonists had no intention to *replace* revelation by reason, as for example the emerging deists threatened to do; instead, they believed that revelation had to *complement* reason in order to reach the truth. Therefore, it can be argued, as both Spellman and Hickman do, that the Cambridge Platonists fall in between 'the

³⁰⁰ *KJV*

³⁰¹ *KJV* James 2.26

extremes of deism on the one hand, and fideism (both Catholics and Protestants varieties) on the other.³⁰² As Hickman further explains:

The Cambridge Platonists were at odds with the Laudian model in which grace is dependent on Anglican sacraments. The Platonic philosophy of deformity would have offered fertile soil for a Dissenter who rejects the Anglican liturgy and forms of worship, and an Athanasian or Calvinist theology of grace, in favour of what he saw as a more Biblical faith.³⁰³

The point I emphasise here is that they sought a form of religious belief based on reflection and the individual's own connection with God. Because of their individualism based on reason as the premise of an infinite and intimate connection with God, they could not accept dogmatic literal readings of the Bible. As John 1.9 states on the 'light': 'That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' (KJV). In this way, the emphasis on the *individual's* connection with God was more important than a forced conformity, which comes with dogmatic worship. It is this particular view of reason and morality that is the base of their emphasis on individual freedom and their conception of religious toleration.

Furthermore, they held that it was the *Christian* Revelation that yielded fulfilment and filled the void the human weakness that was felt in body, mind and spirit. This is an obvious departure from Philo, who only knew the Old Testament; however, it is clear that they still shared and were inspired by his method of approach to scriptural interpretation. And contrary to the Calvinist view of the Fall of Man (from paradise

³⁰² See Spellman, 1993 and Hickman, 2017: 92

³⁰³ Hickman, 2017: 57

into a state of sin) into a state total depravity, Smith holds that the Fall led instead to a *decrease* in ‘the inward virtue and rigour of Reason,’ and consequently ‘those Principles of Divine Truth which were first engraved upon mans Heart with the finger of God are now [...] less clear and legible than at first’: therefore, as a remedy, God provides ‘Truths of *Divine Revelation*’ to help ‘the Minds of men’ find the way back to God.³⁰⁴ Although this divine revelation is only received through a proper elevation of ones’ mind, they depart from the enthusiasts in their emphasis on the rational aspect of religion, as Whichcote asserts: “Christianity *is not* Mystical, Symbolical, Ænigmatical, Emblematical, but unclothed, unbodied, intellectual, rational, spiritual.”³⁰⁵ and concludes, as we have previous cited: ‘for spiritual is most rational!’³⁰⁶ Whichcote writes instead:

‘It behooves us to observe that his sequence of terms culminates in the word which as we have seen confirms the connection between the mundane and the celestial, the visible and the transcendental, Nature and Grace.’³⁰⁷

Therefore, reason is given to each individual by the *grace* of God. Just like in Philo, reason becomes the connection; it is, as in Plato, the power that embodies both the transcendent and mundane realm; it is the link between God and man.

Through their strong conception of *reason*, the Cambridge Platonists are able to square individual free will with God’s grace. As De Pauley explains with particular attention to Whichcote’s theology:

³⁰⁴ Smith, 1660: 383

³⁰⁵ Whichotes quoted in Patrides 1969: 334, see *Aphorisms* §889

³⁰⁶ Whichote, quoted in Patrides 1969:11, cf. Aphorisms §1183 ‘what is most spiritual is most Rational’

³⁰⁷ Op. cit.

The tone of man's life becomes spiritual, when his interests has moved from himself to something in which he sees that God delights. Communion with Him comes with man's concentration upon something which is known to derive from His eternally creative act.³⁰⁸

De Pauley emphasises here that Whichcote interestingly holds that it is through human self-realisation individuals can *activate* a power which is intelligent and *creative*. As De Pauley continues: 'The questions is not, What can man make? but, What can man take? And the answer involves abandoning self-reliance for self-dedication, the result being that man's life becomes a channel for receiving God's best gifts.'³⁰⁹ This creative power or 'life force', as I think is the best way to describe it, stems originally from God's intelligence and is something eternal in itself. Therefore, when activated through the exercise of reason, it is possible not only to enjoy the life that has been intended but also to enjoy it to its greatest potential 'in receiving God's *best* gifts'. In this way, as De Pauley also points out, Whichcote resolves the antinomy between the human individual's freedom and God's grace. It is only through the ability to act *freely* that this creative, intelligent power, or 'life force', is activated, as Whichcote himself writes:

For if God do make a creature that is voluntary and intelligent; we must leave him to the directions of his faculties, otherwise he should controul his own workmanship.³¹⁰

³⁰⁸ De Pauley, 1937: 55

³⁰⁹ Op. cit.

³¹⁰ Whichcote, 1751: 252

As a result of acting freely, humans are *receiving* the effects of God's grace, that is, to channel his best gifts. It is only through this free state that there can be a bond of love between God and his creation. To further explain, Whichcote writes that we have 'not been created to act passively in obedience to a lawgiver's demands, but in answer to a Father's love.'³¹¹ In short, God has not created humans in order to be divinely programmed robots but to have the ability to *freely* love and be loved. This fits with the question of the aim of the Cambridge Platonists' concept of reason: reason is the change each and every individual has been given to think for himself or herself, and with an intentional and conscious mind freely find a way back to God. We can here recall More's statement that life is that very exercise of wit; life's only aim is to train the individual power of wit (i.e. reason) which will enable them to seek and find truth, its source—God—and thereby be received in true victory.

In this way, as Patrides explains, the Cambridge Platonists held that grace is not something that is supposed to overpower humans, but it is supposed to *liberate* them in order to perform the tasks that God has always *intended* them to perform. Again, God has gifted individuals with the capacity of reason and think for themselves, which empowers them, in accordance with his plan, to perform, be free and find their way back. In this way, free will is tied to the fourth definition of using reason as the guiding light. The Cambridge Platonists believed that humans possess *free will* even as their 'life unfolds under the ever-present influence of grace'.³¹² Freedom lies in the *use of* reason. Hickman points out that the contrast between Whichcote and Cudworth lies in the freedom to make mistakes. Whichcote holds that freedom as a concept is

³¹¹ Whichcote cited in De Pauley, 1937: 55

³¹² Patrides, 1969: 21

completely connected to virtue, which means that the person who is *truly* free will not make mistakes, while Cudworth distinguishes free will and freedom, where free will is, and I quote Hickman, ‘a mixture of perfection and imperfection as it entails the capacity to *choose* wrongly.’³¹³

In contrast, Hobbes held that human voluntary action is only caused by the movement of the appetites, by the physical, which lead Hume to declare that reason is but slave to the passions. According to Hobbes’ logic, so is our will. Hobbes defines a negative freedom, or freedom from external restraint. We are free as long as passions can reign and reason helps us achieve them. As we have seen, this means that what reason dictates is only arbitrary to our own pleasures and pursuits; it carries no affinity with something over and above the individual will. But according to Cudworth, for example, this is not true freedom. This would be the application of *right* reason. In opposition to Hobbes’s negative freedom, the Cambridge Platonists held a positive freedom that entails the possession of the *power* to change and move oneself. This power is what, as we have seen, they held was the pivotal role and power of the individual’s use of *reason*. In this way, the Cambridge Platonists are making the concepts of freedom and right reason the same thing. According to Cudworth, freedom is the right to *govern* our spirits. In the same way as Jesus Christ is the king of kings, so is reason the sovereign of each individual. The God-given gift of reason has a *right* and *power* over other aspects of the individual’s life and body. According to Cudworth, only *sin* enslaves people; the gospels have provided human beings with material to liberate themselves from sin, and to lead themselves into a

³¹³ Hickman, 2017: 140 my emphasis

more virtuous and freer life. As Cudworth states in his *Treatise of Freewill*: ‘True liberty [...] is a state of virtue, holiness and righteousness.’³¹⁴

To conclude, by reiterating de Pauley’s words, ‘The questions is not, What can man make? but, What can man take?’ we can answer: from God comes all good, virtue, love and justice as well as freedom, including the freedom to *receive** all goodness and liberate our sins. The reception is enabled through the gift of reason, the light and the guide, which will forever dwell in human hearts, in all life that God has created, and thereby perpetuate and ensure the eternal return to the source of the light of lights. In this way, given their definition of reason and the theological background on grace, we can then conclude and see where the concept of reason and theology merge for the Cambridge Platonists.

4.8 Epistemology in the Cambridge Platonists: Platonic Innatism and Reason

I now turn to the epistemological implications of the Cambridge Platonists’ concept of reason. As earlier stated, their particular conception of reason results in a form of epistemological humility. Although the Cambridge Platonists’ have been associated with a form of innatism, they were not in opposition to the empirical sciences. This epistemic humility endorses knowledge from the sensory world, but at the same time accepts a certain natural predisposition through the power of reason. However, it puts limits on our knowledge from the sensory world, limits that are left open to the sources of reason and revelation combined. In this section, I explain how this works and highlight that it is not in epistemological differences that Locke meets the

³¹⁴ Cudworth, 1996: 196-197

Cambridge Platonists, but in their similarities: their shared outlook on *reason* and the method of approaching scriptural truth. This, most importantly, yields a shared *goal* in matters of both science and religion.

Innatism, which is seen as the centrepiece of Platonic thought, is used as one of most the standard arguments for the knowledge of the existence of God: we have knowledge of God because the very *idea* of God is innate and inscribed on our minds. This is perhaps most evidently seen in Whichcote's statement that the human mind is not 'a Table nook in which nothing is writ'; rather, there is 'an active and *actuell* Knowledge in man.'³¹⁵ And as More writes in his *An Antidote agai³¹⁶nst Atheism* (1653), there is a 'true Notion or Definition of God, and a cleare Conviction that there is an indelible Idea of a Being absolutely perfect in the Mind of Man.' This idea of an absolutely perfect being, More continues, 'is a distinct and indelible an Idea in the Soul'³¹⁷ And as Smith concludes, there are '*Common Notions* of a Deity, strongly rooted in Mens Souls.'³¹⁸

Now, it is necessary to acknowledge here that this is the strongest and most apparent dividing point between the Cambridge Platonists and Locke's empiricism and theory of ideas. The Cambridge Platonists argued that there is an active, innate, and universal principle inscribed in mind or spirit, which is the most significant factor in the production of human knowledge, and that such notions could not come from mere matter. In contrast, Locke argued in the *Essay* against any form of universal notions and instead is perceived to also argue, as Armstrong points out, that 'all knowledge,

³¹⁵ Rogers, 1979: 192

³¹⁶ Patrides, 1969: 217

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 218

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 132

can be derived from experience without the aid of any purely mental or spiritual ideas or principles.³¹⁹ However, they definitely shared their shared method of approach to both scripture, and the relationship between reason and revelation, which appears to yield a similar form of epistemic humility. To understand this, it is vital to understand their common definition of reason at the heart of their respective philosophy.

Prior to Locke, Samuel Parker had also critiqued the innatism and accused the Cambridge Platonists in his *A Free and Impartial Censure of the Platonick Philosophie* (1666) of supposing that ‘the Truth of all Beings consists in a conformity to their Archetypal Ideas, whereby they mean some General Patterns, by which all the Individuals of each Species are framed.’ Furthermore, ‘This doctrine’, he continues, ‘is linked to the belief in innate ideas’, because, in order to know the nature of the creation of mankind the Platonist believes ‘that God has hang'd a multitude of these little Pictures of himself and all his creatures in every man's understanding.’³²⁰ However, in spite of their emphasis on common notions, it is important to emphasise that the Cambridge Platonists did not deny experience from the senses, and their epistemology does not preclude empirical knowledge. Instead, it is important to emphasise the role and particular quality of reason as a *power* of the mind, regardless of the fact if it contains innate ideas or not. As More writes in *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness; or a True and Faithful Representation of the Everlasting Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (1660):

Reason: Which is a Power or Facultie of the Soul, whereby either from her
Innate Ideas or Common Notions, or else from the assurance of her own

³¹⁹ Armstrong, 1969: 199

³²⁰ Parker, 1667: 56

Senses, or upon the Relation or Tradition of another, she unravels a further clew of Knowledge, enlarging her sphere of Intellectual light, by laying open to her self the close connexion and cohesion of the Conceptions she has of things, whereby inferring one thing from another she is able to deduce multifarious Conclusions as well for the pleasure of Speculation as the necessity of Practice.³²¹

More is here describing reason in terms that we have also previously seen, as a *power* by which, he writes, '*Innate Ideas or Common Notions, or else from the assurance of her own Senses, or upon the Relation or Tradition of another*'. It is the *power* of reason that acts in both cases of innate notions and when understanding our senses and relations between things within our experience, whether it be innate ideas, common notions *or* our own senses. It is through *reason* the individual is made capable and able to unravel, as More writes, '*further clew of Knowledge, enlarging her sphere of Intellectual light*'. As a 'clew', is used here as an analogy for how reason is necessary thread that will lead and guide the way.

This is why the metaphor of the candle is vital. In order to understand the Cambridge Platonists, we have to understand the metaphor properly. According to their definition, reason is literally a light that shines on the world, and only in combination with the experiences that the individual self is consciously making it can get to work and guide them. Like a person in a dark cave (to emphasise the Platonic elements in this metaphor) who is given a torch, they will only see what is in the cave and on the walls around them if they make *use* of the torch and start moving it about and shine

³²¹ More, 1660: 51

with it. This is why empirical *experience*, that is, experience of the external world that we make in life in this ‘Theatre of the world’, as More calls it. And is an ‘exercise of Man’s wit’ so that the ‘sedulity of that divine Spark of the Soul of Man’, can be put to action receive the assistance of God, and may have ‘matter of conquest and triumph’.

It is this definition of reason as a power and its vital role within *both* epistemology and religion that Locke agrees with the Cambridge Platonists. It is the shared *rejection* of the conception of an *instrumental* reason that Locke also agrees. The aim of my thesis is not to point out where they are different, but to demonstrate where they are similar, and they have a similar view of reason, independent of their philosophy of where *ideas* comes from. However as I shall afterwards argue, while Locke holds that ideas are a result of our experience, this experience does not preclude an internal landscape, which is similar to the metaphysical conception of reason, as the candle of the Lord, as the Cambridge Platonists argue. This is what I turn to in the next chapter.

In conclusion, the role of reason takes in the epistemology of the Cambridge Platonists, and is something much more than just a collection of ‘little Pictures’ in the human mind. Instead, it constitutes the very *power* of understanding, whether it entertains ‘common notions’ or interacts with the external world. As Cudworth asserts, knowledge is a *power* because it ‘is not a passion from anything without the mind, but an active exertion of the inward strength, vigour, and power of the mind, displaying itself from within.’³²² This inward power of the soul is how the individual reaches higher knowledge, or indeed any knowledge at all. As Hutton points out,

³²² Cudworth, 1996: 74

Cudworth is not saying that this does not mean that innate knowledge is the *only* source of knowledge. Cudworth does not reject sensory knowledge on the basis of empirical input from the eternal world, as Hutton explains: ‘the external world is, intrinsically, intelligible, since it [also] bears the imprint of its creator in the order and relationship of its component parts. However, raw sense data is not, by itself, knowledge. But it requires mental processing in order to become knowledge.’³²³ This ‘mental processing’ is only done or enabled through, I think, reason, which is in this case also the role of consciousness, as we shall see developed further in Chapter 7. Reason thus embodies consciousness and *effort* combined which is also required to *activate* reason, or the gift, to make us receptive to the revelation and truth words of Scripture, as a light to shine on the path leading back to God.

It is worth mentioning here that the metaphor of ‘the candle’ has long been deployed by Protestants in order to emphasise the inadequacy of natural knowledge, that is, reason *unassisted*, thereby asserting that the Greek and Roman philosophers were in the dark because they had only ‘the dimme Candle of Nature.’³²⁴ However, the Cambridge Platonists acknowledge the sufficient ability of reason to lead to a sufficient form of ‘self-realisation’, meaning that, as Curverwel claims, ‘Reason, when awoken, sees the dimness of her own sight.’³²⁵

This does not mean that reason is in itself insufficient; instead, it is the human condition which is insufficient, but since they have been gifted, with the gift of reason which enables us to see, not only what is around us, but ourselves. And therefore also

³²³ Hutton, 2002: 317

³²⁴ Nadler, 2002: 11

³²⁵ De Pauley, 1937: 164

others also and ultimately—by realising this condition i.e. our own dimness—will also in this way *humbly* take us towards higher truths beyond our realm and towards God. This, as we shall see, is also the nature of Locke’s epistemological humility, which as I shall argue he achieves through a similar definition of reason as the Cambridge Platonists and a similar outlook upon the relationship between reason and revelation and approach to Scripture.

Chapter 5

Locke's Platonism and the Cambridge Platonists

5.1 Locke and Platonism – the Scholarly Context

From Chapter 1, we have seen how there is a standard reading of Locke as a Hobbist. We have seen that there is a strand in the history of ideas, leading from Epicurean philosophy to a revival the 17th century with the New Science, evolution of mechanism and materialism, culminating with philosophy of Hobbes. The Epicurean stand is one that Locke would have followed, if he we read him as a Hobbist. We have also seen, in the previous Chapters 3 and 4, there is a different strand leading from Plato and Neo-Platonism, brought into Christianity via Philo of Alexandria, and revived in the 17th century with Grotius and the debate on natural law and 'right reason'. There is an inherent polarization between these two strands, one seen as belonging to 'modernism' and the other to the old metaphysics. If we read Locke as belonging to the Epicurean strand, we automatically impose a polarization between Locke and the Cambridge Platonists. In particular, there is an apparent tension between Locke and Platonism due to Locke's rejection of innate ideas and so-called scepticism in the knowledge of substances and the immateriality of the soul, and as we have seen that innatism and dualism are two primary features of Platonism. In short, Locke's philosophy has been read as refuting both. Locke and Platonism is therefore a vastly underexplored topic in Lock-scholarship and any association thereof would make any modern reader raise an eyebrow or two.

In addition, modern scholars have even read Locke's rejection of innate ideas as an intention jab directed against the Cambridge Platonists. Locke's connection to the

Cambridge Platonists has, therefore, as a result also been overlooked or not taken seriously. Locke's connection to them, along with Platonism as a whole, is seen as irrelevant in reading and understanding Locke's philosophy. Therefore, Locke's relation Platonism has been seen as more or less closed case.

Leibniz was one of the first to draw attention to the tension between Locke's empiricism and Platonism in his in his *New Essays on Human Understanding*, written as a reply to Locke's in 1704 same year as Locke's death. However, Leibniz did not publish his *New Essays* until much later in 1765, due to his respect for Locke. Nevertheless, Leibniz declares: "[A]lthough the author of the *Essay* says hundreds of fine things which I applaud, our systems are very different. His is closer to Aristotle and mine to Plato."³²⁶ From this statement, Leibniz admits that he thought of himself as a form of Platonist, or at least openly endorsed Plato's philosophy than Locke was thought to be. It is clear from what we have seen from Hobbes's philosophical system that he belongs to the Epicurean strand, however, weather Leibniz is right about Locke's case is, I think, far from clear as there is more to the story of Locke's Platonism.

Amongst modern scholars there have been a few who have reflected upon Locke's Platonism, such as RL. Armstrong, G. A. J. Rogers and Victor Nuovo.³²⁷ Though they reach quite mixed conclusions. Armstrong writes that the Cambridge Platonists exemplified an anxiety that the new science view of a material universe would subvert the moral and religious values. However, he acknowledges that between the two

³²⁶ Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, ed. and trans. Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 47. See also Rogers 2008: 195

³²⁷ See, Armstrong (1969), Rogers (2008) and Nuovo (2011)

extreme sources of knowledge, the naturalist as in Hobbes and mentalist, as in the Platonists, Locke ‘does not appear to belong in a clear-cut way to either camp’³²⁸ Armstrong does not go into any depth what the influence could have been between Locke and Cudworth, for example, and concludes that, while the Cambridge Platonists held that there was an active role of the mind in attaining knowledge, Locke’s rejection of innatism is a rejection also of that activity, and Locke is after all a proto Humean. Furthermore, in similar spirit, Rogers describes Locke as the ‘arch-empiricist’ with ‘not much’ influence from Plato and Nuovo observes that Locke’s denial of innate ideas is ‘sufficient to defeat any attribution of Platonism’ because ‘it reduces the human mind to a state of bare passivity lacking altogether in its inwardness any tendency towards a transcendent good.’³²⁹

Some has acknowledged the influence of the Cambridge Platonists on Locke: in a passing remark, Maurice Cranston states that Whichcote was important for Locke’s ‘spiritual developments’.³³⁰ And W. M. Spellman emphasizes on the influence of the Latitudinarians on Locke’s thought, especially Whichcote in this context. Spellman points out that what was particularly important to Locke was Whichcote’s view of man as ‘positively godlike,’ that is, the possibility of human redemption and the close relationship between God and human beings, the positive view of human nature as *capable* and not deprived.³³¹ But that Locke thought of human nature as potentially God-like is a strong claim in favour of Platonism in Locke.

³²⁸ Armstrong, 1969: 193

³²⁹ Nuovo, 2011: 164

³³⁰ Cranston, 1957: 74

³³¹ Spellman, 1988: 79

Something further mentioned by Nicholas Jolley, who identifies Locke's conception of reason as 'the candle of the Lord' as central feature of his argument against the *Enthusiasts*, who indeed Locke does argue against on the basis of the role of reason in religion.³³² And similarly, Joseph Loconte points out that Locke uses reason as a 'universal gift.'³³³ However, neither directly traces this conception of reason or develop it in the light of Locke's relation to Whichcote, or the other Cambridge Platonists, but rather as Locke's part in the contemporary vial of English Protestantism and Christian humanism.

However, more to the point, I think, Rogers correctly claims that Locke and the Cambridge Platonists 'are not nearly so far apart as standard histories of philosophy make them appear.'³³⁴ He concludes by highlighting some of the important themes that they do in fact have in common:

They agreed that the most important intellectual attribute of human beings was their power of reason; both were committed to the possibility of an eternal morality embedded in the very fabric of God's creation and which it was not beyond the power of human intellect to come to know. Both thought that the existence of God could be demonstrated by reason. They were both atomists of a sort.³³⁵

Rogers's summary of these themes in common, are indeed correct, and sets up a scaffolding for some relevant points, I intend to build further on in this chapter.

³³² See Jolley, 2003

³³³ Loconte, 2014: 76

³³⁴ Rogers, 2008: 205

³³⁵ Op. cit.

In contrast to Rogers, Nuovo makes a slightly stronger claim that Locke's own Platonism is neither empty nor incoherent, but that it is important to know where it is suitable to read Locke as a Platonist and where it is not. According to Nuovo Locke's Platonism is 'Platonism super-naturalized', because 'wherever Locke considered Platonic themes, it was always within the context of the biblical revelation. Platonism may have allowed Locke's mind to soar, but it was always within the safe surroundings of Holy Scripture.'³³⁶ Yet, to suggest that Locke is only a Platonist when he is concerned with scripture, would only add to the inconsistency problem in reading his works and the tension between his epistemology and religious philosophy. However, Nuovo points out that there is a link between Locke's proof of the existence of God in the *Essay* and the method of Platonism, that is:

[T]he route to an irrefutable certainty is by an inward turn, and the mind's ascent to God is by means of a principle of causality, characteristic of Neoplatonic systems whereby the mind ascends from a lesser to greater perfection in an endeavor to discover the reason and cause of its existence.³³⁷

More significantly, Nuovo he points out the over-looked significance of Locke's adoption of the term 'inward reflection'. This shows that Locke was 'not necessarily in league with the Cambridge Platonists, but that he was, on his own, thinking Platonist thoughts.'³³⁸ However, in order to properly apply this in the other perspective of Locke's philosophy, I argue that we must have a more in-depth

³³⁶ Nuovo, 2011: 164

³³⁷ Ibid., p. 169

³³⁸ Nuovo, 2008: 213

understanding of Locke's concept of reason, in relation to the Cambridge Platonists and the Philonic strand. In this richer context, I then examine Locke's concept 'inward reflection' in chapter 6.

I conclude this section therefore with some concluding words by Nuovo, who optimistically accepts Locke as a 'friend of Plato', but closes his reflections on Locke's Platonism in a more forbearing manner:

In brief, perhaps Locke's real meaning has influenced the development of eighteenth-century British materialism and modern thought generally in ways not yet explored and less akin to secular rationalism. I shall end here, not because I have exhausted my subject, but because I have reached the limits of my thoughts. Either I am mistaken, and it would be better not to pursue the matter further; or I am at least on the right track, and there is much more work to be done. I hope that the latter is the case.³³⁹

I aim to pick up here, where Nuovo has left us in anticipation; assuming that this is indeed the right track and that Locke's thought was indeed theologically and metaphysically richer than his detractors supposed. If we can trace Platonic themes in his theology, then must it not affect Locke's philosophy as a whole. On the contrary, I argue that it does and that the missing link between Locke's theology and his empiricist epistemology is a proper understanding of his concept of reason. The richer context, I argue Locke partook in through his relation with the Cambridge Platonists, and the contemporary influence and presence of Philo and philo-Semitism.

³³⁹ Nuovo, 2008: 17

Therefore, by comparing aspects of Locke's philosophy, in particular their metaphysical conception of reason, to that of the Cambridge Platonists, I aim to elucidate a new way of understanding Locke's philosophy and how it, crucially, differs from Hobbes instrumental conception of reason. As we have seen, a few scholars have touched upon Locke's similarities to the Cambridge Platonists, Whichcote and Latitudinarian thought, however, little has still been done to place it in relation to the wider picture of his philosophy. Locke's Platonism still remains incoherently placed in the shadow of his empiricist epistemology.

In particular, it is the metaphysics of 'the *eternal morality embedded in the very fabric of God's creation*'³⁴⁰ that somehow corresponds to the concept of *reason*, which lies at the foundation of the philosophy of both Locke and the Cambridge Platonists. I argue that Locke and the Cambridge Platonists share in one fundamental aspect and this is the very thing Locke is perceived as rejecting, according to a 'Hobbist' reading, namely *metaphysics*. The question, I believe, should not be to separate Locke and the Cambridge Platonists on their differences, but to see where they actually overlap and have thoughts in common. This is what following chapter explores further.

5. 2 Locke's Education – Natural law and Philo-Semitism

In aiming to establishing Locke's new place the history of philosophy in relation to the Cambridge Platonists, the so-called 'Latitude men', and the contemporary influence of Philo and philo-Semitism in the 17th context, we must start from the beginning and look at Locke's education. Locke first attended Westminster school,

³⁴⁰ Rogers, 2008: 205

where he studied Latin, Greek, Hebrew and Arabic, as part of the curriculum. Locke began his university education at Oxford in 1652. As England became puritan during Cromwell's rule, some royalist and Anglican teachers managed to remain at Oxford with an unchanged curriculum with the traditional subjects in scholastic exposition.³⁴¹ And, although the colleges were urged to 'purge themselves of any undergraduates who were not good puritans', Locke managed to remain probably thanks to the Dean, John Owen who were simply bending the rules.³⁴² It is recorded that Locke, together with a group of other ex-Westminster boys, was among 'Dr Owens creatures' that had all 'promised to defend Liberty of conscience and other fundamentals of his government'.³⁴³ Owen's government included principals of religious toleration but he was opposed Presbytery. Liberty of conscience and religious toleration, as we shall see, are recurring themes throughout Locke's life and works.

In his first years as an undergraduate, Locke studied logic, moral philosophy, geometry and Greek and he later widened his field of study to metaphysics, astronomy and natural philosophy.³⁴⁴ Rogers writes that 'even in much duller Oxford, as recent scholarship has shown, teaching and learning Greek, including Plato's philosophy, was very much a part of the curriculum.'³⁴⁵ Furthermore, Locke even studied the Eastern languages, such as Hebrew and Arabic, which brought him in contact the staunch royalist, Edward Pococke who became his tutor with probably most influence on Locke.³⁴⁶ In 1662 Locke was appointed lecturer in Rhetoric, the same year as Pococke, who was Chair of Arabic Studies, commenced the Abendana

³⁴¹ Aaron, 1973: 4

³⁴² Woolhouse, 2007: 19

³⁴³ Abrams, 1967: 32

³⁴⁴ Aaron, 1973: 5

³⁴⁵ Rogers, 2008: 195

³⁴⁶ Aaron, 1973: 5

project together with Lightfoot. Lightfoot, is the most cited theologian in Locke's works. No doubt Locke would have encountered his works at the earliest stages at Oxford, along with Philo's works, which are some of the most notable works written in Greek.

After graduating from his MA in 1658 Locke briefly considered turning to the law, but decided to remain at Oxford to take up College duties and commence Medical Studies instead. While half of Locke's total reading in the period between 1658 and early 1667 consisted of medical books, he was still concerned with topics of law and theology, especially in the light of the ever pressing and turbulent political situation in England at the time. Having lived a most sheltered at Oxford, it was only after 1658 and the fall of Cromwell that Locke really started thinking about public matters and began to be concerned over the political and religious climate. It is in this period that we also find some of Locke's attitudes towards religion and toleration begins to take shape. Locke's attitude is reflected in his attitudes towards human nature and the role of reason. On the one hand, as people are endowed with reason they are both given liberties and rights; but on the other hand, Locke saw that people were lost and appeared to have very little capacity to follow any reason or common sense at all. Allowing too much freedom thus became dangerous since people could not handle it. Locke was therefore initially sceptical of religious liberty because he thought it licensed people to dispute. This caused him to cry out in October 1659:

Where is that great Diana of the world, Reason; everyone thinks he alone embraces this Juno, whilst others grasp nothing but clouds [...] and there is no

man but thinks he alone hath this light within and all besides stumble in the dark.³⁴⁷

In this statement, Locke reflects on what he saw as that the problem of the time. Locke saw that, while the enthusiasts were claiming that they were guided by a 'light within', they were in fact not using their reason at all and were only led and blinded by their own folly. Protestant *enthusiasm* originates from a 16th century revival of the ancient Greek term *en theos* which means literally 'in God' and that God could possess an individual human being by some form of direct communication. The term was first used by the Anabaptists, who claimed that God could speak directly through the Holy Spirit. In the 17th century at the height of religious fragmentation of the Civil War period, enthusiasm became a derogatory term associated with the 'dangerous irrationality' and 'fanaticism' of groups such as dissenters, nonconformists and even the 'superstitious' Roman Catholics.³⁴⁸ They were seen as driven by passion and emotions rather than by reason and proper authority from scripture. This leads to a state of chaos and civil war with everyone claiming his or her own version of natural rights based on reason, and then arguing over whom is correct. This is the problem when every person claims that they have right because they have reason; the notion of right is then only founded on mere subjective opinion. So, there must be something else, other than arbitrary reason, to safeguard society against this chaos. This is similar to the critique we find in Selden, and later Hobbes, offered.

While they identified the same heart of the problems of the civil unrest – the question of right – Hobbes and Locke saw very different solutions to this chaotic state.

³⁴⁷ Woolhouse, 2007: 37

³⁴⁸ Griffin, 1992: 53

Therefore, however despairing Locke would have been at that time (in 1659 and after the fall of Cromwell and before the restoration of Charles II, which brought back stability and certainty), there are two views Locke held back then, which prevailed to any ‘Hobbist’ doubt and puritan pessimism of human nature. And, I think, Locke remained steadfast to these views throughout his life: (i) that there is a right to ‘freedom of conscience’, (ii) that God’s laws are known through reason and revelation, and (iii) that the essence and soul of religion lies with the ‘inner worship of the heart.’³⁴⁹ These three views we shall see unchanged in Locke’s thought.

In the early 1660s, Locke began a notebook at Oxford, which ends with an unpublished manuscript from the 1690s entitled *Some General Reflections upon The beginning of S^t John’s Gospel*.³⁵⁰ The earliest entries of this notebook contain entries from Thomas Barlow’s ‘*Analecta sacra*’, which is a biographical guide for students of theology.³⁵¹ In this notebook, Locke also made extensive notes on Jewish rites and costumes and there is most notably a note to recommended reading of Grotius, to which in the margins Locke has written an annotation to Josephus, Philo Judaeus and the Talmud of Babylon.³⁵² This would correspond to Locke’s theological and legal interests of the time, as well as to philo-Semitism that Locke would have undoubtedly come into contact with at Oxford, particularly through the work of Pococke. In further response to the revival of the natural law theory, it is noted that Locke became

³⁴⁹ See Locke cited in Woolhouse, 2007: 51

³⁵⁰ See transcription attached as an appendix to thesis

³⁵¹ Ms. Locke e. 17 p. 33. See also Savage, p. 61 *Philosophy and Religion in Enlightenment Britain: New Case Studies* ed. by Ruth Savage see also p. 64-65 Locke’s proof of divine authority of scripture.

³⁵² Ms e. 17 fol pp. 32 -33

familiar with works by Hugo Grotius, Robert Sharrock and Samuel Pufendorf.³⁵³ Locke also recommended Grotius *De Veritate Religionis Christianae* to his students. *De Veritate* is also a work on law in which Grotius also frequently cites Philo, in particular, in his exposition of the Law of Moses. And we know that Locke also owned two copies of Grotius, *De Jure*.³⁵⁴

Furthermore, a fundamental problem of the civil wars was the religious sectarianism and fragmentation, which was during this period called religious ‘enthusiasm.’ Enthusiasts claimed personal revelation, some individuals even claimed to be the second coming of Christ.³⁵⁵ The common argument to back up the Protestant sects’ right to rebel was the ‘right to conscience.’³⁵⁶ Often this claim was made with reference to the *conduct* of worship and the question of ‘indifferent matters’. For example, in his pamphlet *The Great Question Concerning Things Indifferent in Religious Worship*, Edward Bagshaw argues for tolerance and the individual right to observe or disregard religious ceremonials according to his conscience. Bagshaw argued that, as Marshall writes, ‘individuals should be allowed to worship according to ‘their inward conscience’ and that the civil magistrate did not have to power to impose indifferent matters in religion.’³⁵⁷ The consequences were religious rebellion and conservative resistance. In these times, therefore, scripture *was* a political tool. Locke’s early thoughts on religion and politics aimed to also find a solution to these disputed points in order to procure the most peaceful and orderly society.

³⁵³ See King, 1972: 5 Locke also recommends Puffendorf’s *de Officio Hominis et Civis* and *de Jure Naturali et Genitum*, Robert Sharrock’s *De Officiis secundum Naturae Jus* and Samuel Pufendorf’s *Elementa Jurisprudencia Universalis*

³⁵⁴ See Laslett, Harrison, *LL*. 1329; 1329a.

³⁵⁵ Marshall, 1994: 8

³⁵⁶ *Op. cit.*

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12

‘Liberty’, young Locke already wrote at school, ‘is the greatest of gifts among mortal men.’³⁵⁸ However, Locke held that the claim of ‘liberty for tender conscience’ (against the enforced ceremonial of the Church of England) had been ‘the first inlet’ to all destructive opinions that had stormed throughout England.³⁵⁹ In response to Bagshaw, Locke began writing the first part of *Two Tracts upon Government* in 1660. Locke argues here that the government *is* allowed to impose ceremonies or any other ‘indifferent’ actions on their subjects, because of the very fact that they *are* trivial. The notion of toleration and ‘freedom of conscience’ did not mean for Locke liberty of *practice*, but liberty of inward faith. In the *Tracts*, Locke also argues that the ‘freest condition’ the individual can find themselves in is ‘to owe no subjection to any other but God alone.’³⁶⁰ Yet, perhaps affected by the uncertainty and disorder that had come with religious civil wars Locke was initially skeptical of the capacity of the private man’s judgment and hence a seeker of law and order. Later in 1664, already as a lecturer in Greek, Locke was appointed Censor of Moral Philosophy.³⁶¹ It was probably during these lectures Locke began to formulate the substance for his *Essays Concerning the Laws of Nature*.³⁶²

Unlike Hobbes, I argue that Locke never really abandoned the view of an inner moral law, accessible through reason. Locke’s solution to the problem of right, was not to abandon the concept of inner light, but to accept people’s shortcomings, but Locke did never see them as deprived in nature. While Hobbes was a puritan, Locke followed the ideas of toleration, which rests on an assumption that humans are

³⁵⁸ De Beer, L2 (c. 1650)

³⁵⁹ Marshall, 1994: 13

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 125

³⁶¹ *Ibid.* Aaron, 1973: 5

³⁶² Colman, 1983: 29

capable of reasoning and accepting their faults. This is why, what I call, *the middle way* is important to Locke's philosophy; reason *is* sufficient—but only when correctly applied— as we shall see, but humans also need an external safe guard for when they fail to reason properly. Locke does not abandon the idea of an 'inner light', like Hobbes does, but instead he *complements* it by understanding its shortcomings. I argue that he thereby finds a middle way between not only between liberalism and conservatism, but also between a Hobbesian system of natural law, on one extreme, and the 'enthusiasts' on the other.

Finally, moving on from Locke's days in education, we can to finish looking at aspects of the intellectual background of Locke it is worth making a brief turn the years 1675-1679 which Locke spent travelling in France, mainly for his reasons of his health but it was also an experience in which he encountered new friends and made new important academic connections. In Paris, he met Francois Bernier who introduced him to Gassendi, and the theologian Nicholas Toinard, whom he formed a lifelong friendship and intellectual exchange with. He furthered his theological studies by translating some essays by the Jansenist Pierre Nichole. He also first read Richard Simon's *Historie Critique du Vieux Testament* (from 1678) and began a more thorough reading of John Lightfoot.

Promptly upon his return to England in 1679, Locke wrote to Nicholas Toinard that he had learned from Robert Boyle about the Zohar.³⁶³ He writes that Boyle had told him that in Germany 'a very skilled man' had recently translated the Zohar into Latin. Boyle had forgotten the name of the author, but Locke later found out that it was

³⁶³ See in De Beer, L 469. And in May 1679 (L 467, L470) Locke writes to Toinard on both Lightfoot and Richard Simon.

Knorr. The translations include notes that explain the ancient Cabala of the Jews. Locke's correspondence with Toinard contains amongst many things, scholarly discussions about the Gospels, the Talmud, and ancient Jewish coins.³⁶⁴ Later, in 1687, Locke met the Cabbalist Quaker van Helmont at the house of Thomas Furly, who was also a Quaker and shared Locke's interest in books (Locke invented a travelling bookcase for him that would fit books of all sizes). It seems that van Helmont became the go-between Knorr and Locke, as Locke took an interest in both the Kabala and Knorr's book.³⁶⁵ Although Locke was also very familiar with many theologians that combined both different types of Christology, Locke praised and often quoted the works of John Lightfoot (1602–75). According to John Marshall, Locke consulted Lightfoot when working to identify 'the doctrine of the Gospel'.³⁶⁶ Lightfoot is also, according to Nuovo's work on Locke's religious manuscripts, 'by far' the most frequently referenced biblical commentator in Locke's notes on theology. We can also say that Locke at least read Lightfoot from 1677 onwards, when Locke got hold of his recent publications of a commentary on the Corinthians. From his notes we can see that Locke spent a considerably amount of time on I Corinthians prior to 1679. The hermeneutical and historical aspect of theology was also much of importance to Locke, for example he has made a note in his Bentley Bible referencing Lightfoot, that the world was created in September.³⁶⁷ Furthermore we have evidence on July 1676 Locke records John Lightfoot's comment on Maimonides. This great contextualiser of the Bible provides 'the great register of the Jews customs, & Antiquity'.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁴ Minc, 1985: 110

³⁶⁵ Nuovo, 2011:130

³⁶⁶ Marshall, 2006: 380

³⁶⁷ Locke's Bentley Bible, see the Bodleian Library, shelf mark Locke 16. 25. (item 309.)

³⁶⁸ See MS Locke f. I p. 306 on November 1685 Locke makes notes on Maimonides taken (from Spencer) about Hebrew rituals and Mosaic Laws (MS f. 8 p. 300) See also Ms. F. 6.

Locke and Philo

As part of any theological curriculum, Locke as a student of theology must have encountered Philo. The majority of Locke's library consists of books of theological nature. Specifically, among Locke's theological books he had a copy of, Philo Judaeus of Alexandria, dating from 1613. This copy is a Latin translation of the original Greek and includes *De Opificio Mundi* (On the Creation), *De Vita Mosis* (The Life of Moses) and the *Legurn Allegoriae* (Allegorical Interpretation), which is a philosophical interpretation of the Pentateuch.³⁶⁹ It is most likely that it was during his first theological and Greek studies that Locke would have acquired these texts.

While I have not yet seen any direct references to Philo, there is evidence, as aforementioned, from 1660 that Locke was indeed familiar with Philo's works, and that his works were present to Locke, not only in his library, but also with in his notes. This demonstrates that he must have also had a knowledge and understanding of Philo as a source, both to Christianity and to Grotius. There is also further evidence in Locke's journal from 1680s, this time with reference from Cudworth. The entry states: 'Philo: it is well known that Philo though he was a Jew by nation yet was very ignorant of Jewish customs having been born and bred up at Alexandria. Cudworth 17/93 c.3.'³⁷⁰ This demonstrates not only that Locke already knew well who Philo was, but also that he takes an interest in the context of his philosophy. Philo was known by the Early Church Fathers as bishop Philo, having not been accepted for his philosophy among the Jews. This is noted down with topics under the letter 'P',

pp. 84-85 and further in Dawson, 2007: 216 See also Locke (1976-89-VIIIpp.69-70) on his recommendation of certain commentators such as Hammond, Whitby, Mede, and Lightfoot.

³⁶⁹ Harrison; Laslett, 1971: 209 (Item 2301)

³⁷⁰ MS c. 33 fol. 28

together with Proclus ‘that great champion of the eternity of the word.’ also with reference to Cudworth 744/899. The number 93 stands for Cudworth’s *A discourse concerning the true notion of ye lords supper*, published in 1676 and number 899 for Cudworth’s *The true intellectual system*, which was published in 1678.

Finally, the journal Locke began in 1660s at Oxford ends curiously with an unpublished manuscript from the 1690s entitled *Some General Reflections upon The beginning of St John’s Gospel*.³⁷¹ It is relevant to my argument because it is replete with references to Philo, as reverence and source to Christian Platonism. The manuscript was, in fact, long attributed to Locke until Marshall traced its true authorship to Souverain. The manuscript is written in the hand of Locke’s manservant Sylvester Brounower, but there are some corrections and annotations, included and all writings in Greek, inserted in Locke’s hand. Its content, however, too closely resembles sections of Souverain’s *Platonism Unveiled* published 1700, to be otherwise. Furthermore, *Platonism Unveiled* advertises a forthcoming publication by the same author also entitled *Some general reflections upon the beginning of St. John’s Gospel*, but it was never published. It is therefore thought that this is the lost manuscript of Souverain’s unpublished work that Locke somehow got hold of and made a copy of *Some General Reflections* is probably entered by Locke in 1690 and references Platonism, Philo, the Logos, the trinity and the question of the nature of Christ.

In conclusion, this demonstrates that Philo was an available and present source to Locke and part of the intellectual tapestry, as it were. We have seen evidence of

³⁷¹ Ms e. 17

Locke's encounter with Philo first as a result of his interest of the natural law and reading of Grotius, secondly, his reading of Cudworth in the 1680s and thirdly, in the period of his return to theological studies, post 1690 with the copy Souverain's manuscript. Three encounters which also coincides with three of the most significant and productive periods of Locke's life.

5.3 Locke and the Cambridge Platonists

Locke's earliest personal encounter with the Cambridge Platonists was with Benjamin Whichcote. In 1668 Whichcote was appointed Vicar at St. Lawrence Jewry, in London. Locke became a member of his congregation that very same year. According to Cranston, this was an important influence of Locke's 'spiritual developments.'³⁷² In a later letter written to John Mapletoft in 1670, Locke even refers to Whichcote as a friend, asking Mapletoft to send his regards to 'good Dr Whichcote.'³⁷³ Whichcote's sermons were published posthumously in 1698 and purchased by Locke, who praised it as a 'masterpiece' and has since classified them as his favourite sermons.³⁷⁴ Therefore, Locke must have partaken in Whichcote's ideas, both through attending and listening to his sermons, and later reading them at his leisure, as he obtained a published copy.

Locke's next significant encounter was his meeting with Ralph Cudworth's daughter Damaris³⁷⁵ Cudworth, the later Lady Masham, in 1682. Locke and Damaris met in

³⁷² Cranston, 1957: 124

³⁷³ De Beer, L417, see also letter in British Library, add. MS. 6194, pp. 248-250.

³⁷⁴ Rogers 2008: 201

³⁷⁵ Interestingly, Damaris is a name of the woman who appears in the Acts when Paul is in Athens and confronted by some philosophers of the Stoic and Epicurean school (Acts, 17.18), as a result a few Athenians converted, among them was a woman named Damaris (Acts,

London, late in the year 1681 when she was 28 years his junior. On this occasion Damaris was staying at Lady King's household at Salisbury Court, but they were probably introduced through their mutual acquaintance Edward Clarke and his wife who would also be staying at Salisbury court when they were in London on business.³⁷⁶ Shortly after New Years, in 1682, Locke and Damaris started writing to each other under the pen names 'Philander' and 'Philoclea'. These letters contained a somewhat romantic air, but the nature of the topics are mainly philosophical and friendly. It was the beginning of a serious friendship and a correspondence that spans over 6 years. In September 1683 Locke had to leave England and go into exile in Holland, until 1688. During this period, when he was away, Damaris married Sir Francis Masham and had one son, Francis Cudworth Masham. Perhaps we can speculate whether Locke was made to regret having not proposed to Damaris before he left, or perhaps if his intentions were from the beginning purely Platonic, however we shall never know be certain of this. Nonetheless, shortly after Locke's return to England in the late summer of 1690, he moved permanently to the Masham household, at Oates, and remained there until his death in 1704. This is also naturally when their correspondence ended, so what Locke and Damaris' intellectual life was like together after 1690 we can only know through piecing together their separate correspondences of that period.

Therefore, when aiming to establish a connection between Locke and the Cambridge Platonists, the most apparent link is Damaris, not only because she was Cudworth's daughter but also because soon after their meeting, she encouraged Locke to read

17.34). Damaris is derived from the Greek word *δαμαρ* (*damar*) meaning wife, which stems from the verb *δαμαζο* (*damazo*), which generally means 'to overpower'.

³⁷⁶ Woolhouse, 2007: 175

John Smith's *Select Discourses* and the same year Locke also began to read Ralph Cudworth's *A discourse concerning the true notion of the Lord's Supper* (1676) and *the True Intellectual System Concerning the Universe* (1678). Furthermore, it is noteworthy that his journal entries on Cudworth from 1682 also coincide with his writing and preparing his arguments for the existence of God as presented in the *Essay*. After Damaris's letter in February 1682, Locke was also reading Cudworth's *True Intellectual System of the Universe* (hereafter referred to as *TIS*) as we can see that he made short notes with references to the text under the topic of 'the Atheist' and their arguments answered: 'from no Idea of god', 'their argument ex nihil nihil', 'their argument that there is noe incorporeall being' and finally, 'their argument that Ideas of things are subsequent to them...' ³⁷⁷ These points show that Cudworth's *TIS* could be one of the influences on Locke when he wrote his chapter IV.x on the knowledge of the existence of God. Furthermore, it is around this time in 1682 as he was reading Cudworth's *TIS* Locke started composing his proof of God's existence. ³⁷⁸ After all, we know that Cudworth's work must have impressed Locke as we find that he both cites and praises Cudworth's *True Intellectual System* his later, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, (1693):

wherein the very learned author hath with such Accurateness and Judgment collected and explained the Opinions of Greek Philosophers, that what

³⁷⁷ Aaron and Gibb, 1936: 118 (I have also looked at this manuscript in the Bodleian Library: MS Locke f. 6)

³⁷⁸ MS Locke f. 6; transcribed, by Aaron and Gibb, 1936: 118. And see Nuovo, 2011:208. According to Nuovo Locke wrote the IV.x at the same time as he purchased one of his copies of Lucretius, which indicates that Locke was also reading Lucretius and Cudworth roughly at the same time. Further to this, in his notebook from his journal entry on the Saturday, 18 February 1682 Locke cites Cudworth and mentions the atheist 'argument ex nihilo nihil'.

Principles they built on, and what were the chief *Hypotheses*, that divided them, is better to be seen in him than anywhere else I know.³⁷⁹

In conclusion, it is evident that Locke was well familiar with the ideas and works of Whichote, through his sermons, furthermore, Locke took an eager interest in arguments from the Cambridge Platonists against enthusiasm on the one side, and, against the atheists (see especially Locke's notes on Cudworth 1688-1690). His readings of both Smith and Cudworth are also preserved in his correspondence with Damaris and in his private notebooks dated 1682 and 1688-1690.³⁸⁰ Before turning to a more in-depth exposition of Locke's 1682 correspondence with Damaris concerning divine Knowledge and enthusiasm, I shall look some important notes Locke made in the same period, from his reading of Cudworth on the nature of the soul.

Locke's notes on the Immortality and Immateriality of the Soul

On February 20, Locke made some notes on what he calls the 'physical' proof of the immateriality of the soul. These are some of these notes we shall see are also ideas that Locke later presented in the *Essay*, in particular in his arguments against the doctrine of materialism. In his journal, Locke writes that the usual 'physical' proof for the immateriality and the immortality of the soul is that 'Matter cannot thinke ergo the soule is immateriall, noe thing can naturally destroy an immateriall thing ergo the soule is naturaly immortal.'³⁸¹ According to this statement, the soul is immortal because it is immaterial, and it is immaterial because something material cannot think.

³⁷⁹ TCE §194

³⁸⁰ See MS Locke f 6., MS Locke c. 33 fol. 27-29 and MS Locke d 11.

³⁸¹ Journal entry from 1682, Feb 20 transcribed by Aaron and Gibb, 1936:121

Locke continues considering the counter arguments to those who hold that the soul is material. Here it is worth quoting Locke at length:

Those who oppose these men presse them very hard with the soules of beasts for say they beasts feele i.e. thinke and therefore their soules are immateriall and consequently immortall. This has by some men been judgd soe urgent that they have rather thought fit to conclude all beasts perfect machins rather then allow their soules immortality or annihilation both which seeme harsh doctrines, the one being out of the reach of nature and soe cannot be recons as the naturall state of beasts after this life and the other equaling them in great measure to the state of man if he shall be immortal as well as he.³⁸²

Yet, if we allow thinking to be immaterial and what consequently makes the soul immaterial and immortal, it would seem that this ought to apply to animals as well. And as he writes, ‘This has by some men been judgd soe urgent that they have rather thought fit to conclude all beasts perfect machins rather then allow their soules immortality or annihilation’ Therefore, to argue that animals are no more than machines but also to claim that the souls are important and of equal status as the human soul, both Locke would find equally ‘harsh doctrines’.³⁸³

We find that Locke calls materialism a ‘harsh doctrine’ in the *Essay*, where the discussion on animal souls also crops up. Locke argues that animals are not machines

³⁸² Aaron and Gibb, 1936: 121

³⁸³ *Essay*, II.xiii.18

because they have ideas, and in order to have ideas, they must have some *spirit*, that perceives the ideas.³⁸⁴ As Locke further states in the *Essay*:

That, in an animal the fitness of the organization, and the motion wherein life consists, begin together, the motion coming from within; but in machines the force coming sensibly from without, is often away when the organ is in order, and well fitted to receive it.³⁸⁵

Locke defines machines as something that is caused to move by *without*, while in the case of animals it is clear that the motion comes from within. Internal motion is therefore ‘wherein life consist’. Animals must therefore be more than lifeless machines. It is clear, in his view, in the case of both humans and animals their motion comes from *within*. The question again is what the source of movement is, which seems according to Locke in this case be ‘the life’ in an animal, and external forces in an inanimate, mechanical, object. However, this ‘life’ cannot be material, in Locke’s view. However, Locke is also critical of immateriality.

The above journal entry concludes that *both* sides of the argument however fall into a problem of proving what substances are. This motion within – whatever it may be – cannot be explained in terms of *either* material or immaterial substances. The problem here is not proving the soul’s immortality but proving the soul as a *substance*. His journal entry continues:

³⁸⁴ See *Essay*, II.xi.11

³⁸⁵ *Essay*, II.xxvii.5

But methinks if I may be permitted to say soe neither of these speake to the point in question and perfectly mistake immortality whereby is not meant a state of bare substantiall existence and duration but a state of sensibility. For that way that they use of proveing the soule immortall will as well prove the body soe too.³⁸⁶

Locke points out here that those in favour of an immaterial soul, without perception, are proving an immaterial non-perceiving substance that might as well be as insensible as the epicurean atoms. He then concludes:

Soe that to prove that immortality of the soule simple because it being naturally not to be destroid by anything it will have an eternall duration which duration may be without any perception is to prove noe other immortality of the soule then what belongs to one of Epicurus's attoms viz that it perpetually exists but has noe sense either of happynesse or misery.³⁸⁷

A simple immaterial soul is just as senseless as the epicurean definition of matter, in Locke's view. Therefore, it is not the immortality that is the problem but proving immortality from the tradition 'physical' argument as Locke calls it. Based on what we have seen so far, I argue that Locke does not reject the *immortality* but merely the materialist side of the argument, even though he finds the argument for immateriality problematic on equal terms. Locke does not reject the existence of the soul, in terms of the personhood or immortality of the person. First, we must remind ourselves of his argument as also seen in the *Essay* – that we do not know more about the nature of

³⁸⁶ Aaron and Gibb, 1936: 121-122

³⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 122

immateriality than we do of materiality – this I shall turn further to in Chapter 6 and bearing this in mind it becomes clear that what Locke has in intended is a ‘third’ understanding of the nature and relationship between these different substances. Again, here Locke is complaining of the harshness of the materialist doctrine. The third category of being in a mediocre state becomes crucial. What Locke means with mediocre I shall explore in the 1682 correspondence with Damaris, which I shall now turn to.

5.4 Locke and Damaris: The 1682 Correspondence

In particular, in their correspondence in 1682, they discuss Smith’s *Select Discourses*, the attaining divine knowledge, the problem of enthusiasm and the extent and capacity of reason. It highlights some of Locke’s thoughts which were, to a degree his approach to the Platonists philosophers and where Damaris and Locke would have agreed and disagreed. Most significantly, we can see that Locke’s views on ‘mediocrity’ leads to a humble epistemology, which I argue he shared with the Cambridge Platonists and, secondly, the crucial role of reason in matters of religion as a safeguard against enthusiasm and thirdly to some remarks on Locke’s concept of the immateriality of the soul. In reading this particular correspondence with Damaris, we therefore gain some missing pieces in the puzzle, towards understanding Locke’s concept of reason.

The 1682 correspondence between Locke and Damaris is interesting for a number of reasons: First, it seems that we can draw a parallel between the topics and questions that they discussed in their letters to topics that Locke later had a revived interest in

during his time Locke was staying at Oats after 1690 until his death. Secondly, it shows a direct link between Locke and the Cambridge Platonists, as Damaris was also the daughter of the Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth. We have to ask what Locke's connection with Damaris means for his wider relation to Platonism (though this question implies that we must perhaps then ask to what degree Damaris herself was a Platonist, like her father). On this point, we must look at the parallels between Locke's correspondence with Damaris and his own notes on the Cambridge Platonists. Thirdly, this demonstrates that we can trace the same conceptual points from the Cambridge Platonists as I have earlier stated and that these are important insights to our understanding of Locke's concept of reason. These points are the tension between reason and revelation, where Damaris and Locke seem to disagree, and the role of reason as a safeguard against enthusiasm, where they both agree, also with Smith.

We know from Locke's books that he purchased a copy of Smith's *Select Discourses* (1660) on the 11 February 1682.³⁸⁸ This was most probably on the recommendation of Damaris, as she wrote to him on the 16 of February: 'I suppose by this time you have made a farther progress in the book of which I would gladly know your thoughts...' Locke's notes in his journal entries are dated on the 19, 20 and 21 of February 1682 are mainly comments on Smith's *Select Discourses*. Locke and Damaris seemed to be particularly interested in Smith's first discourse entitled 'The true Way or Method of attaining Divine Knowledge'.

³⁸⁸ De Beer, L696 cf. Smith's *Select Discourses*, 1660

After Masham's letter on February the 16th Locke made a couple of entries in his journal before his draft reply on the 21st of February. On February the 18th, in short, Locke's journal entries from this period correspond to the three main topics of his correspondence with Damaris: first on Smith's division of Knowledge, secondly, on the topic of enthusiasm and thirdly, on Smith's fourth discourse on 'The Immortality of the Soul'.³⁸⁹ I shall proceed by looking at these three topics. These three topics are interconnected through an important comparison between Smith and Locke's view of the role of reason and through a discussion on the nature of reason. In this discussion it seems Damaris disagrees with Locke on the power of reason being as she argues it requires assistance by another 'higher principle'. The concept of reason extends to two crucial topics, that of Locke's critique of Enthusiasm, and that of the question of his view of the immortality of the soul. In both these two aspects we shall find that there is an overlap between Locke and the Cambridge Platonist.

Divine knowledge - Damaris's First Question

In a letter to Locke dated Thursday 16 February 1682 Damaris asks for a clarification on Smith's 'fourfold kind of knowledge'.³⁹⁰ Having read Smith, Damaris wrote to Locke and wanted to know his thoughts on this:

'I suppose by this time you have made a farther progress in the Book of which I would gladly know your thoughts but you must remember to tell me them truly, and to let me know what those things are that you dislike in it.'³⁹¹

³⁸⁹ See De Beer, L696, the topic of enthusiasm was part of a letter to Damaris on the 6th of April

³⁹⁰ Ibid., L684

We have Locke's journal entry from February 21 a draft letter in reply to Damaris' letter from February 16.³⁹² This draft includes extensive notes on Smith's *Discourses*, on the topic of enthusiasm and the revelation of St. Paul in reply to Damaris' query. Locke writes with particular reference to section III of Smith's first discourse, entitled, '*The true way or method of attaining to Divine Knowledge*'. In order to understand Damaris' query and subsequent dissatisfaction with Locke's answer, I shall first explain this 'fourfold kind of knowledge', as presented by Smith in his *Select Discourses*. However, as Locke himself points out, Smith does not so much make a division of different *kinds* of knowledge per se but seems more like a division of different kinds of people, who on the basis of their *perception* of their own constitution, i.e. their conception of human nature have different ways of attaining knowledge,

Smith's Division of Knowledge

In the *Select Discourses*, Smith writes, after '...setting aside the *Epicurean* herd of British men, who have drowned all their own sober Reason in the deepest *Lethe* of Sensuality', that 'the rest of Men' are divided into four ranks according to a method by *Simplicius*.³⁹³ According to Smith, by the fact that the Epicureans deny the soul they also completely exclude the power of reason as a driving factor of human nature, as it is only informed and instrumental to bodily pleasures. Smith thus continues; to the first rank belong those who believe body and soul make them up equally:

³⁹¹ De Beer, L 684

³⁹² Ibid., L687

³⁹³ Smith, 1660:17 '*..upon Epictetus*'

The knowledge of these men I should call [...] in *Plutarch's* phrase; a Knowledge wherein Sense and Reason are so twisted up together, that it cannot easily be unravel'd, and laid out into its first principles. Their highest Reason is [...] complying with their senses, and both conspire together in vulgar opinion.³⁹⁴

The problem with those who are in this rank is that their *conceptions* of body and soul are too mixed up and muddled together, so that ‘their higher notions of God and Religion are so entangled with the Birdlime of fleshly Passions and mundane Vanity’. The distractions from mundane vanity and passions means that they are stuck, like in birdlime and, therefore, ‘they cannot rise up above the surface of this dark earth, or easily entertain any but earthly conceptions of heavenly things.’ Such souls, Smith quotes Plato, are ‘lodg'd [and] heavy behind...’³⁹⁵ He also makes the analogue that these people are like a spider, who sometimes appear to be moving up into the air but are in fact only moving within their own web that they have spun out of their ‘own gross fancies’, and by ‘which they fasten and pin to some earthly thing or other.’³⁹⁶ In this way, these people may *appear* to be reaching after divine virtue, when they in fact are stuck in their own subjective muddle.

Secondly, Smith ranks those who realise that they *should* look at, i.e. perceive themselves as soul rather than body. This is the fundamental understanding that the soul has precedence over the body. This includes someone who ‘thinks not fit to view

³⁹⁴ Smith, 1660: 17

³⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 17-18

³⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 18

his own face in any other Glass but that of Reason and Understanding’, for such person *realises* that their body is made to obey the soul and that we have to wait upon ‘the higher and nobler part’ in which ‘common Principles of Vertue and Goodness, are more clear and steady’. Here, Smith is citing the Stoics:

And therefore the Stoick suppos'd, that the doctrine of Political and Moral vertues was fit to be delivered to such as these; and though they may not be so well prepared for Divine Vertue (which is of an higher Emanation) yet they are not immature for Humane, as having the Seeds of it already within themselves, which being water'd by answerable practice, may sprout up within them.³⁹⁷

Smith is referring to the Stoic idea of the divine seed, implanted in each human from creation and therefore ‘having the Seeds of it *already* within themselves’.³⁹⁸ The seed is the intellectual faculty, the so-called ‘eye of the soul’, ‘*which indeed all have, but few make use of*’. It is interesting here that Smith seems to think that these seeds must be ‘water’d by answerable practice’ so they ‘may sprout up within them’. As we have seen in previous chapter, the Cambridge Platonist’s has the conception of reason as a ‘seed’, which means that it may *grow* and gain further divine knowledge through the individual’s own endeavour and practice.

The third rank, as Smith’s classification continues, would include someone ‘whose Soule is *already purg'd* by this lower sort of Vertue, and so is continually flying off

³⁹⁷ Smith, 1660: 18-19

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 18-19

from the Body and Bodily passion, and returning into himself.’³⁹⁹ The people of the third rank have also ‘*escaped the pollutions which are in the world through lust,*’ Smith writes, referring to St. Paul.⁴⁰⁰ The third rank thus belongs to those who have progressed from just merely understanding that the soul has presidency over the body, but also have elevated their reason and soul, in accordance to this understanding. But the danger here is that, as their ‘inward sense of Vertue and moral Goodness being far transcendent to all meer Speculative opinions of it’, therefore, the knowledge of their heights ‘may be quickly apt to corrupt’, as Smith continues:

Many of our most refined Moralists may be [...], full with their own pregnancy; their Souls may too much heave and swell with the sense of their own Vertue and Knowledge: there may be an ill *Ferment of Self-love* lying at the bottome, which may puffed it up the more with Pride, Arrogance, and Self-conceit.⁴⁰¹

In this way, these people in the third rank get dazzled by their own self-achievement, and while their knowledge is elevated, their souls get lost in pride, arrogance and self-conceit and then, as a result, they lead themselves astray from achieving any true divine knowledge. In a way, this rank is an advanced form of the second, yet, it is also a stage where people get stuck.

To the fourth and final rank according to Smith belongs ‘the true Metaphysical and Contemplative man’, who by ‘running and shooting up above his own *Logical or Self-*

³⁹⁹ Smith, 1660: 19

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 19

⁴⁰¹ Op. cit.

rational life, pierceth into the *Highest life...*'.⁴⁰² This rank includes people who have succeeded to progress past the third rank and not losing themselves in 'Self-love'. Therefore, having done away with pride and self-conceit, this is the rank of 'the true and sober Christian':

who lives in Him who is *Life* it self, and is enlightened by Him who is the *Truth* it self, and is made partaker of *the Divine Unction, and knoweth all things*, as S. John speaks.⁴⁰³

Here it is notable that Smith refers to St. John, being known the gospel of knowledge and perception. For example, see 1 John 2.20: 'But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things' (KJV). With this reference Smith here seems to referring to the union between Christ and man and the union between God and Christ, through logos. The partaking in the 'Divine Unction' is thus partaking in Christ, God's logos. And only through entering this stage, can humans achieve true divine knowledge.

This stage is entered through a form of abandonment of self, as Smith continues, 'abstracting himself from himselfe, endeavours the nearest Union with the Divine Essence that may be.' Here, Smith refers to Plotinus who wrote that one has to be 'knitting his owne centre, if he have any, unto the centre of Divine Being'.⁴⁰⁴ The personal soul has to become one with the divine source of all things. This is only done through the individual soul the partaking in the Divine, which returns to the conception of logos, the gift from god, as a part of God, that applied *properly* will

⁴⁰² Smith, 1660: 20

⁴⁰³ Ibid., p. 21

⁴⁰⁴ Op. cit.

lead to a unification, or rather re-unification. Smith writes that these are the people of true divine knowledge, and concludes in the same manner his section started, with a jab at the epicureans: ‘pitty those poor brutish *Epicureans* that have nothing but the meer husks of fleshly pleasure to feed themselves with.’⁴⁰⁵

Locke’s reply

In Locke’s reply to Damaris, it is interesting that in his reading of Smith he disagrees on a seemingly rather minor point. According to Locke, it is not the case that there are different *kinds* of knowledge, as Smith calls it, but knowledge itself can come in *degrees*. As he writes to Damaris:

...*a fourfold kinde of Knowledg* whereas those four differences he afterwards enumerates and describes seeme not to me to be soe much four sorts of knowledg but severall degrees of the love of god and practice of vertue.⁴⁰⁶

The degree of knowledge attained by an individual is therefore relative not to the *kind* of knowledge the person has acquired but to which *degree* the person has achieved a proper love of God and practices virtue. Locke, therefore, suggests that Smith is wrong in proposing that there are different types of *knowledge*, rather it seems to be the case that there are different types of *people*. As he continues, writing to Damaris, ‘yet I cannot allow that it is a different sort of knowledge at all above his reason...’ Locke’s worry is that a case of different kinds of knowledge, or any knowledge that claims to be ‘above’ reason, would allow for enthusiasm and not, in fact, be

⁴⁰⁵ Smith, 1660: 21

⁴⁰⁶ Aaron and Gibb, 1936: 124

knowledge at all. Instead, Locke introduces a ‘division of men’. As earlier stated, we have not got an exact copy of Locke’s exact reply but thankfully in a draft letter to Damaris from the 21 of February, we find a reiteration of his ‘division of man’.⁴⁰⁷ His division is, I think, in essence quite similar to Smith’s and to a degree mirrors his stages of four kinds of knowledge.

I have summarized Locke’s ‘division of men’ as follows: First, there are those who think they are only body and mind, and not soul or spirit. Second, there are those who in some cases think of themselves as soul separate from the body and ‘in those instances have only visions or more properly imaginations.’⁴⁰⁸ Thirdly, Locke writes that there are those ‘who considering themselves as made both of body and soule’ and ‘in a state of mediocrity make use and follow their reason’.⁴⁰⁹ Though Locke does not go further into detail, I think this is the clearest summary of Locke’s core philosophical stance. In the first case, he seems to reject the Cartesian distinction of body and soul, in the second case he rejects those who live *only* in a perception of themselves as the soul, prior and independently of body. And in the third and final case, which is the person who follows both their senses and reason to reach knowledge through a truly humble position. This mediocre state is the state between two extremes. Although, it must be said that it is from this not clear what Locke’s exact distinction is between the concepts of mind, soul and *spirit*. These are some distinctions that I will turn to and hope to shine some further light on in my final chapter on Locke’s theology.

⁴⁰⁷ De Beer, L687

⁴⁰⁸ Op. cit.

⁴⁰⁹ Op. cit.

Damaris, however, was not entirely impressed by Locke's division of persons as she criticizes it as 'too general'⁴¹⁰, because 'there are a number of Persons in the World...which I find not included in any part of it.'⁴¹¹ On this point it seems unclear in both cases of Smith and Locke whether they mean that their respective division of persons *achieving* different *levels* of knowledge due to their understanding of their *own* essence (i.e. the mind-body problem), or a division between different types of actual knowledge or capacities of people *due to* their own essence. However, Locke explicitly states that these are not divisions of *actual* knowledge, as there is only one thing that classifies as *knowledge*. He also explicitly states that this is what these men 'think of them selves'. It appears that, for Locke, those who think of themselves correctly will also apply their knowledge correctly and thereby reach further towards 'truth' and knowledge of the divine. However, in Smith's case it seems to be more about overcoming mundane temptations and passions, distractions and vices such as pride, arrogance, and self-conceit in order to reach special knowledge and understanding of the divine.

Furthermore, we can also ask what Locke actually means by the term 'mediocrity'? The word 'mediocre' from Latin means to be in the middle of either height or degree. It is possible that Locke applied the term in two ways in this case, either simply directional, in the sense of simply 'being in the middle', or it has a prerogative meaning, in which the state of being in the middle it is the *only* way which enables the individual to *make use of* his or her reason properly. If it is the latter, then we must ask what is it that is so special with 'being in the middle', as it were, that allows us to make better use of our reason? In short, are those people who, according to Locke, are

⁴¹⁰ De Beer, L684

⁴¹¹ Op. cit.

in a mediocre state there because they follow reason or are they able to follow reason because they are in a state of being mediocre?

While the answer to this question is not entirely clear, I argue that Locke applies the meaning of the word in both senses. Locke advocates a medium between two extremes. Hardcore materialism (i.e. the belief that humans only constitute of body) is according to Locke not correct, and such thinking would also limit our understanding. And the case of denying the fundamental aspects of body and focusing on the soul creates a dichotomy between body and mind, is equally problematic to Locke. According to Locke, it is only through accepting that we are in a mediocre state between these extremes, we are endorsing all aspects of human nature, in which reason is the mediating function between body and spirit, or soul. This, I think, points towards a similar theory of complementarity as we have seen is shared by the Cambridge Platonists.

Therefore, I think we can argue that Locke intended the mediocre state to be a prerogative state and that understanding our constitution as consisting of both body and soul allows a more humble approach which enables reason to prevail. This is because an application of 'either-or' of being in a state of just body or just soul seems to Locke inexplicably narrow-minded. As we know, Locke is agnostic on the definition of what a 'substances' is and, therefore, there can be as little known of the nature of matter as a substance as of spirit. For Locke, all we know is that our existence consist of both. That is, both of a soul (alternatively defined as the 'rational soul', that is the 'thinking thing within') and a body. Locke does not subscribe to the Cartesian distinction of body and soul as two distinct substances, but nor does he

subscribe to materialism (i.e. the denial of soul or the conception of soul or thought as material). However, he agrees with a form of Cartesianism by accepting the importance of endorsing the fact that we should ‘think of ourselves’ as constituted of *both* ‘body and soule’. Therefore, the true state in which we are in, he calls a state of ‘mediocrity’. Only those who have accepted that they are ‘in a state of mediocrity’ and make *use* of our reason, the one gives the other.

To further support my point, I think we can find further evidence to this understanding of ‘mediocrity’ in his *Essay*. For example, in III.xii.10 Locke writes on the improvement of our knowledge:

This way of getting and improving our knowledge in substances only by experience and history, which is all that the weakness of our faculties in this state of mediocrity which we are in in this world can attain to, makes me suspect that natural philosophy is not capable of being made a science.

Here he also seems to argue that our very existence ‘in this world’ *is* a ‘state of mediocrity’. But, if we think of ourselves as a state of mediocrity between body and soul but also as a form of existential mediocrity, Locke initiates a very original and humble position. Humble, in the face of all the potential knowledge that is out there, and in the face of the all-knowing, eternally thinking being.

This is further supported in n the *Essay* III.xiv.2 titled *Of Judgment*. Locke calls this mediocre state the ‘twilight state’ and explains:

God has set some things in broad daylight; as he has given us some certain knowledge, though limited to a few things in comparison, probably as a taste of what intellectual creatures are capable of to excite in us a desire and endeavour after a better state: so, in the greatest part of our concernments, he has afforded us only the twilight, as I may so say, of probability; suitable, I presume, to that state of *mediocrity* and probationership he has been pleased to place us in here; wherein, to check our over-confidence and presumption, we might, by every day's experience, be made sensible of our short-sightedness and liableness to error; the sense whereof might be a constant admonition to us, to spend the days of this our pilgrimage with industry and care, in the search and following of that way which might lead us to a state of greater perfection.⁴¹²

Here, Locke writes that we must 'endeavor' after a better state. That is, we have to check our over-confidence and presumption, and be 'made sensible of our short-sightedness and liableness to error'. Through a more humble attitude, we shall be able to a state of greater perfection, through employing the gift of *reason*. And Locke concludes the same passage:

It being highly rational to think, even were revelation silent in the case, that, as men employ those talents God has given them here, they shall accordingly receive their rewards at the close of the day, when their sun shall set and night shall put an end to their labors.

⁴¹² My emphasis

Those talents that ‘God has given them’ Locke is referring to the gift of reason. This leads us to another important question on the nature of reason. This will be developed under the topic of enthusiasm.

Enthusiasm – Damaris’ second question

Finally, with regards to enthusiasm, Damaris writes that she does not understand what Locke means with ‘vision’, in his second category of people; those who place soul before body and, as Locke writes, ‘have only *visions* or more properly imaginations’ (my emphasis). This is linked to the question how much is attributed to the power of reason and to the problem of enthusiasm. Here we also find in Locke’s reply that he is in clear agreement with Smith. In an earlier journal entry dated February 19, Locke had already defined the term ‘Enthusiasm’ as:

A strong and firme perswasion of any proposition relateing to religion for which a man hath either noe or not sufficient proofs from reason but receives them as truths wrought in the minde extraordinarily by god himself and influences comeing immediately from him seems to me to be Enthusiasm, which can by noe evidence or ground of assurance at all nor can by any means be taken for knowledge.⁴¹³

⁴¹³ Aaron and Gibb, 1936: 119

Enthusiasm is therefore religious belief without sufficiently using reason. Locke is thus also rejecting direct inspiration or revelation. In the draft reply letter to Damaris on the 21 February Locke continues:

For what ever opinions or perswasions are in the mind without any foundation of reason, may indeed by the temper and dispositions of some mindes whether natural or acquired seeme as cleare and operate as strongly as true knowledg, but indeed are not knowledge but if they concerne god and religion deserve the name of Enthusiasme which however you seeme to plead for and thinke St Paul to a degree allows...⁴¹⁴

Locke writes that many people can be of opinions or persuasions in the mind that are *without* any foundation of reason, which would suggest that they are also not in accepting of their true, humble and mediocre state and thus not employing their reason sufficiently. But, as Damaris' question follows, 'how much you may attribute to the power of Reason'? As she writes to Locke:

But I know not what you may call Vision nor how much you may attribute to the power of Reason, onely as I understand them it seems to mee that there may be something between these two things, there being (I think) such a Degree of Perfection to be attain'd to in this Life to which the Powers of mere Unassisted Reason will never Conduct Man, not that I think more meaneley of Reason I beleeve then you do. But I would faine to know whether you think not that by implying it the best one can, and by constantly adhering to the

⁴¹⁴ Aaron and Gibb, 1936: 124

Dictates of it, they may not at length come to be acted by a Higher Principle,
Or whether it is by that alone that we are capable of becoming those new
Creatures so often spoken of...⁴¹⁵

She questions if reason is alone sufficient in attaining a degree of higher knowledge, or if the knowledge has to be fulfilled by the act of 'a higher principle'. The term 'new Creatures', I think, could be a reference to the Pauline letter 2 Corinthians 5:17, which states: 'Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.' The becoming of new creatures is in a way the reaching of a higher form of perfection. Does the union with Christ or God happen through the power of reason alone, or are interference by God's grace necessary? She then refers again to St. Paul as she concludes that reason *unassisted* is not sufficient in attaining higher truths. Smith, she thinks, was of the same opinion in the *Discourses*:

[I]t seems to mee I confess that it is not, and I believe that my Author was of that mind, neither do I know how to understand several places in St Paul (which seem'd not difficult before) if hee Himself were not as much an Enthusiast as this comes to.⁴¹⁶

The first problem is that if reason is not sufficient – the worry is that we are susceptible to enthusiasm, not being able to know who is acted upon and not, while reason is the objective measure by which all things can be measured by. Damaris is pointing out the problem that according to Locke's interpretation of Smith, it seems

⁴¹⁵ De Beer, L684

⁴¹⁶ Op. cit.

that St. Paul would be an enthusiast too; in the manner he is receiving his revelations. Assisted reason would then be reason assisted through revelation, and un-assisted reason is reasoning, i.e. coming to have true divine knowledge, *without* revelation.

The second problem is that, if using ones own reason should suffice, then what need is there for revelation? This comes down to a further ambiguity in the meaning of ‘unassisted’. It would seem like Locke and Damaris are attributing two different meanings to the term and what counts as assistance, they are therefore talking past one another, I believe. Locke allows reason to be assisted and include improvement by things like contemplation, such as the correct contemplation *of* scripture, while Damaris seems to say that that reason works is unassisted by another faculty or source, a higher power or principle, as it were. Specifically, the disagreement here seems to be on the term ‘vision’ and how much Locke ‘attribute to the power of Reason’. According to Damaris, there is a ‘Degree of Perfection to be attain'd to in this Life to which the Powers of meere Unassisted Reason will never Conduct a Man’. It was also common then to even call divinely caused dreams for ‘vision’. De Beer points out that Locke is using vision in a pejorative way.⁴¹⁷ Meaning that ‘vision’ in this instance is anything *but* reason or revelation, it is any belief without the proper employment of reason. Those in category two, who only live in the ideas of their soul, and not taking into account the full picture – the spirit and body.

I argue that Locke uses the same argument to reject the enthusiasts as the Cambridge Platonists: namely because enthusiasm, that is *direct* inspiration, removes the individual endeavour to learn and understand for *one's self* and therefore know the

⁴¹⁷ De Beer, L684

creation as independent, autonomous creature. In fact, Smith is not denying the presence of reason, or arguing for having any divine knowledge in its *absence*. According to Smith, the epicureans, for example, ‘drowned all their own sober Reason in the deepest *Lethe* of Sensuality’, and if we return to his distinctions between the fourfold kinds of knowledge again it is clear that the fourth rank is not about denying body or soul, but it is finding a balance, and using reason, understanding that there is a relationship between the body and the soul. As he describes the fourth, most elevated, rank as ‘the true Metaphysical and Contemplative man’. A ‘contemplative man’ is surely someone who *thinks* and thereby *makes use* of his or her reason. The person in of the third rank has the ability to, as Smith stated, ‘knitting his owne centre, if he have any, unto the centre of Divine Being’. Furthermore, if we compare this to Locke’s third characterisation of being in a state of ‘mediocrity’ we find it similar to Smith’s fourth category of knowledge. I argue that we find that Smith and Locke are less far apart than has been thought, even perhaps by Damaris herself at the time. The person who has found himself or herself in Smith’s fourth kind of knowledge is also in a form of mediocre state, where he or she has accepted the bodily state, as well the spiritual realm while at the same time not loosing themselves in their own selfish fancies, and become pompous as a result. This is the point with Locke and the Cambridge Platonists shared state of epistemic humility.

Locke writes that reason is assisted by ‘education discourse and contemplation or otherwise’.⁴¹⁸ We can compare this to what Locke states in his *Paraphrases* on St. Paul, written the very end of his life and posthumously published in 1707:

⁴¹⁸ De Beer, L684, my emphasis

[T]he Light of the Gospel he had received from the Fountain and Father of Light himself, who, I concluded, had not furnished him in this extraordinary manner, if all this plentiful Stock of Learning and Illumination had been in danger to have been lost or proved useless, in a *jumbled and confused Head*.⁴¹⁹

The point here I think is that a person receiving ‘influences coming immediately’ from God are classified as an enthusiast *unless* that person belongs to the ‘third’ group of people, as Locke defines it, that is, those who are in a state of ‘mediocrity’ and follow their *reason*. In contrast, this is why influences coming ‘immediately’ or the allowing of ‘immediate revelations’ takes away the agency to think, act and learn for themselves, and *then* only after activating reason, will they become receptive. Revelation would therefore ‘be lost or proved useless, in a *jumbled and confused Head*’. It is however, on this subtle point that Locke also disagrees with Smith’s division of knowledge, as it seems according to Locke that Smith allows for knowledge ‘above reason’.

The notion of having different *kinds* of knowledge means that there are *different* kinds of knowledge that can come without the practise of reason. As mentioned earlier, Locke does not want to say that there are any kinds of knowledge ‘above reason’. In this context Locke writes:

For thought I grant it is easily to be imagin'd that a love and practise of vertue may and naturally doth by implying his thoughts more on heavenly objects

⁴¹⁹ Locke, 1987: 143

given a man a greater Knowledge of god and his duty, and that reciprocally produce a greater love of them yet I cannot allow that it is a different sort of knowledge or any knowledge at all above his reason, for what ever opinions or perswasions are in the minde without any foundation of reason [...] ⁴²⁰

In this way, there are not several ways to attain love of god and practice of virtue, but only one way: through the exercise of reason. As Masham asked Locke if we are ‘constantly adhering to the Dictates of it [reason], they may not at length come to be acted by a Higher Principle, Or whether it is by that alone that we are capable of becoming those new Creatures so often spoken of...’⁴²¹ Therefore, he replies to Masham that this also applies in the case of St. Paul, and the becoming of ‘new Creatures’. For if persuasions of the mind ‘concerne god and religion deserve the name Enthusiasme which however you seeme to plead for and thinke St Paul to a degree allows’:

yet I must still say is noe part of knowldge and the new creature in my sense does not consist soe much in notions nor indeed in any irrationall notions at all, but in a new principle of life and action i.e. the love of god and a desire of being in holiness like unto him.⁴²²

The desire to be like the image of God – we are not ready made so, but have the capacity to be so with the gift of reason. Therefore, it seems that if knowledge comes in degrees so must also reason, as he states that ‘faculty its self’ can consist of ‘severall degrees of perfection’:

⁴²⁰ Aaron and Gibb, 1936: 124

⁴²¹ De Beer, L684

⁴²² Aaron and Gibb, 1936: 124

What unassisted reason can or cannot do I cannot determine since I thinke the faculty its self in its severall degrees of perfection all the helps and improvements of it by education discourse contemplation or otherwise are all assistance from god and to be acknowledg to the goodness of his providence...⁴²³

We shall therefore reach higher perfections ‘by constant imployment’ of reason and ‘improvements of it by education discourse contemplation’ or otherwise, Locke writes, we are all assistance from god but then there is no need to think or let alone have reason at all. And Locke further defines reason as a natural faculty, like the eye:

I thinke of reason as I doe of the sight an ordinary eye by constant imployment about any object may grow very acute in it the assistance of glasses may make it see things both better and at a greater distance but yet whatever is discerned by the eye however assisted is perceiving by and comes under the natural faculty of seeing, and soe whatever | is known however sublime or spirituall is known only by the natural faculty of the understanding reason, however assisted.⁴²⁴

As our reason can reach different degrees, according to Locke, so will our knowledge and understanding, both of the world and our love of god and practice of virtue. In this sense, reason and revelation are one and the same thing, or degrees there of the

⁴²³ Aaron and Gibb, 1936: 124-125

⁴²⁴ Op. cit.

same thing. For ‘whatever strong perswasions we have in matters divine’ if it is not ‘vouchd by reason’ it cannot be ‘otherwise then perfect Enthusiasme.’⁴²⁵

In conclusion, is Locke’s reply satisfying as an answer to Damaris’ worry about vision and reason? Damaris was in her letter explicitly doubtful as she writes that ‘the Powers of mere Unassisted Reason will never Conduct a Man’, that is, the question is if unassisted reason could educate people in the love of God or how to act virtuously.⁴²⁶ But as she writes it depends on how much power Locke attributes to reason. I think Locke is not discarding revelation or in any way *replacing* it with reason. Rather, it is the other way around: you cannot have revelation, let alone receive or understand it, without reason. As Locke writes ‘Revelation is natural reason enlarged’ and that it is reason ‘vouches the truth of by the testimony and proofs it gives that they come from God’.⁴²⁷ In the case of St. Paul, or Moses, their rational faculties were at such a *degree* of perfection where it was possible for them to receive and understand God’s revelation. Reason and revelation are therefore complementary activities, where we must scrutinise revelations and think about them for ourselves only in order to understand the world, God, and ourselves.

5. 5 Conclusions

To conclude and answer the aforementioned questions: First, what can we say about Damaris’ influence on Locke? We can tell from Locke’s journal that the issues of enthusiasm, revelation and reason were topics Locke was interested in much earlier.

⁴²⁵ Aaron and Gibb, 1936: 125

⁴²⁶ De Beer, L684

⁴²⁷ *Essay*, IV.xix.4

Locke's journal from 1682 contains entries on miracles where Locke writes 'here too I say the least deamination must be that of reason.'⁴²⁸ However, the fact that their correspondence and his journal entries correspond means that their mutual interest for this topic made Locke think and work on these topics again also with the clear implication of his reading of Smith and Cudworth. It is clear that Damaris undoubtedly provided Locke with debate and insight as a learned and insightful person in her own right, instigating both topics, questions and inputs in the discussion. The chapter IV.xix "Of Enthusiasm", was only added to the *Essay* in the fourth edition in 1700, at the time Locke was living at Oates. This leads to the second question: to what degree does Damaris provide a direct link between Locke and the Cambridge Platonists? I think it is obvious that she does provide a link, as their contact seemed to have spurred Locke's reading of both Smith and Cudworth. It is evident that his journal entries of early 1682 cannot be read without the context of his correspondence with Damaris. And Locke's journal entries along with his correspondence are keys to his thoughts at the time and to us also understanding parts of the *Essay*, which comes as a clear result from this period. Even if Damaris did not directly influence Locke *per say* this proves that the Cambridge Platonists were very much part of Locke's intellectual landscape. Third, and finally, I think that the 1682 correspondence in combination with Locke's journal entries, highlights certain important aspects of Locke's understanding of reason, which we shall turn further to in the following chapters. Therefore, in conclusion, Locke himself could not have failed to see that his own views overlapped with many of those of the Cambridge Platonists, as he at times even admits, as he ends his reply to Damaris (who had a broken arm at this time) with high praises of Smith's *Discourses*:

⁴²⁸ Aaron and Gibb, 1936: 115 (Journal except 1681, Sund. Apr. 3)

I will not enter into a discourse of that having more then enough tired you already which will be to use you worse then your fall did if I break your brains with my Jargon. The next discourse of Superstition is one of the best I ever read...⁴²⁹

⁴²⁹ Aaron and Gibb, 1936: 125

Chapter 6

Rethinking Locke: Locke's Proof of God's Existence and the 'Thinking Matter' Thesis as a Rejection of Materialism

Part I. On Locke's proof of God's existence

6.1 Locke's Definition of Reason

Many terms fall under Locke's definition of reason; source of ideas, understanding, knowing, thinking, consciousness, inward perception, spirit and mind. It is not always clear to which of these Locke refers. At one point he writes that 'reason' is 'the power of thinking' but also 'called the Understanding' and falls under the collective term 'mind'.⁴³⁰ Locke takes into account that the term 'reason' has a wider connotation, as he writes:

The word reason in the English language has different significations: sometimes it is taken for true and clear principles: sometimes for clear and fair deductions from those principles: and sometimes for the cause, and particularly the final cause. But the consideration I shall have of it here is in a signification different from all these; and that is, as it stands for a faculty in man, that faculty whereby man is supposed to be distinguished from beasts, and wherein it is evident he much surpasses them.⁴³¹

⁴³⁰ *Essay*, II.vi.2

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, IV.xvii.1

Therefore, among its ‘Various significations’ Locke admits that his prime consideration of the faculty reason is that it is the faculty whereby humanity is ‘supposed to be distinguished from beasts’. In the *Epistle to the reader* he writes that the *Essay* aims to remove ‘some of the rubbish that lies in the way to knowledge’ in order for reason – ‘the most elevated faculty of the soul’ – can progress in the search for truth. Like a hawk, he writes, searches for its prey: ‘Hunting, wherein the very pursuit makes a great part of the Pleasure.’⁴³² Thus, like the hawk soars and takes flight in the sky, so does the mind in ‘every step it takes [...] in its progress towards knowledge’ and ‘makes some Discovery, which is not only new, but the best too, or the time at least.’ According to Locke it seems that humans must therefore search the earth with their ‘hawk-like’ sight to furnish their mind, before they can take flight and receive revelation and meaning of higher truths. The Reason is therefore the intermediary point between Man and God ‘the father of light and fountain of all knowledge’⁴³³

We can already begin to sense a stark distinction with Hobbes’s purely instrumental definition of reason. Hobbes had stripped reason of its divine quality as a transcendent gift from God – a universal guiding light towards truth – and defined it instead as a tool in order to fulfill individual needs and desires. Neither in the *Leviathan* nor in the *de Cive* does he refer to reason as ‘the candle of the Lord’. Hobbes does not see reason as an innate gift from God, as he writes that ‘reason is not, as sense and memory, born with us, nor gotten by experience only, as prudence is, but attained by industry’.⁴³⁴ Though there is still an element of ‘industry’ this is not actualized by the internal ‘spiritual’ workings of the mind, but purely through external forces, acting

⁴³² *Essay, the Epistle to the reader*, p.6

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, IV.xix.4

⁴³⁴ Hobbes, 1994: 25

upon the mind. As we have seen, for Hobbes reason is the ability to be able to make additions and subtractions. Contrary to this, Locke argues that reason must be something more, for ‘God has not been so sparing to men to make them barely two-legged creatures, and left it to Aristotle to make them rational’.⁴³⁵

6. 2 Locke on Enthusiasm and the Critique of the ‘Inner Light’

Despite his adopting this terminology throughout the most parts of his writings, I would like to draw attention to what Locke indicates at the beginning of the *Essay*:

[A]nd notwithstanding all this boast of first principles and innate light, we shall be as much in the dark and uncertainty as if there were no such thing at all.⁴³⁶

In his chapter on enthusiasm, he takes on an even more sceptical approach. In understanding Locke’s epistemic humility, it is worth addressing Locke’s critique of the ‘inner light’ in his chapter of Enthusiasm after his proof of God’s existence (which he states is the highest truth reason can discover). Locke is here arguing against notion that ‘the light of reason’ can be somehow supernaturally infused or ‘enlightened.’ The human reason, as the ‘candle of the Lord’, Locke now suddenly degrades to a mere ‘dim candle’:

When the Spirit brings light into our minds, it dispels darkness. We see it as we do that of the sun at noon, and need not the twilight of reason to show it us.

This light from heaven is strong, clear, and pure; carries its own demonstration

⁴³⁵ *Essay*, IV.xvii.4

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, I.ii.20

with it: and we may as naturally take a glow-worm to assist us to discover the sun, as to examine the celestial ray by our dim candle, reason.⁴³⁷

After this pompous statement Locke then argues against the notion that ‘the light of reason’ can be somehow supernaturally infused or ‘enlightened’. The ‘supposed internal light’ is then examined, judged and now found wanting:

The supposed internal light examined. But to examine a little soberly this internal light, and this feeling on which they [the Enthusiasts] build so much. These men have, they say, clear light, and they see; they have awakened sense, and they feel: this cannot, they are sure, be disputed them. For when a man says he sees or feels, nobody can deny him that he does so. But here let me ask: This seeing, is it the perception of the truth of the proposition, or of this, that it is a revelation from God? This feeling, is it a perception of an inclination or fancy to do something, or of the Spirit of God moving that inclination? ⁴³⁸

Enthusiasts were seen as being driven by spontaneous authority, passion and emotions rather than by sober reason and proper authority from scripture. This, we have previously seen in Locke’s correspondence with Damaris.

Locke writes in the *Essay* that enthusiasm is a conviction of ‘an immediate intercourse with the Deity and frequent communications from the divine Spirit’.⁴³⁹

However, the way to understand Locke’s view of reason in his critique of enthusiasm,

⁴³⁷ *Essay*, IV.xix.8

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, IV.xix.10

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, IV.xix.5

is that while the enthusiasts claim that they use right reason, they are in fact discarding reason all together. Enthusiasm is therefore ‘founded neither on reason nor divine revelation’ and ‘accepts its supposed illumination without search and proof’.⁴⁴⁰ Locke furthermore states that: ‘Immediate revelation being a much easier way for men to establish their opinions and regulate their conduct than the tedious and not always successful labour of strict reasoning.’⁴⁴¹ The problem Locke has with enthusiasts is the gap in their *epistemology*, for knowledge of God requires sagacity and endeavour. Knowledge of God can therefore only be reached through as Locke says, the ‘labour of strict reasoning’.

In this way, I argue that Locke uses the same reason to reject enthusiasts as the Cambridge Platonists, namely, because enthusiasm removes the individual agency to receive enlightenment or indeed the word of God. Individual agency *is* the endeavour to learn and to understand as an independent (self-governing, autonomous) creature. We can compare this to what Locke states in *An Essay for the Understanding of St. Paul's Epistles*, written in 1703:

[T]he Light of the Gospel he had received from the Fountain and Father of Light himself, who, I concluded, had not furnished him in this extraordinary manner, if all this plentiful Stock of Learning and Illumination had been in danger to have been lost or proved useless, in a jumbled and confused Head.

The person receiving the revelation must therefore be reasonable enough, that is they

⁴⁴⁰ *Essay*, IV.xix.7 and IV.xix.8

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, IV.xix.5 ‘labour of strict reasoning’ can be linked to individual actualization of reason, such as second or fourth principle of the Cambridge Platonit’s definition of reason, see also Chapter 4.

cannot have a ‘jumbled and confused’ head. Locke continues in the same passage:

nor have laid up such a Store of admirable and useful Knowledge in a Man, who for want of Method and Order, Clearness of Conception, or Pertinency in Discourse, could not draw it out into Use with the greatest Advantages of Force and Coherence.⁴⁴²

This notion corresponds to some notes that Locke made from his reading of Smith in October 1688.⁴⁴³ Locke made three entries entitled ‘Prophetia’, from Smith’s fourth *Discourse* on Prophets. It is important for my present purpose to note that chapter III of Smith’s fourth discourse there is a direct citation of Philo. As the chapter is entitled: ‘How the Prophetical Dreams did differ from all other kinds of Dreams recorded in Scripture. This further illustrated out of several passages of *Philo Judaeus* pertinent to this purpose.’ Locke’s notes are summarizing and paraphrasing Smith. In this chapter on Philo, Smith writes that the truest prophet is really the philosopher, which has a ‘true understanding of things in their coherence and contexture.’ Smith is here quoting Philo and uses Philo’s definition of Moses, a ‘veritable Platonic Philosopher-king’⁴⁴⁴ The very reason Moses was the recipient of God’s revelation was because of his high level of his *reasonableness*. The highest form of understanding thus becomes a form of revelation. Smith describes different levels of prophecies, the highest form, as Locke notes:

‘cary with them to the understanding of the prophet a clear perception of the mystick meaning of the symbolical representation and have the maske of

⁴⁴² Locke, 1987: 8-9

⁴⁴³ MS. Locke C. 33 fol. 28 Adversaria oct 88

⁴⁴⁴ Willey, 1986:138

divine revelation form miracles and a conformity to the true piety and right reason.⁴⁴⁵

This, so called, the highest degree, the Jews described as ‘Gradus Mosaicus’. The *highest* degree of Divine Inspiration, which was the *Mosaical*, and the very definition of revelation being reason enlarged, emerges through the application of *right* reason.

This clearly corresponds to what Locke states in the *Essay*:

Reason is natural *Revelation*, whereby the eternal Father of Light, the Fountain of all Knowledge communicated to Mankind that portion of Truth, which he has laid within the reach of their natural Faculties⁴⁴⁶

Before moving on to do a re-examination of Locke’s epistemology, it is worth saying a little about his concept of reason in relation to powers. In the chapter on Powers, which is the longest chapter of the *Essay*, Locke makes a distinction between passive and active powers. We shall see that this will fit both with his definition of reason and reflection as an active power of the mind, and also as an active source of knowledge, but also in his rebuttal of materialism. As I argue, Locke does both in the proof of God’s existence and in his famous ‘thinking matter’ passage. Now let us turn to reconsider Locke’s epistemology.

⁴⁴⁵ MS. Locke C. 33 fol. 28

⁴⁴⁶ *Essay* IV. xix. 4

6.3 Locke's epistemology reconsidered

Locke's rejection of innate ideas entails that no concepts or ideas are created *a priori* to our interaction and experience of the world. *Experience* is, according to Locke, by definition: 'In that, all our Knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives it self.'⁴⁴⁷ But we can ask two questions here. First, what type of *experience* is Locke talking about. What is it that we *are* experiencing? For Locke an experience entails an agent who is getting the experience. As he writes in II.XXIII.15 of the *Essay*, there must be a 'spiritual being within me that sees and hears.' Therefore, the second question is what does Locke mean with that thing 'within' getting the experience?

Locke holds that the world external to our mind is just as 'real', carrying the same status of reality as the internal world. In Locke's account of knowledge there are *two sources* of ideas that we experience, yet it is only these two *combined* that will classify as knowledge. Referring to these two sources as 'windows', Locke argues that ideas are gained from sensation and reflection as two equally weighted sources. However, it is only through these two combined that we get what Locke classifies as *knowledge*. In order to explain this I shall look first at what Locke means with knowledge and from *experience*.

Experience

According to Locke there are two things of which we have clear and conscious *experience*. These two are the 'fountains of knowledge', in that our experience is employed with 'either about *external sensible Objects; or about the operations of our*

⁴⁴⁷ *Essay*, II.i.2

*Minds, perceived and reflected on by our selves, is that, which supplies our Understanding with all the materials of thinking.*⁴⁴⁸ Locke refers to these two sources of knowledge as *sensation* and *reflection*⁴⁴⁹ both which we can access through *experience*. Remember that Locke defines knowledge as the perception of the ‘agreement or Disagreement *and repugnancy of any of our Ideas.*’⁴⁵⁰ In addition to this Locke also writes that there are three different ‘degrees’ of knowledge in terms of ‘ways of Evidence and certainty’. First, we have intuitive knowledge, where ‘the mind perceives the Agreement or Disagreement of two Ideas immediately.’⁴⁵¹ Second, there is demonstrative knowledge, building on these immediate ideas and creating new ones intermediately.⁴⁵² Third, there is *sensitive knowledge*, from which we get ideas of the existence of material objects outside the mind, via sensation.⁴⁵³ This is the experience ‘of the particular existence of finite beings without us’. What Locke means with *sensation* can be understood as follows. Our senses interact with those external objects of distinct perceptions, which in turn give to the mind ‘those *Ideas, we have of Yellow, White, Heat, Cold, Soft, Hard, Bitter, Sweet,*’ These ideas are therefore wholly dependent upon our senses.⁴⁵⁴

In contrast to sensation or sensitive knowledge, *reflection* is entirely internal and concerns only ‘the *Perception of the Operations of our own Minds* within us.’ The function of this is to:

⁴⁴⁸ *Essay*, II.i.2

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, II.i.4

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, II.i.2

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, IV.ii.1

⁴⁵² *Op. cit.*

⁴⁵³ *Essay*, IV.ii.14

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, II.i.3

– furnish the Understanding with another set of *Ideas*, which could not be had from things without: and such are, *Perception, Thinking, Doubting, Believing, Reasoning, Knowing, Willing* and all the different acting of our Minds: which we being conscious of, and observing in ourselves, do from these receive into our Understanding, as distinct *Ideas*, as we do from Bodies affecting our Senses.⁴⁵⁵

Note that Locke states here that these are ideas ‘which could not be had from things without.’ In other words, these types of internal operations of the mind must, therefore be independent of external objects. Locke refers to the external source of knowledge as ‘sensation’, or sensual knowledge, and the internal sensation as ‘reflection’. However, throughout the *Essay* Locke uses the terms reflection, internal perception and internal sensation interchangeably.

What we are consciously ‘observing in ourselves’ is therefore known through our ‘*internal sense*’ and constitutes a form of *experience* that the individual perceives wholly in him or herself. Even though this perception does not come through our five senses, Locke claims that we can still properly call it a form of internal sensation:

This Source of *Ideas*, every Man has wholly in himself: And though it be not Sense, as having nothing to do with external Objects; yet it is very like it, and might properly enough be call’d internal Sense.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵⁵ *Essay*, I.i.4

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, II.1.iv

Internal sense is traditionally understood as the mechanism that can identify the relevant casual connections between thoughts and sensations. It is according to this interpretation that a perception-like faculty produces connections between ‘introspective objects (a thought or sensation) and introspective states.’⁴⁵⁷ Internal sense is *like* external causal relations between objects and visual systems, but internal function between conscious states. This term is today referred to as the *Inner Sense* view of introspection and is regarded to have originated with Locke.

In a later section of chapter II of the *Essay*, Locke claims that ‘External and Internal Sensation’ as the ‘only passages I can find, of knowledge, to the Understanding,’ Note here that Locke distinguishes *two* passages to knowledge. In the same passage Locke continues:

These alone, as far as I can discover are the Windows by which light is let into this *dark Room*. For, methinks, the *Understanding* is not much unlike a Closet wholly shut from light, with only some little openings left, to let in external visible Resemblances, or *Ideas* of things without; would the Pictures coming into such a dark Room but stay there, and lie so orderly as to be found upon occasion, it should very much resemble the Understanding of a Man, in reference to all Objects of sight, ad the Idea of them.⁴⁵⁸

Here, Locke is likening the human understanding to ‘a Closet wholly shut from light.’ This closet is the state of ignorance, void of knowledge. He also notes that there are

⁴⁵⁷ Gertler, 2014: 387

⁴⁵⁸ *Essay*, II.xi.17

two windows ‘by which light is let in.’ A window usually signifies something that allows us to look *out through* and into the outside world, but Locke uses the analogy of window as something that is letting light and impressions *in*. Here, light symbolises the ideas that come into the closet of understanding. As he further states that these two windows ‘by which light is let into this *dark Room*.’ By analogy then, the dark room *is* the human understanding which has two windows that is letting in ideas: the window of sensation and the window of reflection, or as Locke also calls it in passage IV.ii, ‘*external and internal sense*’.

In summary, the standard take on the analogy of the windows is that they simply imply, according to Locke’s causal theory of perception, that sensitive knowledge is letting ideas in from the external world, which gives us sensory knowledge by the disagreement or agreement of the ideas we get of the external world. In this respect, the inner sense functions in the same way and gives us knowledge about our mind. However, I have here highlighted that if internal perception is, as Locke indeed states, another source letting *in* light in to the dark room, it surely should illuminate the room in the same way as external perception. Therefore we must understand both external and internal perception as ‘original sources’ of ideas.

However, there are two problems here. First, as Samuel Rickless argues, sensitive knowledge does, in fact, not classify as knowledge according to Locke’s own definition.⁴⁵⁹ Locke writes that sensory knowledge is *not as certain* as the knowledge we get from intuition and demonstrative knowledge, but that is still ‘passes under’

⁴⁵⁹ Rickless, 2008

and ‘*deserves the name knowledge.*’⁴⁶⁰ According to Rickless ‘sensitive knowledge’ is therefore better understood as a kind of *assurance*.⁴⁶¹ This leads to a sceptical problem. Since Locke’s definition of knowledge is ‘the perception of the connexion and agreement’ of ideas, it seems like we get no knowledge of the external world apart from our ideas. As Locke states, sensitive knowledge is ‘not altogether so certain, as our intuitive knowledge, or the Deductions of our Reason.’⁴⁶²

Which leads us to the second problem, if inner sense follows the same definition of knowledge then it would seem that it does not classify as knowledge either, since according to internal knowledge we get ideas from the internal workings of our minds, such as ‘*Perception, Thinking, Doubting, Believing, Reasoning, Knowing, Willing*’ etc.⁴⁶³ What we get from these simple ideas is also the agreement and disagreement between the ideas. In this way, internal sense faces the same sceptical problem as external sense; we only know the ideas and not their causes.

Hobbes, for example, does not include reflection as a component or source of knowledge, arguing for a strictly mechanical causal theory of perception where all our ideas are affected upon the body externally. According to Hobbes, external bodies acts upon our senses that gives ‘that which men call sense.’⁴⁶⁴ As such, all knowledge comes from bodies acting externally on to the mind. It is on this point that Cudworth criticises Hobbes for his empiricism, writing:

We grant that the *Evidence* of Particular Bodies, existing Hic & Nunc, without us, doth necessarily depend upon the *Information of Sense*: but yet

⁴⁶⁰ *Essay*, IV.xi.3

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, IV.i.2

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*, IV.xi.3

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, II.i.5

⁴⁶⁴ Hobbes, 1994: 6

nevertheless the *Certainty* of this very *Evidence*, is not from *Sense* alone, but from a *Complication of Reason and Understanding* together with it.⁴⁶⁵

Keith Allen suggests that Cudworth argues that there is a conjunction between sense and reason. It is in the conjunction of sense and reason we find, as Locke argues, these two windows – letting light into the human understanding – and together illuminating the dark room. We can tie this to Locke’s proof of the existence of God, as Allen continues:

As far as Locke is concerned, we can know that the appearance of ideas before the mind must have some cause, because we can know with intuitive certainty that ‘bare nothing can no more produce any real Being, than it can be equal to two right Angles’ (E IV.x.3); this is a central premise in Locke’s argument for the existence of God, and a principle that Locke holds in common with more rationalistic contemporaries like Descartes and Cudworth.⁴⁶⁶

This means that we have the experience of our internal workings of the mind confirmed by the external world. The agreement and disagreement between ideas, are the ideas we are getting from the internal sense or window, which gives us the direct experience of perceiving that we perceive. Put differently, it is through *our* internal sense that we perceive that we perceive. According to Allen, it is this experience of perceiving that we perceive, combined with the ideas of the existence of things without the mind, that gives us knowledge. These two windows (internal and external sense) fills the empty room with light. In this way, ideas put together can be made into knowledge. As Allen concludes:

⁴⁶⁵ *TIS*, 1678: 637

⁴⁶⁶ Allen, 2013: 264

Sensitive knowledge therefore consists in perceiving the agreement of the reflective idea of actual sensation—the awareness of the mental operation of receiving ideas from without—with the idea of actual real existence: the idea of the existence of something distinct from us that causes us to receive those ideas.⁴⁶⁷

Essentially these points are made by Cudworth against Hobbes, in support of the rationalistic claim that knowledge of the existence of finite particulars requires the conjunction of sense and reason. Furthermore, as Allen claims, ‘Even though Hobbes does not recognize reflection as a distinct form of experience, the point might seem to generalize to Locke’s more nuanced view of sensory experience as a conjunction of sense and reflection.’⁴⁶⁸ As we know, in contrast to the Cambridge Platonists, Locke rejects innate ideas but not the concept of inner sense. In this way Locke’s theory of perception is more similar to Cudworth than to Hobbes’s. As Allen also explains:

By introducing reflection as a source of ideas, Locke is a more expansive empiricist than Hobbes before him, or Berkeley and Hume after. This allows Locke to meet one of Cudworth’s objections to Hobbes’s empiricism: that since we do not get the ideas of life, cognition, knowledge, reason, memory, volition, appetite, or even sense, from the external senses, then there must be an innate source of ideas over and above outer experience.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁷ Allen, 2013: 257

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 263

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 259

This entails, according to Allen, that both Locke and Cudworth held the important case of having *both* inner and outer experience. That is, our inner experience counts just as much as our sensory experience of the external world. I argue that this fits my wider, more complex understanding of Locke's concept of reason. Furthermore, it is in the combination of the inner light (God's gift of reason) and the outer sense that humans can achieve the special status of *knowledge*. If it does not classify as knowledge, it gives way to an apparent inconsistency. First, how can we trust our sense if the only access we have of the external world is through our ideas. It seems we have no access to the world at all, except our own ideas. Secondly, if we look at Locke's definition of sensitive knowledge, as knowledge gained through the perception of the agreement or disagreement of ideas, it seems that we can have no actual knowledge of the external world. This is because our only access to the external world is through understating of the ideas and not direct knowledge. But, as Allen points out, if there is a problem with sensitive knowledge, then there is just as much of a problem with 'sensitive judgment.'⁴⁷⁰ This turns us to Locke's concept of inner sense in relation to what he calls 'sensitive knowledge'. If sensitive knowledge is not classified as knowledge, then we must also say that we have no knowledge of anything external to our minds. If sensitive knowledge cannot consist solely in perceiving agreements between ideas, and must instead consist in the agreement of our ideas with the objects that they are ideas *of*, then the same ought to be true of knowledge of the existence of God and ourselves. As Allen explains:

Although one of the central conclusions of the *Essay* is that 'the Candle, that is set up in us, shines bright enough for all our Purposes' (E i.i.5), Locke is at

⁴⁷⁰ Allen, 2013: 254

pains to insist that we can be absolutely certain of our own existence by intuition (E iV.ix), and know of God's existence by demonstration (E iV.x).⁴⁷¹

According to Hobbes theory of perception there is for example no distinction between the natures of the human mind to the animal mind, or for example an oyster. The only difference we see in Hobbes is the number of external impressions that can be made, or impressed, upon the being. In the case of an oyster these impressions are very limited, and in the case of a human being there are multiple impressions. Locke is therefore making a distinction here between what classifies as knowledge and mere perception. As Locke also writes, '*Perception*, I believe, is, in some degree, *in all sorts of Animals*' (II.ix.12). We can take Allen's point here further as Locke describes' oysters as 'having some small dull perception, whereby they are distinguished from perfect insensibility.'⁴⁷² The oyster is an example that Locke uses as a case that does not need the *combination* of sensation and reflection, as is required in us:

We may, I think, from the Make of an Oyster, or Cockle, reasonably conclude, that it has not so many, nor so quick Senses as a Man [...] What good would Sight and Hearing do to a creature that cannot move itself to or from the objects wherein at a distance it perceives good or evil?⁴⁷³

Locke continues that the quickness of sensation might even be inconvenient to an animal 'that must lie still.'⁴⁷⁴ The Oyster therefore experiences only external

⁴⁷¹ Allen, 2013: 255

⁴⁷² *Essay*, II.ix.14

⁴⁷³ Op. cit.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, II.ix.13

perception. Locke must separate between perception and knowledge because only external perception is combined with *inner sense*. I argue, therefore, that we can therefore fit Locke's theory of perception, with his overall conception of reason as an *endowment by God specifically to humans*. Here, Locke differs from Hobbes, because according to Hobbes, Humans are no more than highly complex oysters, since it is purely mechanical external factors that cause perception in humans. For Locke humans differ from oysters because oysters are less complex, only having simple ideas from external sense. This, however, cannot classify as knowledge without internal sense,. Locke's theory of knowledge can, therefore, be viewed as closer to that of Cudworth than Hobbes.

6.4 Locke's Proof of God's Existence

In the light of a Hobbesian reading of Locke, an especially puzzling part of the *Essay* is Locke's proof of the knowledge existence of God he presents in book IV.¹⁰ For, if Locke is arguing for a strict empiricist epistemology where all knowledge can only come from the senses, then how can humans come to know God, as he later claims, to *the highest degree* of certainty.

I am now going to understand Locke's proof of God's existence in the light of a more moderate empiricism – where the human understanding, that is, with the internal sense is a source of knowledge. Locke's proof can be described in three stages: first, he demonstrates the existence of an eternal creative Being, secondly, he demonstrates that the eternal being is the source of thinking and all other powers and perfections.

Lastly, he demonstrates that this cogitative thinking being cannot be material.⁴⁷⁵

Locke combines the cosmological proof of the unmoved mover with the ontological proof, from the state of being, and adds a unique premise, namely *thinking being*.⁴⁷⁶

That is, he argues that *I* can know God, not just from my very existence but from my very *thinking* existence, from what it means to be a thinking, *conscious* being. This is why there's a strong link, as I argue in the Chapter 7, between Locke's demonstration of our knowledge of God and his definition of personal identity.

My aim here is not to evaluate the validity of Locke's proof of God's existence but to give an explanation and analysis of how Locke would have explained his proof, in the light of my new understanding of Locke's concept of reason, since Locke affirms:

Though God has given us no innate *Ideas* of himself; though he has stamped no original Characters on our Minds, wherein we may read his Being: yet having furnished us with those faculties our Minds are endowed with, he hath not left himself without witness: since we have Sense, Perception, and Reason and cannot want a clear proof of him as long as we carry ourselves about us.⁴⁷⁷

Locke's first premise echoes the famous standpoint of Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*.⁴⁷⁸

Both Locke and Descartes are convinced of our certainty of our knowledge of God as 'the highest and most incontestable truth'. However, I argue that Locke can be understood as taking Descartes' position in reverse. As Descartes begins, I think, therefore *I am*. Descartes infers from thinking that he exists, while Locke begins by

⁴⁷⁵ See also Jolley, 2015: 85

⁴⁷⁶ Ayers, 1981: 170

⁴⁷⁷ *Essay*, IV.X.1

⁴⁷⁸ Jolley, 2015:85

stating: *I am*, therefore I think. The *I am* in Locke stands for a state *prior* to thinking (i.e. having ideas) but is just the purest state of being *conscious*. It is an *experience* of being of being oneself. Therefore, Locke writes that we have knowledge of Being from our *intuitive* knowledge of our *own self*: ‘I think it is beyond Question, that *Man has a clear perception of his own Being*; he knows certainly, that he exists, and that he is something.’⁴⁷⁹ Locke thus defines intuitive knowledge as a result of our *reflection*:

For if we will reflect on our own ways of Thinking, we shall find, that sometimes the Mind perceives the Agreement or Disagreement of two *Ideas* immediately by themselves, without the intervention of any other: And this, I think, we may call *intuitive Knowledge*. For in this, the Mind is at no pains of proving or examining, but perceives the Truth, as the Eye doth light, only by being directed towards it. Thus the Mind perceives, that *White* is not *Black*, That a *Circle* is not a *Triangle*, that *Three* are more than *Two*, and equal to *One* and *Two*. Such kind of Truths, the Mind perceives at the first sight of the *Ideas* together, by bare *Intuition*, without the intervention of any other *Idea*; and this kind of knowledge is the clearest, and most certain that humane Frailty is capable of.⁴⁸⁰

Therefore, the knowledge of our *own existence* is intuitive because ‘we perceive it so clearly, and so certainly, that it neither needs nor is capable of any proof.’ The main function of intuition provides us with proof of our own existence. As Locke states:

⁴⁷⁹ Essay, IV.x.2

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., IV.ii.1

‘Experience then convinces us, that we have an intuitive Knowledge of our own Existence, and an internal infallible Perception that we are.’⁴⁸¹

Though Locke’s set up is very similar to Descartes as they both derive God’s existence from our own existence. Locke writes on the knowledge of existence: ‘I say then, that we have the knowledge of *our own existence* by Intuition; of the *Existence of GOD* by Demonstration; and of other Things by Sensation.’⁴⁸² According to Locke’s account it is from our *intuitive* knowledge and constant experience of our own being that we deduce the existence of God. I argue here that on Locke’s account our experience of our *own* being seems to *precede* even the thinking process and the ideas we get from sensation and reflection. Thinking is a result of our very being – not the other way round. In this way, it can either be argued that Locke set up his proof in direct opposition to Descartes, or that he simply takes one step further.

Another important difference between Locke and Descartes is Descartes’ appeal to innate ideas. Since we can establish in ourselves the existence of a finite and imperfect mind, Descartes argues that we can come to know the infinite and perfect mind of God. Descartes then proceeds to argue for the existence of God from the very *idea* we have of the supreme God. Descartes’ God is like a craftsman who has given his stamp imprinted on our minds. In *Meditations* 5 Descartes proves God’s existence using the ontological argument proving the idea of God and his attributes to be true in the same way as ideas of mathematical truths are. Therefore, with the innate idea of God’s eternity and perfection we can establish the existence and essence of a finite

⁴⁸¹ *Essay*, IV.ix.3

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, IV.ix.2

and imperfect mind in ourselves and we can thus come to know the infinite and perfect mind of God.

Descartes uses the same argument to show how we can also come to know that matter exists and what its essence consists of. Because God is a distinct and true *idea*, God and matter for Descartes are two distinct substances. Although there are three different substances identified in Descartes, the third is the human soul, which is distinct from both God and the Body. However, this creates the problem of substance dualism, as Elizabeth of Bohemia points out in a letter to Descartes. 'I beseech you,' she writes, 'to tell me how the soul of a man (since it is but a thinking substance) can determine the spirits of the body to produce voluntary actions.'⁴⁸³ What she means to question is how an immaterial substance can by force move a material, physical object. To this, Descartes fails to give a satisfactory answer. Locke, however, gives a puzzling but, as I argue, highly original solution to this problem. Locke criticises both immaterialism and materialism, and he argues that we know as little of both of them, on the basis that a substance is something 'we know not.' However, I argue that, per definition, Locke deems a materialist explanation to God *and* the mind impossible, on the basis of the 17th century definition of matter - shall be argued in part II. Let us first turn to my exposition of Locke's proof of the existence of God.

There is therefore something about my *own* rational constitution that corresponds to also having knowledge of God. Locke's God proof can be put into two stages, first stage he argues for God as the source of creation. In the second part Locke argues that

⁴⁸³ Atherton, 1994: 11

this eternal source must contain all the powers that the creation has. Locke's proof can be formulated like this:

P1 I exist

P2 What was not from eternity had a beginning

P3 What had a beginning must be produced by something else.

C1 There is an eternal being, an eternal source, from which everything else comes. [From P1, P2, and P3]

P4 If a thing has any powers, its source has those powers too.

C2 The eternal source is most powerful. [From C1 and P4]

P5 If a thing is knowing, its source is knowing too.

C3 The eternal source is most knowing. [From C1 and P5]

C4 There is an eternal being that is most powerful and knowing and the source of everything else.

After presenting his proof in IV.X and concluding that there is an eternal being that is most powerful and knowing and the source of everything else that exist, Locke then argues in the remains of the chapter that this God cannot be material. However, this is a development of premise 5. Locke calls the eternal being for 'eternal source' and not only do I know about myself that I am, but also that I am thinking. Since the original source of all existence, inducing my existence, also has all the powers that are in existence, it must also be thinking. Therefore, Locke concludes, there is an eternal being that is most powerful and knowing and the source of everything else.

The structure of the first three premises is on the basis of the argument of there being a first creator. He repeats that argument three times, first for there being a creator, second for there being a all powerful creator, and thirdly for there being a all knowing Creator. His proof has four conclusions, according to the first (P1, P2, and P3), there is an eternal being, an eternal source, from which everything else comes. From the second (C1 and P4), this eternal source must also be most powerful. And third (C1 and P5), this eternal source is also most knowing. The fourth and final conclusion then, Locke claims that we can therefore *know* that here is an eternal being that is most powerful and knowing and the source of everything else.

However, the term ‘Knowledge’ in premise 5 can be interpreted in two ways. Either that it is all knowledge, i.e. God would literally to *know* everything, or that it is the *capacity* to know. This I think is not clear, but I shall take it to mean the latter, that God is the most *wise* being, this would be aligned with also being ‘most intelligent’ since intelligent does not necessarily entail having the most content of knowledge. Based on Locke’s argument from the chapter on powers, I am going to argue that Locke takes knowledge to be the highest form of power, that is God’s highest powers stems from the highest form of wisdom.

My aim here is not to evaluate the logic of Locke’s argument or the validity of his argument, but the underlying assumptions that Locke make that are fundamental to properly understand the proof and to see how it fits with other parts of his philosophy. However, in order to examine Locke’s argument, further and the meaning behind

these premises I have made a construction of Locke's reasoning in 6 steps instead, they are as follows:

step 1. We have knowledge of *real* Being from our self

step 2. Non-entity cannot produce real Being

step 3. Being must have been something from Eternity

step 4. The Eternal Being must be all Powerful

step 5. The Eternal Being must be all Knowing

step 6. Knowledge (i.e. thought, intelligence) cannot be produced by matter

Step one refers to premise 1, 'I exist' and Step 3-5 are derived from Locke's three first conclusions. Step 6 concerns Locke's addition to his proof that thinking cannot be material; it is not part of the proof of God's existence but a statement based on the very definition of what matter is. In this way, Locke avoids the concept of substances as irrelevant to the definition of God. However, in doing this Locke does *not* argue that God is immaterial, or that thought is material. On the contrary, I argue that on the basis of the definition according to theories of matter that were available to Locke in his time, thought could not be material, and therefore nor can God.

As Locke states quite clearly, according to step 1 that we have knowledge of Being: 'I think it is beyond Question, that *Man has a clear perception of his own Being*; he knows certainly, that he exists, and that he is something.'⁴⁸⁴ The experience we have of our own being is intuitive in the sense that it goes beyond any particular experience such as thinking, feeling, reasoning and sensation. It is therefore the most

⁴⁸⁴ *Essay*, IV.x.2

fundamental experience, which precedes the process of gaining ideas, that is first, *I am* this is intuitive, therefore, secondly, *I think*, and using reason I gain ideas and knowledge. Locke proceeds in his proof with in step 2 that a non-entity cannot produce any real being, this, ‘Man knows by intuitive certainty, that bare *nothing can no more produce any real being, that it can be equal to two right Angles*’.⁴⁸⁵ In the same way as Locke states that it is intuitive to know that ‘white is not black’, we can also say it is intuitive to know that something that is *not* cannot *be*. This is based on the argument that ‘nothing comes nothing’, meaning, something that *is* must therefore be created by *something*.

We have also seen Locke make a note of this argument from his reading of Cudworth in 1682 on ‘*ex nihilo nihil*’ and arguments against the atheist.⁴⁸⁶ Jonathan Bennett points out that this argument is based on a misunderstanding in the logic of ‘nothing’ and is endorsed by Descartes and also followed by Leibniz. Bennett writes ‘It is eerie to see these men—so much abler than we are—confidently mishandling something that we easily get right.’⁴⁸⁷ Pointing out that we have Hume to thank for this. I am not sure it is that easy, and argue that it still depends on what is meant by ‘nothing’. However, Bennett writes that this mistake enables ‘to ignore the possibility that matter should come into existence *ex nihilo* without being *produced* at all.’⁴⁸⁸

If we ignore the reasons Descartes and Leibniz made this ‘mistake’ and focus on Locke and his source in this case which we know is at least to some degree,

⁴⁸⁵ *Essay*, IV.x.3

⁴⁸⁶ Aaron and Gibb, 1936: 118 (I have also looked at this manuscript in the Bodleian Library: MS Locke f. 6)

⁴⁸⁷ Bennett, 2005: 163 See Bennett’s footnote and cf. Hume 1983: 1.3.3

⁴⁸⁸ *Op. cit.*

Cudworth's reference to the idea that nothing can come from nothing. Cudworth's reference is based on Plato. Who writes in *Phaedo*: 'if all things that have life should die, and, when they had died, the dead should remain in that condition, is it not inevitable that at last all things would be dead'⁴⁸⁹ By nothing then in a Platonic sense, is meant death, and the fact that from something dead can no living thing come – the argument 'nothing can come from nothing' can be rephrased no living thing can come from something that is by definition dead. Death is taken here then as the complete void of existence all together, not in the sense of an Epicurean death, which just a return to the eternal dispersion of atoms. According to Locke Atoms, and matter lacks in power, just like Cudworth argues, life, is something that directs atoms, not something that is inherent or that they themselves constitute. Locke then proceeds his argument to step 3, concluding that there must have been *something* (active and living) from eternity:

If we therefore know there is some real Being, and that Non-entity cannot produce any real Being, it is an evident demonstration, that from eternity there has been something; Since what was not from Eternity, had a Beginning; and what had a Beginning, must be produced by something else.⁴⁹⁰

Nevertheless, however problematic step 2 and 3 are for Locke, they are not crucial for my argument. However, bearing them in mind, be patient as I shall move on swiftly on to step 4, in which Locke states that 'the Eternal Being must be all Powerful'. I argue that this is the most crucial premise, as Locke writes:

⁴⁸⁹ Plato, *Phaedo* 72c

⁴⁹⁰ *Essay*, IV.x.3

Next, it is evident, that what had its Being and Beginning from another, must also have all that which is in, and belongs to its Being from another too. All the Powers it has, must be owing to, and received from the same Source. This eternal Source then of all being must also be the Source and Original of all Power; and so *this eternal being must also be the most powerful.*⁴⁹¹

I would here like to draw particular attention to Locke's, often over-looked statement: 'that what had its Being and Beginning from another, must also have all that which is in, and belongs to its Being from another too.' This can be interpreted in two ways. One way by analogy of human creation, by which it is easy to find many examples where the created object does not contain all the properties of its creator. If I create a bowl of clay, I create something that does not contain any of my properties, as I am not made out of clay. The bowl will only contains the properties of the clay, that is, the *material* that I have *used* for the throwing. Therefore, it would appear that God could have loads of qualities that his creation does not contain. This seems problematic for Locke.

The second way to interpret this passage, which I propose is a less problematic for Locke, albeit more complex, is based on the analogy of the Platonic conception of 'seed'. Rather than being based on the creation made by inferior human beings, we are after all, talking of the creation by God, who is a far superior being. Let me refer back to the ancient sources I gave in Chapter 3 and the definition of the divine Logos.

⁴⁹¹ *Essay*, IV.x.4

According to this definition, the Logos is the seed of God's creation. As it contains the 'seed' of its creator that is then transmitted to the rest of the creation, in particular to human beings. This is the concept of reason understood as a seed, of, in Plato's terms, the 'divine seed,' in which the rational soul partakes. The Stoics called this the 'Logos spermatickos.' Seed is defined by the founder of the Stoic school, Zeno of Citicum, as 'a thing having a nature capable of producing other things of the same nature as the thing from which it has been separated.'⁴⁹² This was the cosmic Logos (or Pnuma) operating as the seminal Logos (i.e. seed) in the natural world partaking in all souls and bodies.⁴⁹³ It is by the seminal Logos that everything was upheld and generated; it is the beginning and perpetuation of everything. In the same way, Logos is connected to law. In this way, the analogy of seed corresponds to both to the Platonic idea of creation from the craftsman creating man from a 'copy and pattern,' and the biblical reference Gen. 1.27 'man created in the image of God,' that is the word of God is implanted in humans.⁴⁹⁴

The *seed* therefore corresponds to the rational faculty of human beings, that is, our *Reason* and unites each individual with the creator as the seed of the divine reason (*the Logos*). For example, as also seen in Cicero, directly influenced by the Stoics, as he writes, Reason 'unites men, and what natural fellowship there is among them [...] Law is the highest reason, *implanted* in Nature'.⁴⁹⁵ The Divine Logos is implanting in human nature at the creation, and the seed is thus each human individual's *reason*. As we have seen, Philo argues by using the immanent Logos as God's *will* within in the

⁴⁹² Yonge and Seddon, 2007: 105 cf. *DL* 7.159

⁴⁹³ Hillar, 2012: 145

⁴⁹⁴ The same theme is also seen in the New Testament: Matthew 13, Christ's parable of the Sower in, and the Galatians 3, 'if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed.'

⁴⁹⁵ Cicero quoted in Hillar, 2012: 146; See also Cicero *de Legibus*, in *De Re Publica*, I.V.16; I.V.19;IV.II.23; I.XV.42 see translation by C.W. Keyes (1988)

cycle of nature, God is ‘immortalizing the kinds, and giving them a share of eternity’:

On this account he not only guided and urged the beginning on towards the end, but caused the end to turn back to the beginning. Out of the plants emerged the fruit, as an end out of a beginning, while out of the fruit that encloses the seed within itself the plant emerges again, as a beginning out of an end.⁴⁹⁶

This is also a conception seen amongst the Cambridge Platonists who held that the ‘seed’ was implicit in the notion of ‘deiformity’ of human nature.⁴⁹⁷ The conception of the seed is also connected to the ‘Word of God,’ as implanted in the human soul. Cudworth uses this analogy in the *True Intellectual System*, where he describes the spermatic principle, which he defines as:

The spermatic reason is not a pure mind or perfect intellect, nor any kind of pure soul; but something which depends upon it, being as it were an effulgency or irradiation from both together, mind and soul, or soul affected according to mind, generating the same as lower kind of life.⁴⁹⁸

By a ‘lower kind of life’, Cudworth means his concept of ‘plastic’ nature, as he writes, ‘though the plastic Nature be the Lowest of all Lives, nevertheless, since it is a *Life* it must needs be *Incorporeal*; all Life being such.’⁴⁹⁹ Furthermore, More writes that the *seed* literally *is* the Word of God, the incorruptible, pure part of human

⁴⁹⁶ *Opif.* 44

⁴⁹⁷ Patrides, 1969: 20

⁴⁹⁸ *TIS*, 1678: 163

⁴⁹⁹ *TIS*, 1678: 163

nature, God's 'eternal Wisdom and incorruptible Word; the only incorruptible Seed.' In the same way, the seed is immortal, as God 'sets his Seed of everlasting Life in our hearts.'⁵⁰⁰ In Cudworth, the analogy of seed figure as an important analogy in his sermons: 'the second Adam' who does not only fill the world with 'Holinesse, and meer Imaginary Righteousnesse' but must also convey 'an *imortall seed* of Grace into the hearts of true Believers.'⁵⁰¹ This means that the 'immortal seed of Grace' *is the same as* the human reason. And Christ *is* the Divine Logos, incarnated, as Whichcote writes: 'Christ, was nothing, but *Divinity dwelling in a Tabernacle of flesh*, and God himself immediately acting a humane nature; he came into the World to kindle here that *Divine life* amongst men'.⁵⁰²

Now, if we read again Locke's passage: 'what had its Being and Beginning from another, must also have all that which is in, and belongs to its Being from another too...' I argue that we must place this statement in a much wider context of Locke's intellectual milieu and take into account his contemporary perspective and the intellectual pursuits of those that would have affected him. We know that Locke held Whichcote's *Sermons* in the highest regards, and that he at the time of planning this proof read Cudworth. In this respect, Locke is most certainly referring to God's act of creation, which means that the creation must contain the *seed* of God. That is the maker's mark, in a Platonic sense. According to this interpretation, Locke can also accept the special status of reason as an ultimate link between the created human individual and God. An idea we have seen reflected in both Platonic and Stoic philosophy, in Philo and in the Early Church fathers and, most significantly and

⁵⁰⁰ Patrides, 1969: 208 More's *The Purification of a Christian Man's Soul*

⁵⁰¹ Cudworth, 1647: 32

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 33

contemporary to Locke, in the Cambridge Platonists. The analogy of the seed corresponds to the idea of ‘image’ – where God created human beings in his own image (see Genesis, 1:27) – and thereby gave humans the properties that images him most: wisdom - or at least the capacity there of. In Chapter 7, I shall develop this notion further in the context Locke’s theology as he also, in his later published work, the Reasonableness of Christianity argues that Jesus Christ is the ‘second Adam’, restorer of the image (the seed!) and eternal life in human nature.

For now, let us turn to step 5 of Locke’s argument for the existence of God, that the eternal being must also be the first *intelligent* being. As Locke states:

Again, a Man finds in himself *Perception*, and *Knowledge*. We have then got one step further; and we are certain now, that there is not one some Being, but some knowing intelligent Being in the world [...] if it be said, there was a time when no Being had any knowledge, when that eternal Being was void of all Understanding. I reply, that then it was impossible there should ever have been any knowledge. It being as impossible, that Things wholly void of knowledge, and operating blindly, and without any Perception, would produce a knowing Being, as it is impossible that a Triangle should make it self three Angles bigger than two right ones.⁵⁰³

Here, Locke is building on what I argued earlier in previous passage on Locke’s epistemology reconsidered: it is through the combination of perception the experience of our own being, and of the world that we can come to the conclusion that there must

⁵⁰³ *Essay*, IV.x.5

be ‘some knowing intelligent being in the world.’ According to Locke’s epistemology, this is a truth that we know due to two things: Our intuitive knowledge of our own existence and the *experience* of our own existence. Building on this, Locke concludes that God must be the eternal, intelligent, being, and source of all our intelligence, i.e. reason. This leads us to Locke’s final step 6 in which he states that this thinking intelligent being *cannot* be material:

For it is as repugnant to the *Idea* of senseless Matter, that it should put into it self Sense, Perception, and Knowledge, as it is repugnant to the *Idea* of a Triangle, that it should put into it self greater Angles than two right ones.⁵⁰⁴

According to Locke, knowledge (i.e. thought, intelligence) is not material. I will return to this argument of Locke part two of this chapter, where I argue that he holds that thought is not, and cannot be material. For the very reason that it does not matter how much physical matter we have, it could never think in itself. Furthermore, he argues that pure matter cannot, per definition, think. As Locke assuming the definition of matter as something completely inert, and lacking internal power, he explains:

For example: let us suppose the matter of the next pebble we meet with eternal, closely united, and the parts firmly at rest together; if there were no other being in the world, must it not eternally remain so, a dead inactive lump?

⁵⁰⁴ *Essay*, IV.x.5

Is it possible to conceive it can add motion to itself, being purely matter, or produce anything?⁵⁰⁵

Locke here compares matter to an inert pebble. How indeed could something completely void of thought, intelligence or movement do anything other than remain what it is? A pebble. From whence does its powers come from if they are not inherent as well? As Locke continues in the same passage: ‘Matter, then, by its own strength, cannot produce in itself so much as motion.’ So even if we add motion to matter, ‘whatever changes it might produce of figure and bulk, could never produce thought,’ they would knock and impel but the world would eternally remain ‘a dead inactive lump’, like a pebble.⁵⁰⁶ Furthermore, Locke appeals ‘to everyone’s own thoughts’ asking, ‘whether he cannot as easily conceive matter produced by nothing, as thought to be produced by pure matter.’ Therefore, Locke concludes that God (or, reason and thought) is not material, for without God, not even matter would be produced:

So that, if we will suppose nothing first or eternal, matter can never begin to be: if we suppose bare matter without motion, eternal, motion can never begin to be: if we suppose only matter and motion first, or eternal, thought can never begin to be.⁵⁰⁷

This is because Locke’s rational proof of God’s existence based on the intuitive knowledge we have of our own existence. Thus he concludes:

⁵⁰⁵ Essay, IV.x.10

⁵⁰⁶ Op. cit.

⁵⁰⁷ Op. cit.

Thus from the Consideration of our selves, and what we infallibly find in our own Constitutions, our Reason leads us to the knowledge of this certain and evident Truth, That there is an eternal, most powerful, and most knowing Being; which whether any one will please to call God, matters not.⁵⁰⁸

I defend a connection here in Locke on two points: First, that his epistemology is consistent with his conception of intuitive knowledge – the experience we have of our own existence – and the knowledge of the existence of God, secondly this means that Locke must hold that thought, per definition, is not and cannot be material. Our knowledge of God is therefore, according to Locke, attained through *the gift of reason*. In the next section, I shall draw some parallels between Cudworth and Locke's proof of the existence of God.

6.5 Knowledge of God - through the light of reason and meditation

In *the True intellectual system of the Universe* (1678), Cudworth writes:

In like manner, though the existence of a God or perfect being cannot be demonstrated a priori, yet may we notwithstanding, from our very selves (whose existence we cannot doubt of), and from what is contained in our own minds, or otherwise consequent from him, by undeniable principles of reason, necessarily infer his existence.⁵⁰⁹

Cudworth, like Locke, does not have an *a priori* proof of God, but argues that it is

⁵⁰⁸ *Essay*, IV.x.6

⁵⁰⁹ *TIS*, 1678: 373-374

demonstrable from our own existence. It seems that Locke is directly echoing Cudworth who also writes that we can prove God from ‘our very selves,’ ‘whose existence we cannot doubt of.’ I argue that there is an important crossover between Locke and Cudworth’s argument against atheism, and enthusiasm, in particularly as seen in their common understanding of the term ‘reason’. As we have seen in previous chapter, this must also play a significant role when we look at Locke’s epistemology and conception of the existence of God.

Locke states that the *idea* of God is naturally deducible ‘through the common light of Reason.’⁵¹⁰ The existence of God is evident through the exercise of our reason: the very *idea* of deity is ‘agreeable to the common light of Reason, and naturally deducible from every part of our Knowledge.’ But this is not done through the common notions or that the light of reason gives us ‘common ideas.’ Locke’s definition of reason here therefore seems, again, similar to the Cambridge Platonists, as something that can be activated through endeavour and simply through making *use* of our faculties. As Locke states:

[I]t seems to me plainly to prove, That the truest and best Notions Men have of God, were not imprinted, but acquired by thought and meditation, and a right use of their Faculties: since the wise and considerate Men of the World, by a right and careful employment of their Thoughts and Reason, attained true Notions in this as well as other things...⁵¹¹

⁵¹⁰ *Essay*, I.iv.9

⁵¹¹ *Essay*, I.iv.15: ‘...whilst the lazy and inconsiderate part of Men, making the far greater number, took up their Notions by chance, from common Tradition and vulgar Conceptions, without much beating their Heads about them.’

In particular, I would like to draw attention here to Locke's use of the term 'meditation.' What is he actually referring to here? An important bit of the discussion, is that Locke is here stating that knowledge of God through is (not so surprisingly) *not* imprinted *but* instead *acquired* by the 'right use' of our faculties: that is through 'thought and meditation.' I argue that what Locke is referring to is the exercise of our *inner sense*, as explained in the section on Locke's epistemology. Furthermore, Locke uses the term '*meditation*' in several other places both in the *Essay*, in the *Reasonableness* and in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. Locke also writes that 'common notions' has led to 'Odd, low, and pitiful ideas of God common among men.'⁵¹² Therefore, knowledge of God *requires* the particular effort from one's *individual* thought and endeavour. This is what makes us who we are. In a letter to Molyneux in 1695, Locke writes:

Meditating by one's self, is like digging in the mine; it often, perhaps, brings up maiden earth, which never came near the light before; but whether it contains any metal in it, is never so well tried as in conversation with a knowing judicious friend who carries about with him the true touchstone, which is love of truth in a clear-thinking head.⁵¹³

I would like to draw the reader's particular attention to Locke's use of thought and meditation as a form of '*right* use of their faculties' (my emphasis). The 'right use of faculties' Locke contrasts with those who are lazy, and does not make use of their own reason but instead follow tradition and other people's conceptions:

⁵¹² *Essay*, I.iii.17

⁵¹³ Locke to Molyneux Oates, 26 April 1695 quoted in Knox, 1807: 261

[W]hilst the lazy and inconsiderate part of Men, making far the greater number, took up their Notions by chance, from common Tradition and vulgar Conceptions.⁵¹⁴

Locke also writes on wrong assent, and error that there are those who just is in want of the will to use their reason properly:

Their hot pursuit of pleasure, or constant drudgery in business, engages some men's thoughts elsewhere: laziness and oscitancy in general, or a particular aversion for books, study and meditation, keep others from any serious thoughts at all⁵¹⁵

Since knowledge of per definition requires *intellectual* labour (through sensitive knowledge and reason combined), a rational proof that would convince anyone seems to spoil the efforts. Indeed, this was a belief Locke himself lived most decidedly after. He even admits, in a letter to van Limborch from 1695, how his biblical studies led to an almost spiritual experience:

From an intent and careful reading of the New Testament the constitution of the New Covenant and the doctrine of the Gospel opened up to me as it appeared to me brighter than the noontide light ...⁵¹⁶

⁵¹⁴ *Essay*, I.iv.15

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, IV.xx.6

⁵¹⁶ De Beer, L1901

This, I should add, in Locke's view the exercise of reason is also part of what God *intended* for us, as he states that otherwise he would not have given us this faculty in the first place. As Locke states: 'God has not been so sparing to men to make them barely two-legged creatures, and left it to Aristotle to make them rational'⁵¹⁷ Locke continues, 'God has been more bountiful to mankind than so. He has given them a mind that can reason, (without being instructed in methods of syllogizing).'⁵¹⁸ As Locke states in his introduction to the *Essay*:

Men have Reason to be well satisfied with what God hath thought fit for them, since he hath given them [...] Whatsoever is necessary for the Conveniences of Life and Information of Virtue; and has put within the reach of their Discovery, the comfortable Provision for this life, and the Way that leads to a better.⁵¹⁹

Locke does not attempt to prove the existence of God, and nowhere does he say that it is possible – but his so-called proof is intended to demonstrate *how* we come to *know* God. Locke demonstrated what is 'the means to discover and know him.'⁵²⁰

In July 1680, Locke wrote some reflections on how God's omnipotence is 'not a perfection' unless regulated by his wisdom and goodness.⁵²¹ He then wrote in 1681: 'That there is a God, and *what* God is, nothing can discover to us but natural

⁵¹⁷ *Essay*, IV.xvii.4

⁵¹⁸ *Op. cit.*

⁵¹⁹ *Essay*, I.i.5: 'They have light enough to lead them to the Knowledge of their Makes, and the sight of their own Duties. [...]if they will boldly quarrel with their own Constitution, and throw away the Blessings their Hands are fill'd with, because they are not big enough to grasp everything.'

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, IV.vii.11

⁵²¹ Ms. Locke f.4 p. 163

reason.⁵²² Ideas about God derive from simple ideas from sensation and reflection – reason tells us nothing about God’s substance or essence, then, but, just about his attributes. As Locke states in the *Essay*:

God in his own essence incognisable. For it is infinity, which, joined to our ideas of existence, power, knowledge, &c., makes that complex idea, whereby we represent to ourselves, the best we can, the Supreme Being.⁵²³

Therefore, Locke goes on stating that the ideas we have of relations are often clearer than the ideas are ‘often clearer than of the subjects related.’ So a relation is more knowable even than the essence of God:

This further may be considered concerning *Relation*, That though it be not contained in the real existence of Things, but something extraneous and superinduced, yet the ideas which relative words stand for are often clearer and more distinct than of those substances to which they do belong. The notion we have of a father or brother is a great deal clearer and more distinct than that we have of a man; or, if you will, paternity is a thing whereof it is easier to have a clear idea, than of humanity; and I can much easier conceive what a friend is, than what God; because the knowledge of one action, or one simple idea, is oftentimes sufficient to give me the notion of a relation; but to the knowing of any substantial being, an accurate collection of sundry ideas is necessary.⁵²⁴

⁵²² Quoted in Griffin, 1992: 109 Cf. *Essay*, II.Xxiii.1

⁵²³ *Essay*, II.xxiii.35

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*, II.xxv.8

It is therefore by knowing the relation and dependence that we have to God, that we also come to know our duties. Locke defines relations as something that enables us to take our knowledge *beyond* the object itself:

Besides the ideas, whether simple or complex, that the mind has of things as they are in themselves, there are others it gets from their comparison one with another. The understanding, in the consideration of anything, is not confined to that precise object: it can carry an idea as it were beyond itself, or at least look beyond it, to see how it stands in conformity to any other.⁵²⁵

Our physical senses relate to the world that everyone has equal access to and provide the set of knowledge and ideas of the things that exists outside us. According to Locke, we also have an internal sensation that is limited to our personal reflections and experiences, the internal landscape that is unique and exclusive to every person's conscious mind. This is the experience of our own thinking being. The conscious, intuitive experience of our own thinking being proves that there also exists a greater eternal thinking being. As Locke holds that knowledge is based on experience, he thinks it is just as irrational to deny the existence of the internal operations our minds, as it is to deny the reality of our external experiences. In fact, as we have seen for Locke, the most certain knowledge we have is the intuitive knowledge of the operations of our own mind. This is the experience we have of our own thinking being.

Now, I shall turn to the second problem of Locke's so-called agnosticism of substances which is often taken for epistemic skepticism. This agnosticism is a

⁵²⁵ *Essay*, II.xxv.8

problem as Locke asserts in his proof of God's existence that—for all we know of God—God must also be *immaterial*. This seems inconsistent with other statements about substances, and the most cited example being his suggestion on that God may superadd thought to matter. However, I argue that even if Locke is agnostic about the degree to which we can attain knowledge of the real substances, he does not offer a reason to deny the reality of them, i.e. that material and immaterial substances both exist. He states that we can no more conclude the non-existence of spirit as the existence of body.⁵²⁶ Since we do not know what the substance of a thing is, we cannot be able to know what God is either as a substance. In IV.x.12, we find that Locke gives the eternal cogitative Being attributes, based on our own constitution prior to the essence:

Though this discovery of the necessary existence of an eternal Mind does sufficiently lead us into the knowledge of God; since it will hence follow, that all other knowing beings that have a beginning must depend on him, and have no other ways of knowledge or extent of power than what he gives them; and therefore, if he made those, he made also the less excellent pieces of this universe,—all inanimate beings, whereby his omniscience, power, and providence will be established, and all his other attributes necessarily follow.⁵²⁷

Indeed, even if we can see and experience the sensible effects the operations of most parts of nature both of our internal and external reality, Locke holds that 'their causes

⁵²⁶ *Essay*, II.xxiii.5

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, IV.x.12

are unknown, and we perceive not the ways and manner how they are produced.’⁵²⁸ Locke’s agnosticism gives no reason to deny the existence of the operations of mind and body. Instead of limiting the world, where we cannot even trust our own thoughts, Locke’s agnosticism, in combination with his realism, results in rather open-minded solutions. Therefore, I argue that the crucial point is that Locke’s proof is thereby based on the *powers* of God, *not* what God is in essence. God as a substance is not his primary concern. Indeed, he admits in his chapter on our knowledge of substances that ‘Such a knowledge as this, which is suited to our present condition, we want not faculties to attain. But it appears not that God intended we should have a perfect, clear, and adequate knowledge of them.’⁵²⁹ I will further explain why the status of ‘substances’ are not Locke’s primary concern in section two of this chapter. This section has aimed to explain how Locke could argue for the existence of God, in spite of his skepticism regarding the nature of the term ‘substances.’ However, it does not serve as an explanation as how Locke could argue that God cannot be a *material* substance, to understand this we must turn to the third and final inconsistency as I have identified them: the meaning of Locke’s hypothesis of ‘thinking matter.’ In the following section I reconsider the common interpretation of the passage of Locke’s ‘thinking matter’-passage, arguing that it does not necessarily have to collapse into materialism, or the fact that thought should in anyway become material after the ‘superaddition’.

⁵²⁸ *Essay*, IV.xvi.12

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*, III.xxiii.12

II. The Thinking Matter Controversy

6. 6 Introducing ‘Thinking matter’

Locke’s the concept of ‘thinking matter’ is really only a passing remark in the *Essay* IV.iii.6, where he states that it is possible for God to superadd thought to matter. There is a tension between two possible ways of interpreting this concept: on the one hand it sounds as if he is in favour of a materialist position which makes thought purely material after the superaddition has taken place, while on the other hand, Locke also acknowledges two substances: thought and matter. Most scholars have agreed that Locke’s position is best explained as agnostic, though decisively in favour of a materialist position.

This ambiguity can be traced the uncertainty in Locke’s claim in II.xxiii.2 which states that if anyone examines his own knowledge concerning the idea of pure substance in general he will find he has no other *idea* of it at all except ‘a supposition of we know not what.’ This claim lays the foundation for the agnostic interpretation of Locke’s theory of thinking matter. Locke is thereby denying that we cannot actually know what a substance is and therefore, as he continues in the same chapter; ‘[we] have as much reason to be satisfied with our Notion of immaterial Spirit, as with our notion of body; and the Existence of the one as well as the other.’⁵³⁰

⁵³⁰ *Essay*, II.xxiii.5

Therefore, since we cannot know the nature of substances the power of thought might as well be superadded to matter by an act of God. Locke's agnosticism seems undeniable. However, there are two ways of interpreting Locke as an agnostic; either as one where he is leaving the possibility for substance dualism open or one in which his agnosticism implies absolute rejection, and thereby favours a materialistic standpoint of the nature of thought. On this point I find Michael Ayers' comment most accurate, 'Locke was not telling the reader to adopt a certain hypothesis for its own sake, but enjoying Christian humility in matters of unproven impossibility and necessity.'⁵³¹ Meanwhile, I would like to stress Locke's 'Christian humility' on the matter, I will conclude in favour of a stronger argument against Locke's allegedly favour of materialism.

Concerning this first set of interpretation, John. W. Yolton suggests that Locke's proposition is signifying an opening door to materialism. After Hobbes and Spinoza, who have routinely been cited as the 'arch materialists,' it was in fact the thinking-matter controversy that became the focus of, what Yolton calls, the 'materialism-immaterialism controversy'.⁵³² According to the basis of the interpretation in favour of materialism Yolton writes that Locke's 'thinking matter', in contrast to the Cartesian immaterial soul, places all thought process in the purely material body. While Descartes identifies thought as a property of the soul and extension as property of the body, the concept of thinking matter places both extension and thought in the body. It is thereby taken that Locke discards the concept of the immaterial soul therefore reducing the human life to a mere material ephemera. This idea is strongly opposed by 'the defenders of immaterialism' and by those who insist that not even God can

⁵³¹ Ayers, 1991:151

⁵³² Yolton, 1984:vii

make matter think without essentially changing nature of matter.⁵³³ Along these lines, Catherine Wilson concludes that Locke does not argue that an incorporeal soul exists anymore *after* God has superadded the power of thought to bare insensible matter. She argues that he simply shows that ‘the spiritual being of which I am aware of is just my own purely material, thinking self.’⁵³⁴ Located between the first and second interpretations, Nicholas Jolley argues that although Locke’s stance was leaning mostly towards some ‘form of materialism’ he sometimes also touches upon a weak sort of property dualism.⁵³⁵ The conclusion of Locke as being in favour of materialism, however, fails to explain how he can then later insist in his proof of the existence of God, that thought cannot be material, and equally that God is an immaterial thinking being.

I argue in this section that Locke’s agnosticism with regards to the nature of substances does not collapse into materialism. I accept that Locke is neutral on the grounds that we do not know how matter and thought interact, but he still remains clear that thought does not *become* material after the super addition. Crucially this depends on how we interpret God’s act of ‘superaddition’

Let’s turn closer to what Locke says in the legendary passage, where Locke raises two alternative views neither of which we can be certain of: that is, either that a mere material being thinks or that God directly superadds the faculty of thinking to matter.

Thus, Locke writes:

⁵³³ See Locke’s debate with Bishop Stillingfleet

⁵³⁴ Wilson, 2008:152

⁵³⁵ Jolley, 1984: 81

[w]e have the ideas of matter and thinking, but possibly shall *never* be able to know whether any mere material being thinks or no; it being impossible for us, by the contemplation of our own ideas, without revelation, to discover whether Omnipotency has not given to some systems of matter, fitly disposed, a power to perceive and think, or else joined and fixed to matter, so disposed, a thinking immaterial substance: It being, in respect of our Notions, not much more remote from our comprehension to conceive, that GOD can, if he pleases, superadd to it another Substance, with the faculty of Thinking.⁵³⁶

Locke writes that even though we have ideas of matter and thinking, we shall possibly ‘never be able to know whether any mere material being thinks or no.’ It is thereby, for Locke, just as logical and ‘not much more remote from our comprehension,’ to think that God can superadd to another material substance a thinking immaterial substance. Locke’s treatment of this issue must be framed in a broader set of questions concerning the nature of the material and the spiritual, and the possibility of their being understood and distinguished by human beings. In an other passage of the *Essay*, Locke recognizes that our senses suggest that the corporeal and the spiritual being are to be considered as two parts of nature, as every act of sensation gives us, in fact, equal knowledge of both parts. As Locke maintains in II.xxiii.15:

For whilst I know, by seeing or hearing, etc. that there is some Corporal Being without me, the Object of that sensation, I do more certainly know, that there is some Spiritual Being within me, that sees and hears. This I must be

⁵³⁶ *Essay*, IV.iii.6

convinced cannot be the action of bare insensible matter; nor ever could be, without an immaterial thinking being.⁵³⁷

Here, Locke acknowledges that our senses confirm the existence a certain spiritual being. Seeing, hearing, as well as other sensible perceptions, not only confirm the existence of independent corporeal beings, but also that of a spiritual being in the perceiving object. Perception, in fact, cannot be understood as the result of mere material state of affairs, nor can it be seen as a faculty of a purely incorporeal being. If we recall what Locke states in IV.x, ‘it is impossible to conceive that ever bare incogitative matter should produce a thinking intelligent being, as that nothing should itself produce matter.’ Locke compares the impossibility of matter producing intelligence to that of a pebble – because a pebble would eternally stay just as dead and inactive as it is, if nothing more is added to it.

However, it is necessary to stress that Locke is generally agnostic about the notion of substance, to the extent of claiming, in book two of the *Essay*, that our complex ideas of substances is something which cannot be properly understood. As Locke writes,

[s]o that if anyone will examine himself concerning his Notion of pure Substance in general, he will find himself he has no other idea of it at all, but only a supposition of he know not what.⁵³⁸

According to what we have seen so far, Locke has at least established that we know, in a way, that there is something we have ideas of, that is immaterial and thinking and

⁵³⁷ *Essay*, II.xxiii.15

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, II.xxiii.2

that there is something that is material, which is not thinking. However, this takes us back to the first difficulty Locke's theory poses: even though we have the ideas of matter and thinking, the ultimate natures of thought and matter are beyond our knowledge. But how can we then know that God is not material? Locke recognises that there are in fact three very different beings under the same name 'substance':

If so, whether it will thence follow—that God, spirits, and body, agreeing in the same common nature of substance, differ not any otherwise than in a bare different modification of that substance; as a tree and a pebble, being in the same sense body, and agreeing in the common nature of body, differ only in a bare modification of that common matter, which will be a *very harsh doctrine*. If they say, that they apply it to God, finite spirit, and matter, in three different significations and that it stands for one idea when God is said to be a substance; for another when the soul is called substance; and for a third when body is called so;—if the name substance stands for three several distinct ideas, they would do well to make known those distinct ideas, or at least to give three distinct names to them.⁵³⁹

Locke is here highlighting the problem of the term 'substance' being used so widely that three so separated things must in fact be the same thing, which would make God and Spirit the same as body, or body the same as God and Spirit. The former according to Locke is 'a very harsh doctrine', something he also states in his private notes from his reading on Cudworth that mechanism and materialism 'seeme harsh doctrines.'⁵⁴⁰ What then is going on when we use the term 'substance'? Our

⁵³⁹ *Essay*, II.xiii.18 my emphasis

⁵⁴⁰ MS Locke f. 6 p.20

understanding of Locke's position on this will be of important consequence when we also look at his idea of the soul and afterlife. This I shall return to.

It was previously stated, in Locke's definition, that matter does not have the power to produce anything, not even matter, let alone thought. In the passage IV.x.16 Locke explains that 'for unthinking Particles of Matter, however put together, can have nothing thereby added to them, but a new relation of Position, which 'tis impossible should give thought and knowledge to them.' This means that matter in motion, or in whatever position, can still not, by itself, generate anything. Locke states that even though 'we cannot conceive how anything but impulse of Body can move Body', this is not, as he continues:

Reason sufficient to make us deny it possible, against the constant Experience, we have of it in our selves, in all our voluntary motions, which are only produced by free action or thought of our own minds; are not, nor can be the effects of the impulse or determination of the motion of blind Matter, in or upon our Bodies; for then it could not be in our power or choice to alter it.⁵⁴¹

Locke defines matter as 'the idea of thinking, and moving a body, being as clear and distinct ideas as the ideas of extension, solidity, and being moved.'⁵⁴² Furthermore, matter and solidity Locke also describes, just like a pebble: 'a dead inactive lump.' Thought is therefore something internal, and intuitively experienced: a power independent of external motions. This corresponds to how we have seen Locke defining sensation: as our senses interact with those *external* objects of distinct

⁵⁴¹ *Essay*, IV.x.19

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*, II.xxiii.15, on complex ideas of substances

perceptions these then produce ‘those *Ideas*, we have of *Yellow, White, Heat, Cold, Soft, Hard, Bitter, Sweet*’.⁵⁴³ In contrast to sensation, *reflection* then is entirely internal and only concerns ‘the *Perception of the Operations of our own Minds* within us.’ Only the material (the ideas) of thoughts is impressed upon the mind through sensory experience, so that knowledge only appears in *combination* of external impressions, and reflection. Reflection is therefore *the power* of the ‘spiritual being within me that sees and hears’. Again, this power can in Locke’s view not be generated by the material particles. Internal sense and bodily sensation are therefore two complementary powers, as Locke writes:

For the mind getting, only by reflecting on its own operations, those simple ideas which it attributes to spirits, it hath or can have no other notion of spirit but by attributing all those operations it finds in itself to a sort of beings; without consideration of matter.⁵⁴⁴

However, the internal workings of the mind cannot be described in terms of matter. And so, per definition, they are distinct things and thought cannot *be* matter.

Therefore, Locke holds that matter cannot think and our thoughts must come of something which is *not* material. This also means that nor can they ever be made material, for without these creative powers of thought, because if thought became material, it would cease containing its thinking power, and thereby also become as inactive and ‘dead’ as a pebble found on the ground. Furthermore, in IV.iii.6 Locke states that, since matter cannot be created by itself, this creative power must therefore

⁵⁴³ *Essay*, II.i.3

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, II.vi.11

be *superadded* to it. Even if the connection between thought and matter is close a clear distinction still remains. In fact, Locke even writes that if a thinking being was a result of the combination of matter and motion, ‘such a thinking being will be no better nor wiser, than pure blind matter’.⁵⁴⁵ It does not make any difference if we ‘resolve all into the accidental unguided motions of blind matter, or into Thought depending on unguided motion of blind matter’, ‘not to mention’, as Locke continues, ‘the narrowness of such thought and Knowledge that must depend on the motion of such parts.’⁵⁴⁶ Indeed, it is impossible ‘that any one Particle, should either know its own, or the motion of any other Particle, or the Whole know the motion of every Particular; and so regulate its own Thought and Motions, or indeed have any Thought resulting from such Motion.’⁵⁴⁷

Though throughout the *Essay* Locke does not make a solid distinction between thought, cognition, mind, and even spirit, in IV.x.11 he states that “[...] something necessarily must exist from eternity, ’tis also as evident, that Something must necessarily be a cogitative being: For it is impossible, that nothing, or the negation of all being, should produce a positive Being or Matter.’ Then, in the following passage, he calls this eternal cogitative being ‘the eternal *Mind*’ as he says ‘this discovery of the necessary Existence of an eternal Mind, does sufficiently lead us into the knowledge of GOD; since it will hence follow, that all other knowing Beings that have a beginning, must depend upon him.’⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁵ *Essay*, IV.x17

⁵⁴⁶ *Op. cit.*

⁵⁴⁷ *Op. cit.*

⁵⁴⁸ *Essay*, IV.x.12

Therefore, I argue that Locke must attribute mind, thought, and intelligence, to something entirely immaterial; since he denies (or is undecided about the meaning) of the concept such as ‘substance’ it is instead possible to define thought as a form of *creative power* that only lies within its creator, the ‘Eternal thinking Being’, namely God. Locke concludes that if God were purely material nothing would have been created at all in the first place not even matter and likewise if human beings were purely material they would not have the power to think or to make free moral choices. Therefore, Locke ascribes powers such as thought and will—by which we define our own being—to something which *cannot* be material. Therefore, he concludes that there must exist an *all powerful and thinking* being which is the source of both thought and matter.

These considerations can lead to a better understanding of Locke’s concept of thinking matter. As it has been shown Locke firmly maintains that every power of thought comes from God. Moreover, thought is never made material and does not change the essence of matter because it is a power that is superadded to matter. However, matter cannot originate thought and thought cannot change the essence of matter, only its disposition. On the basis of his definition of the inability of thought to be material we can reassess when his statement in IV.iii.6. Firstly, we have ideas of matter and thinking *combined* because we should therefore accept a state of mediocrity. However, on the premise that matter cannot by its own power create thought, as it must be superadded by something more powerful than matter. That is by God.

6.7 Conclusion thought not material

Locke's concept of 'thinking matter' as presented in IV.iii.6, provides a closer connection between mind and body. We have seen from reading other parts of the *Essay* where Locke presents his understanding of matter as a completely unthinking thing, Locke's immaterial conception of thought, cannot collapse into something purely material. Moreover, his rebuttal of the notion of substance prevents him from describing thought as a substance—and more in general from providing any definition of the essence of thought. However, from Locke's definition of pure matter, which is by itself in a powerless state incapable of creating anything. Since Locke avoids describing thought as a substance, I have defined it as a creative thinking power that comes from God. After being super added to matter by God, it must remain an active thinking power, that is, immaterial. I argue that Locke's concept of 'thinking matter' does not advocate any form of materialism. Since Locke defines thought as an *immaterial* power, it is incapable of becoming material, because materiality for Locke equals unthinking, however, it is true that Locke can be seen as agnostic, but only with regards to substances per se. However, his denial of providing a comprehensive definition of the essence of thought cannot be seen as a form of complete agnosticism, as stated by Jolley and Ayers. Of course Locke's ambiguity leaves the question of the relation and *interactions* between thought and matter open. It is not unlikely that Locke chose in this way to avoid the contradictions in which the Cartesian solution of the pineal gland fell. At the same time Spinoza's monism probably seemed too radical and too 'harsh' in Locke's view. A position reflected in Locke closing words in IV.x.

If you do not understand the Operations of your own finite Mind, that thinking Thing within you, do not deem it strange, that you cannot comprehend the Operations of that eternal infinite Mind, who made and governs all Things, and whom the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁹ *Essay*, IV.x.19

Chapter 7

On Locke's Theory of Personal Identity and Theology

Part I. On Locke's Theory of Personal Identity

7.1 Locke's Theory of Personal Identity: from Cudworth to Consciousness

On the topic of Locke's theory of personal identity, few scholars have drawn sufficient attention to the influence of Cudworth on Locke. Indeed perhaps because Locke's theory of personal identity is seldom read within a context of Platonism or his theology. The reason for putting these two sections in one chapter is because I argue that the Platonic aspects of Locke's definition of reason and consciousness are essential to understand his Christology and theology as non-heretic. A Platonic understanding of Locke's concept of consciousness, therefore also solves the problem of the Trinity in Locke's theology. As Locke is neutral on the concept of substances, he avoids the problem of the intelligibility of the Trinity, not by rejecting it, but merely by shifting the concept of *personhood* from an emphasis on bodies and substances to the concepts of *consciousness*.

More recently, Shelley Weinberg has acknowledged some similarities between Cudworth and Locke on the usage of the term 'consciousness'. However, Weinberg develops Locke's theory in isolation from Cudworth's, as she is focusing upon its psychological implications.⁵⁵⁰ I argue that understandings of Locke's theory fall short, if placed in relation to his theology, as well as the contemporary on-going debate on natural law theory. I argue that we can place Locke's theory of personal identity in

⁵⁵⁰ See Weinberg, *Consciousness in Locke*, 2016

relation to the wider influence of Cudworth, in particular his understanding of concepts such as ‘internal motion’ and ‘life’. I further argue that we can compare Locke’s attitude towards the identity of both animals and humans as distinct from pure mechanical operations, with that of Cudworth. Furthermore, that it is also possible to link Locke’s theory of personal identity to the argument forwarded in the previous chapter: Locke’s concept of the *inner sense* and reflection as crucial components of his epistemology, his rejection of materialism, as a result of his proof of the existence of God, and the concept of ‘thinking-matter’.

What follows in this section is an exposition of Locke’s theory of personal identity in the context what we have learned so far from his connection with the Cambridge Platonists. Locke only added the sections on personal identity to the chapter entitled *Of Identity and Persistence* in the second edition of the *Essay*, published in 1694. We know Locke at this time had at least been reading Cudworth in 1682 and in 1688, and was now also living with Damaris at Oates. Locke’s theory of identity is groundbreaking, as he was the first to offer such a clear account of a *theory of personal identity*. In this sense, Locke was the first to not place personal identity in the continuity of a *substance* – i.e. either in the soul or the body (or both) – but in a new concept called ‘consciousness’.⁵⁵¹ Therefore, terms such as ‘consciousness’ and ‘self-determination’ have long been attributed to Locke, while the fact that this does not receive sufficient attention is that these terms are in fact Cambridge Platonists coinages.⁵⁵² In the *True Intellectual System*, Cudworth uses the idea of the consciousness as a central part of his account of the operations of the self-

⁵⁵¹ As also argued by Thiel, 2011

⁵⁵² Hutton, 2015:159

determination and personhood.⁵⁵³ And in the *Essay*, Locke explicitly writes ‘Consciousness makes personal identity.’⁵⁵⁴ In addition to Cudworth’s usage of the term ‘consciousness.’ However, Locke’s earliest consideration of identity can be found in a journal entry, from January 1684:

Identity of persons lies not in haveing the same numericall body made up of the same particles, not if the minde consists of corporeal spirits in their being the same. but in the memory & knowledge of ones past self & actions continued on under the consiousnesse of being the same person whereby every man owns himself.⁵⁵⁵

Here we can see that before writing his entry on personal identify for the for the *Essay*, as Thiel notes, Locke had already accepted Cudworth’s term consciousness. As such, Locke directly rejected Lucretius’s theory that memory and identity is just as dependent on the sameness of material particles. Now let us turn to what was written 10 years later in the *Essay*.

7.2 Locke’s Concept of Consciousness

Locke’s concept of consciousness can thus be mapped on to three interconnected parts of Locke’s philosophy: First, to Locke’s conception of *inner sense* (as I defined it Chapter 6), second, his rejection of materialism, and third, his conception of

⁵⁵³ Hutton, 2015: 148

⁵⁵⁴ *Essay* II.xxvii.10

⁵⁵⁵ MS f. 7 p. 107, transcription by Thiel 2011: 99

morality, in so far as he claims that personal identity is ‘a forensic term’. Most fundamentally consciousness is his definition of personal identity.

Locke writes that the Identity of the same ‘man’ consists in nothing but in a participation of the same continued life by constantly fleeting particles of matter organised in one body.⁵⁵⁶ Locke argues that just like in the case of an oak tree, the particles, or whatever constitutes ‘the substance,’ of the oak tree are irrelevant, but it is the participation in the same *life*, which is determined by ‘internal motion’. With regards to personal identity the concept of the soul, since soul is defined as a substance, is irrelevant. As we have seen, Locke holds that ‘animal identity is preserved in identity of life, and not of substance’.⁵⁵⁷ So he also argues that personhood based in consciousness, and not in a substance (whether we call it matter or soul). Locke thus distinguishes between the identity of ‘a man’ (or ‘a woman’, if you like) and the identity of what he defines as a *person*. The identity of a person does not depend upon the sameness of body, nor does it depend upon the sole criteria of the partaking of the same ‘life,’ as in the case of an oak tree, or other vegetable and animal life. Instead Locke insists that the concept of *personal* identity lies within the *consciousness*.

The term ‘consciousness’, however, was first introduced and given a philosophical definition, in this context, by Cudworth.⁵⁵⁸ He defines consciousness as that ‘which makes a Being to be Present with it self, Attentive to its own Actions, or Animadversive of them, to perceive it self to Do or Suffer, and to have

⁵⁵⁶ *Essay*, II.xxvii.6

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, II.xxvii.12

⁵⁵⁸ See, for example, the OED definition of *Consciousness*

a *Fruition or Enjoyment of it self.*'⁵⁵⁹ Locke adopts the term almost identically. Locke's conception of consciousness can be defined in four ways: First, as 'a perception of what passes in a man's *own* mind,'⁵⁶⁰ secondly, as 'a reflex act of perception; that is reflecting on the feelings of pain and pleasure; happiness, and misery,'⁵⁶¹ thirdly, by something that is not 'inseparable from thinking [but] *essential* to it',⁵⁶² fourth and finally, as a *present* representation to 'a past action.'⁵⁶³ That is, as a *present* representation of the collection of that which constitutes me, as I am *now*, but also *containing* all my past actions.⁵⁶⁴ Consciousness is therefore the thing that constitutes the thinking thing that is the same thinking (i.e. being conscious) of ones' present and past actions and of one's own being. As Locke states:

This being premised, to find wherein personal identity consists, we must consider what person stands for;—which, I think, is a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness which is inseparable from thinking, and, as it seems to me, essential to it: it being impossible for any one to perceive without perceiving that he does perceive.⁵⁶⁵

Locke's conception of consciousness therefore constitutes a prerequisite for any experience of ones' (internal) self including ones' (external) actions. But how does the identity of a person differ from the identity of an oak? Both are partaking in what

⁵⁵⁹ *TIS*, 1678: 159

⁵⁶⁰ *Essay*, II.i.19

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*, II.xxvii.13

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*, II.xxvii.9 my emphasis

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*, II.xxii.13

⁵⁶⁴ Thiel 2011: 67

⁵⁶⁵ *Essay*, II.27.9

constitutes their own common life, both are moved by internal motion but the person has consciousness. Locke thereby seems to use the same criteria for distinguishing ‘a man’ and ‘an oak tree’, but he then takes one step further in order to reach the concept of *personal* identity. That is, he makes a distinction between man, as in the body of a man (or a woman) and what constitutes personhood. Just as Cudworth argues that consciousness is not essential to life, because there must be some ‘appearance of life’ or ‘vital sympathy’ in plants and ‘plant-animals.’ In contrast to Descartes’ crude definition of animals as mere machines, both Cudworth and Locke hold even oak-trees in higher terms than that.

Adopting Cudworth’s term in his personal identity theory, Locke’s definition of consciousness is also defined as that very *experience* we have of being someone, it is simply the ‘I am.’ It is an internal experience of being oneself, that is, ‘the Perception of the Operations of our own Minds within us.’ Furthermore, Locke defines having a ‘Self’ as: ‘A thinking intelligent being, that has Reason and Reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places.’⁵⁶⁶

I shall now map Locke’s concept of consciousness to the three interconnected parts of Locke’s philosophy. First, by combining Locke’s concept of consciousness with Cudworth’s probable influence on his idea of ‘internal motion’, we can directly link back to my discussion on Locke’s inner sense in Chapter 6. The distinction between consciousness and inner sense is fine, but crudely consciousness is what constitutes the awareness of that which is perceived through our internal operations and the internal sense. You cannot reflect without being conscious, and reflection requires a certain *level* of consciousness. An oyster, albeit having an identity since it is

⁵⁶⁶ *Essay*, II.xxvii.9

pertaining in the same life, has simple ideas because it has not no conscious reflection of those ideas. Returning to Locke's example of the Oyster. According to Locke the oyster does not have the use of the *combination* of sensation and reflection. As he states, we may be reasonable to conclude that an Oyster does not have reflection, 'not so many, nor so quick Senses as a Man'.⁵⁶⁷ The greater the complexity of the senses in an organised body of life, the greater the input of simple ideas and thereby the greater is the *need* for reflection and an internal sense. The role of a *consciousness*, which Locke states, is inseparable from the faculty of 'thinking', is therefore also the same as reflection and putting the inner sense to work. The 'inner sense' is therefore something that can be of use only to fully *conscious*, thinking beings.

Secondly, Locke's definition of consciousness also fits with my conclusion from the previous chapter on Locke's definition of God and my interpretation of thinking matter – and that Locke thought impossible to originate from or be defined from a materialist standpoint. Locke's definition of the individual human beings through a personal identity vested in a conscience, avoids complicated explanations of the question of what substances are, which, according to Locke, creates *just as* big a problem for materialists as it does for immaterialists – i.e. the concept of the soul as a substance. However, the materialistic definition of matter is still most incompatible with Locke's thought, as we have seen both in his God-proof, and debate on substance dualism, and now in his definition of life and personal identity as vested in consciousness, avoids the discussion of substances, but still places it with the idea of something 'internal'

⁵⁶⁷ *Essay*, II.9.13

Third, and finally, I shall turn to the moral implications of Locke's theory of personal identity. Locke's moral philosophy is here linked to the concept of the immortality of the soul. In a 'Hobbesian' reading of Locke, the 'soul' (as a substance we know-not-what) would perish along with the body (also as a substance we know-not-what), which would then be restored on the occasion of a resurrection. Modern readers, who are especially attributing a Hobbist reading to Locke, see his criticism of the concept of substances as a blatant rejection of the immortality of the soul (and thereby also the person). Which, if it was indeed true would be very problematic for Locke and his theology. However, I argue, as I think is now evident, Locke is only disputing the concept of substances, but not necessarily disputing the immortality of the *person*. This is however linked to Locke's criterion of the individual as *conscious* can also be defined in terms of moral agency.⁵⁶⁸ Therefore, an account of immortality that focuses only on issues of individuation and identity of the 'soul' as a substance is insufficient and, in part, irrelevant. After all, Locke must have thought, it is not the particles in the body that commits the crime a jury (or God) would punish, but the conscious *person* that is behind those actions. That is, if I kill someone by hitting them on the head with an organ pipe, it is the *I* who is punished, not my arm or any particles that constitutes my arm at that time of the killing. This is a further reason why the concept of body, or substance, is irrelevant to Locke's theory of personal identity, as it is a forensic term.

Locke therefore explains the forensic status of personhood by demonstrating the problem that comes with placing personal identity in 'the soul' – not because it is defined as *immaterial*, but because the soul is defined also defined as *a substance*. In the same way, the soul cannot be material and the soul cannot be an immaterial

⁵⁶⁸ See more on Locke's moral agency in Forster, 2005: 52

substance either which is wholly distinct from the body. For what guarantee do we then have that it will *remain* in the same body? If I go through extensive surgery and effectively get a new appearance (or a new body) then it is still *I* who have committed the murder with the organ pipe. The same soul of a man or a woman may at different times be united to different bodies. Furthermore, we would then not even be able to be sure that a sheep farmer's soul would not float into the body of his ram, and vice versa. This supposition leads to absurdity according to Locke but he wants to demonstrate that the concept of substances *does not matter* to his theory of *personal* identity. Again, this notion becomes particularly pertinent for his moral philosophy and conception of crime and punishment. Locke was also the first to say that personhood *is* a forensic term:

Wherever a man finds what he calls himself, there, I think, another may say is the same person. It is a forensic term, appropriating actions and their merit; and so belongs only to intelligent agents, capable of a law, and happiness, and misery.⁵⁶⁹

In order for a punishment to classify as a *just* punishment, that is, that the right *person* is punished in accordance to the actions the person has truly committed, we must also have a criterion for what constitutes a *person*. There must therefore also be continuity between a person and their actions, which makes them accountable. Therefore, only *conscious* beings—or intelligent agents—can be morally culpable. As in my example, the case of the murder with an organ pipe, we charge and punish the conscious agent behind the murder, not the pipe itself. This is why it is imperative, that *I am* a

⁵⁶⁹ *Essay*, II.27.26

(conscious) person, partaking in the ‘common life’ that constitutes *me*. I am therefore also always accountable for my actions, as long as I remain myself. If I was, however, absurd and suddenly possessed by Socrates, he would be accountable for what appears to be my actions. As Locke writes about Socrates in the state of sleeping and waking: ‘if the same Socrates waking and sleeping do not partake of the same consciousness, Socrates waking and sleeping are not the same person.’⁵⁷⁰ Therefore, it would be no more right to punish the awake Socrates for what sleeping Socrates did, as Locke explains, ‘than to punish one twin for what his Brother-twin did, where of he knew nothing, because their outsides were so alike.’⁵⁷¹ Therefore, Locke writes based on the assumption that Socrates has ‘two distinct incommunicable consciousnesses acting the same body’, the one constantly present during the day, the other by night:

I ask, in the first case, whether the day and the night—man would not be two as distinct persons as Socrates and Plato? And whether, in the second case, there would not be one person in two distinct bodies, as much as one man is the same in two distinct clothings?⁵⁷²

Based on this example, it is clear that for Locke *personal* identity is not decided by the external bodily appearance, but to the consciousness to determine personhood, and that it is only personhood that can be accountable for actions. As Locke writes ‘as far as consciousness can be extended backwards, so far reaches the identity of that person; if is the same self now as it was then; and it is by the same self with this

⁵⁷⁰ *Essay*, II.27.19

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*, II.27.19-20

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*, II.27.23

present one that now reflect on it, that action was done.⁵⁷³ And for the same reason he admits that ‘Humane laws’ do not punish the mad man for the sober man’s actions and ‘thereby making them two Persons: ‘which is somewhat explained by our way of speaking in English, when we say such an one is not himself or is besides himself.’⁵⁷⁴ Locke concludes, however, in a rather Lutheran spirit when he continues writing that,

And therefore, conformable to this, the apostle tells us, that, at the great day, when every one shall “receive according to his doings, the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open.”⁵⁷⁵

Locke hereby acknowledges a well-known problem, namely, that it is hard for fallible and temporal legal jurisdictions to always judge correctly, due to human knowledge and understanding being both frail and insufficient.

7.3 Soul, Substance and the Afterlife

Conclusively, I argue against the common assumption that Locke *rejects* the concept of the soul, and thereby also belief in the Doctrine of the Resurrection. I argue that Locke’s dismissal of the need for a proof of the soul’s immateriality is not a statement in favour of a ‘material soul’. Where thinking is but a material phenomena annexed to the body. I have previously argued, Locke is simply rejecting of the concept of soul as a foundation for the *person*, not in the general sense that the word is used. Locke is therefore still securing his theological and moral aims from the ‘harsh’ doctrine of

⁵⁷³ *Essay*, II.xxvii.9

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, II.xxvii.20

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, II.xxvii.26, cf. II.xxvii.22

materialism. We need to place the concept of the soul and resurrection in the context of Locke's rejection of substances, his theory of personal identity and theory of law, which is inseparable from his theology.

Let me tie together what I have argued so far. First of all, as we have seen in previous chapter, Locke argues material and immaterial substances are in principle *equally* unknowable. This we saw as part of his argument in the *Essay* that we do not know more about the nature of immateriality than we do of materiality. We have seen that, whatever substances are, thought cannot per definition, be material.

Secondly, therefore, what truly experiences happiness and misery is a *person*— not a substance, if we look back to one of his statements in the *Essay* we find that Locke is using his definition of consciousness as a third way out of the problem of substances: 'Consciousness unites substances, material or spiritual, with the same personality.'⁵⁷⁶ Locke continues, conceding: 'I agree, the more probable opinion is, that this consciousness is annexed to, and the affection of, one individual immaterial substance.'⁵⁷⁷ As Locke also argued, as we have seen in previous chapter, it is impossible to annex consciousness or cognition to a *material* substance. Here we can reiterate his statement that while we experience a corporeal being without 'the object of sensation', for example, seeing and hearing, we more certainly know that there is a 'spiritual being within,' that sees and hears: 'This, I must be convinced, cannot be the action of bare insensible matter; nor ever could be, without an immaterial thinking

⁵⁷⁶ *Essay*, II.xxvii.25

⁵⁷⁷ *Op. cit.*

being.’⁵⁷⁸ Thus, Locke’s agnosticism towards substances does not collapse into materialism, nor an ultimate rejection of the soul.

Locke’s conception of a just punishment therefore establishes two things: first that *there is a truth* about each person’s actions, and secondly, that God, as the ultimate source of justice and wisdom will always transcend the temporal jurisdiction with his perfect judgment and knowledge. Therefore, any injury will be rectified by God, according to Locke, and as God ‘can see into every mans heart’ even deeds that they might have forgotten about, but consciously committed in the past, will be judged:

[I]n the Great Day, wherein the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, it may be reasonable to think, no one shall be made to answer for what he knows nothing of, but shall receive his doom, his conscience accusing or excusing him.⁵⁷⁹

In the following section I shall therefore put this concept of the human nature; his definition of the concept of reason, including the tension between the frailty and competence of human nature in relation to God, by looking at his theology and Christology, as presented in the Reasonableness of Christianity.

⁵⁷⁸ *Essay*, II.xxiii.15

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, II.xxvii.22

Part II. On Locke's Theology

7.4 Introduction – Locke's theology

In this section, I give an account of Locke's unique take on theology. With focus on the *Reasonableness of Christianity*, I examine Locke's view of the role of reason in view of religion and in his Christology. I conclude that there is a clear continuum between Locke's view of the individual, his theory of personal identity as based in *consciousness*, and his Christology. Further to this, by examining Locke's affinity with Philo, this continuum between theory of identity and Christology can also be framed within Locke's traditional theory of the Law.

Locke's theology is original and complex, and we have access to a significant amount of material, such as his private notes and letters on theological topics, which span over Locke's entire lifetime. Locke also had to defend many of his published works against, what he saw as unfair, unreasonable, and almost personal attacks on himself, even if they were often by eminent clergy. I will therefore narrow the scope by focusing on his main published work on theology: the *Reasonableness of Christianity, as delivered in the Scriptures* (1695). I aim to demonstrate that in Locke's theology we find a platonic conception of the role of reason, defined as 'the candle of the Lord'. And, specifically, in his Christology Locke's views Christ as both the Image of God and the *mediator* between human nature and God. This, I argue, will help us to understand *how* Locke would have seen his own theology and the project in the *Essay*, not as conflicting, but as a compatible and part of the same philosophy and continuum of his ideas.

While Locke engaged in theological works throughout his life, it was not until 1694 that he had the time and leisure to devote himself to a more intense study of theology: ‘For I ought now to give my mind for the most part to such studies’, he acknowledges in a letter to his friend Philipp van Limborch.⁵⁸⁰ Chronologically, this letter coincides roughly with a journal he started at the time, a commonplace book he called ‘*Adversaria Theologica* 94.’⁵⁸¹ This year thus signifies the beginning of this period of theological study, which culminated with his publication of the *Reasonableness of Christianity* in 1695.

Theology is for Locke a ‘rational exercise’, which fits with his idea of Christianity as *reasonable*. Though a ‘reasonable’ take on Christianity was a popular theme amongst early freethinkers, it is important to note that Locke conceived this not as a methodology of freethinking, but with a genuine belief that there are truths to be discovered in the field of theology, just like in science. For Locke the ‘dogmatic’ freethinkers were just as unpleasant an option as the dogmatic theologians. But he employs the same epistemic humility in his method of the role reason and his method of understanding Christianity. However, if we understand Locke’s concept of rationality in the light of the Platonic conception, we shall then see that while Locke has a seemingly minimal theology, he does not limit the field of study, as he concludes that there is a *duty* to deploy one’s own, individual understanding in life and the primary study of life being theology.

⁵⁸⁰ De Beer, L1826

⁵⁸¹ Nuovo, 2002: 21

As earlier stated, Victor Nuovo is the main scholar who has explored Locke's theology and done the most substantial work examining and publishing Locke's religious writings. Nuovo is also the first to seriously argue that Locke's theology can be seen as a 'key' to his philosophy.⁵⁸² Nuovo points out that Locke made two fundamental discoveries as a result of his particular research that commenced in 1694: 'one, that to be a Christian and a beneficiary of the covenant of grace, it is necessary to accept only one, albeit complex proposition, that Jesus is the Messiah; the other, that Christianity is essentially a moral religion.'⁵⁸³

I argue that neither of these two 'discoveries' were in fact new findings, even if they were more articulate through his work after 1694 we shall see that both points are already in agreement with what Whichcote preached back at St. Lawrence Jewry in 1668. Indeed, we know that Locke probably spent time revisiting Whichcote's sermons, as when they were published in 1689 Locke quickly obtained of a copy. The moral aspect of Christianity was also significantly emphasised by the Cambridge Platonists. What we must find out therefore, is how Locke understands Jesus as the Messiah, in the *Reasonableness*, and how that related to his view of Christianity as a moral religion.

I argue that Locke's understanding of the nature of Jesus Christ lies in his view of *reason*. We will see that Locke's interpretation of Christianity as a religion, lies within intellectual *conduct* of the *individual*, and is a particular view that he shared

⁵⁸² See Nuovo, *Christianity, Antiquity, and Enlightenment: Interpretations of Locke* (2011)

⁵⁸³ Nuovo, 2011: 22 Nuovo further states: 'In my continuing studies of Locke, it has become increasingly clear to me how this discovery is joined with another: the mutuality of reason and revelation. Near the close of *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, Locke reviews the advantages to mankind of a Messiah and most prominent among them is that Messiah restored universal morality. What was supposed to be reason's domain, was taken over, refined, and given back to it by revelation in a form that reason could recognize and confirm.'

with the Cambridge Platonists and would have also found their philosophy in this sense both appealing and agreeable. In this way we can find a thread that runs between Locke's earliest work on Natural Law, his main political work the *Two Treatises*, his epistemic humility as presented in the *Essay*, and finally to his theology as presented in the *Reasonableness*. For my purposes in this section, I am going to limit myself to the *Reasonableness*.

Adam: the Image and the Fall

In his first vindication of the *Reasonableness*, Locke reminds the reader, 'I speak not of the Doctrines of Christianity, nor all that is published to the World in it: but of those Truths only, which are absolutely required to be believed to make any one a Christian.'⁵⁸⁴ Locke is concerned with what it means to *be* a Christian, framed within the topic of Redemption, as he opens the *Reasonableness* by stating:

'Tis obvious to anyone who reads the New Testament, that the Doctrine of Redemption, and consequently of the Gospel, is founded upon the supposition of Adams's fall. To understand therefore what we are restored by Jesus Christ we must consider what the scripture shews we lost by Adam.⁵⁸⁵

In his search he claims to be diligent and unbiased. In the Doctrine of salvation, Locke is only concerned with the first stages of the Doctrine, that is, of righteousness and not with sanctification. Characteristically, Locke wants to avoid two extreme interpretations of Christianity; one that has shook the Foundations of all Religion, and

⁵⁸⁴ Locke, 2012: 21

⁵⁸⁵ WR, 2002:91

the other, which makes Christianity almost nothing. Locke argues instead that the most fundamental requirement to be a Christian narrows down to one tenet and that is to believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah. This fundamental belief is, according to Locke, completely in harmony with reason and is therefore also sufficient for salvation. The theme of Locke's *Reasonableness* can therefore be summed up as *redemption* as it aims to answer the question what is *required* for salvation.

Locke draws his doctrine of redemption upon his interpretation of Adam's Fall in the Old Testament. Locke's doctrine of redemption can be understood in two stages, first through the *image of God*, that is, what is meant by the Fall and what did human nature lose as a result of the Fall. Secondly the coming of Christ and the restoration of the image, that is, what is restored through the nature of Christ depend also on the definition of the nature of Christ. Therefore, in order to know what is required for us to be saved, we must first know what Adam lost and then what Christ restored.

First, let us turn to the concept of Adam as created in the *image of God*. We must first understand what Locke held was part of that original image. Locke holds two things, first, the rational nature of human beings, and secondly immortality. Locke had already written on the *Image* in the *Two Treatises of Government* (1689), where he states that God creates Adam an *intellectual* being in his own image. Locke writes, that Adam is created in 'In his own image, after his own likeness', and therefore,

makes him an intellectual creature, and so capable of dominion: for wherein soever else the image of God consisted, the intellectual nature was certainly a part of it, and belonged to the whole species.⁵⁸⁶

And in the *Reasonableness* he states, that ‘the Light of Reason’ is ‘the same spark of the Divine Nature and Knowledge in Man, which making him a Man.’⁵⁸⁷ For what is part of the image is also part of the human nature? The penalty is stated, as Locke points out, in Gen. II.17: ‘*in the days that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*’ and he concludes, ‘by reason of this Transgression all Men are Mortal, and come to die.’⁵⁸⁸ Therefore, according to Locke it is clear that ‘the Doctrine of the Gospel is that Death came upon all Men by Adam’s sin.’⁵⁸⁹ Therefore, Locke writes, ‘by this Fall [Adam] lost Paradise, wherein was Tranquillity and the Tree of Life i.e. he lost Bliss and Immortality.’

The first answer is clear, what Adam lost on behalf of humanity was immortality. It is crucial that the only part of the image of human nature that was lost was immortality, which concerned everyone, by virtue of being human. However, the part of the image, which is *reason* and what makes humans human, still remains intact. This has a crucial part for Locke in reaching righteousness and salvation. It is therefore through the remaining intellectual nature of man that humans are saved. But in order to illustrate this, Locke must also explain what is meant by ‘death’, that is what is meant by being in a state of mortality. In this context, it is significant that Locke acknowledges that there are many different meanings of the word *Death*. Locke

⁵⁸⁶ TT §30

⁵⁸⁷ WR, 2002: 190

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 92

⁵⁸⁹ Op. cit.

thinks it is too far to claim that it is a state of ‘Guilt’, which involves not just Adam but all his posterity as well, to be put in a state of ‘endless torment in Hell-fire’.⁵⁹⁰ Here, Locke is arguing against the Calvinist doctrine of original sin, that is by ‘Death threatened to *Adam* were meant the Corruption of Humane Nature in his Posterity, ‘tis strange that the New Testament should not take notice of it.’⁵⁹¹ Locke further asks: ‘How doth it consist with the Justice and Goodness of God, that the Posterity of *Adam* should suffer for his sin; the innocent be punished for the guilty?’⁵⁹²

To answer this, Locke writes that ‘to put Men in a state of Misery worse than not being, without and fault or demerit of their own’ would be impossible to reconcile with the notion of God’s justice, goodness and other attributes ‘which he has declared of himself, and Reason as well as Revelation must acknowledge to be in him; unless we will confound Good and Evil, God and Satan.’⁵⁹³ Locke therefore defines death as merely the state of ‘ceasing to be, the losing of all actions of Life and Sense and according to Locke’s reading of the New Testament, ‘every ones sin is charged upon himself only’.⁵⁹⁴ What human beings lost as a result of the Fall was therefore *only* their immortality, but they were not condemned and punished as humanity for some fault that was not committed by any other individual than Adam himself. Furthermore, in Locke’s discussion on the definition of ‘death’, when Locke writes that scripture cannot mean by the term ‘death’ that one is actually kept *alive* in perpetual torment, he has put a footnote to Smith’s *Select Discourses*, Book VI, Chapter 1 ‘of Phrophesie’. We know, as I have also demonstrated in Chapter 5, that Locke had already read Smith both early in 1682 and in 1688. It would appear that

⁵⁹⁰ WR, 2002: 92

⁵⁹¹ Ibid., p. 93

⁵⁹² Ibid., pp. 93-94

⁵⁹³ Ibid., p. 94

⁵⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 93

this reading was something that remained with him, even in his writing on theology in 1694. His footnote is as follows: ‘Scripture speaks not so much in the tongue of the learned Sophies of the world as in the plainest and most vulgar dialect that may be, which the Jews constantly observed, says Mr. Smith of Prophetie, Chap 1’.⁵⁹⁵ Locke’s subsequent reference to Maimonides is also from Smith. Smith’s first chapter is on ‘Man's Mind capable of conversing and being acquainted as well with Revealed or Positive Truth’ where Smith argues that ‘*Scripture* frequently accommodates it self to vulgar apprehension, and speaks of things in the greatest way of condescension.’⁵⁹⁶ The full quote Locke refers to, reads in Smith:

And therefore (it may be) the best way to understand the true sense and meaning of the Scripture is not rigidly to examine it upon Philosophical Interrogatories, or to bring it under the scrutiny of School-Definitions and Distinctions. It speaks not to us so much in the tongue of the learned *Sophies* of the world, as in the plainest and most vulgar dialect that may be. Which the Jews constantly observed and took notice of, and therefore it was one common Rule among them for a true understanding of the Scripture.⁵⁹⁷

The point is that Scripture must be accessible not only to a select, educated few, but to everyone. As Smith states: ‘The Scripture was not writ only for Sagacious and Abstracted minds, or Philosophical heads; for then how few are there that should have

⁵⁹⁵ WR, 2002: 92

⁵⁹⁶ Smith, 1660: 169

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 172

been taught the true Knowledge of God thereby?’⁵⁹⁸ Smith is arguing against the literal reading of scripture, for example such as taking Gen. 2. 7. ‘that *God breathed into man the breath of life, and man became a living soul*’ literally. Smith calls such literal interpretations ‘Very idiotical’ and, therefore, the concept of Death, which is of Locke’s present primary interest, Smith explains: ‘So the state of *Hell* and *Miserie* is set forth by such denominations as were most apt to strike a terror into the minds of men.’⁵⁹⁹

After using Smith to explain and acknowledge the different interpretations of the term ‘death’, Locke states that by death he means the *absence* of the things we enjoy with life, such as action and sense. As Locke writes:

This shews that Paradise was a place of Bliss as well as Immortality, without toyl, and without sorrow. But when Man was turned out, he was exposed to the drudgery, anxiety, and fragilities of this Mortal Life, which should then end in *Dust*, out of which he was made, and to which he should return; and then have no more life or sense than the *Dust* had, out of which he was made.⁶⁰⁰

As a result of Adam’s fall, human nature fell into a state of ‘drudgery, anxiety, and fragilities of this Mortal Life’. As Locke writes of Adam as the Son of God and created in his image, so too are all human beings:

⁵⁹⁸ Smith, 1660: 173

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 174

⁶⁰⁰ WR, 2002: 93

Adam being the Son of God, and so St. Luke calls him, chap. iii. 38, had this part also of the likeness and image of his father, viz. that he was immortal. But Adam, transgressing the command given him by his heavenly Father, incurred the penalty; forfeited that state of immortality, and became mortal. After this, Adam begot children: but they were 'in his own' likeness, after his own image; 'mortal, like their father'.⁶⁰¹

Salvation therefore happens to the 'lost' image being restored by Christ, therefore, understanding of the fall through the *Image*, the *Image* is *restored* by Christ. Jesus Christ is therefore the missing Image of *life* and through reason, by putting to work the *Law* of Reason, that is reason of each individual human, this image is restored *through* faith in Jesus Christ. Before turning to the relationship between the Law of Works and the Law of Faith, and let us first turn to what Locke means by Jesus Christ as *restoring* the image.

It is worth noting here that Locke is only concerned with what is necessary for salvation and does not concern himself with sanctification. Therefore in the *Reasonableness*, Locke is concerned in the only for the first stages, of salvation, that is, righteousness. The prophecies of the old testament of Messiah's coming, gave the promise that all humans where saved, from the beginning. Furthermore, Locke hold that there is therefore no room for an arbitrary decision by God, to choose who is going to be saved or not, as the promise of Justification has been part of revelation from the start.

⁶⁰¹ WR, 2002: 93

Jesus Christ - The Second Adam

The second question follows then, what did Jesus Christ restore? As Locke continues, writing with reference to Paul: ‘From this estate of Death Jesus Christ restores to all mankind to Life; I Cor. XV. 22 *As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made Alive.*’ The second answer follows from the first, if Adam did not corrupt nature more than the loss of natural eternal life, then Christ has come to restore us to our original state – the original state of *immortality*. Each human individual is still equipped with the Candle of the Lord, that is their reason is still part of the most elevated faculty of the soul. This fact, at least gives each human individual the opportunity to be *restored* to eternal life, if they *believe*. This means that salvation does not come to a group of people, but only to each individual *person*, through an individual connection to God and through the belief in Christ. In this we begin to see why an individual *consciousness* is more crucial to Locke’s theory of personal identity than having a body. It is only through our conscious minds, that we can hold an individual belief. In short: no one else can believe on another person’s behalf. This is why it is crucial to Locke that all individuals should not suffer for something that Adam did. As Locke continues:

If any posterity of *Adam* were just, they shall not lose the Reward of it, Eternal Life and Bliss, by being his Mortal Issue: Christ will bring them to life again;

And then they shall be put every one upon his own Tryal, and receive Judgment, as he is found to be Righteous or no.⁶⁰²

Note again that Locke here emphasize that all posterity of Adam were *just*. Furthermore, it is clear that by virtue of being *created* as individuals in the image of God, each *individual* also has a rightful title to Righteousness, to reiterate Locke's statement: '*their own Righteousness they might have a Title to*'. This also fits his concept right and law, as presented both in *Two Treatises*, and in his much earlier work the *Essays on the Law of Nature*. Though Locke could not say this clearer than in the *Reasonableness*:

And thus men are by the Second *Adam* [i.e. Christ] resorted to Life again: That so by Adams' sin they may none of them lose anything, which by their own Righteousness they might have a Title to. For Righteousness, or an exact obedience to the Law, seems by Scripture to have a claim of Right to Eternal Life.⁶⁰³

Therefore, Adam's Fall could not affect every single individual and posterity of Adam, and thereby punish them for something they had not done. The reason being that it was part of God's promise that Messiah was going to come, as it had been prophesied in the Old Testament. Therefore, at the occasion of Adam's sin and Fall, humanity still retained their own capacity for *Righteousness*, as individuals. Therefore, according to Locke, each human individual has a *right* to a *fair* trial as individuals. This is also why Locke could not accept a complete corruption of human

⁶⁰² WR, 2002: 95

⁶⁰³ Op. cit.

nature or the transferring of ‘guilt’ from the fall of Adam. If Adam’s guilt was transferrable, humans would collectively be punished. This is why Locke is concerned with the Messianic term – because it was the Messiah that was *promised* by God from the Old Testament and part of a uniformed plan for mankind. This is also why the concept of an individual capacity to *reason* and *understanding*, also two functions under the term ‘*consciousness*’, is so crucial to Locke both in his epistemology as well as in his theology and conception of the law. Therefore, before we turn to Locke’s Christology, that is the question of Christ’s nature, we must look at the difference between Locke’s conception of Adam and the Second Adam. Therefore, I shall now turn briefly to his understanding of the relationship between the Law of Works and the Law of Faith, which further on Locke’s emphasis on the role of the individual’s use of their reason in Christianity.

7.5 The Law of Faith and the Law of Works

Since the Fall of Adam there have been two major revelations according to the Christian bible. These are called the first covenants, as seen in the Old Testament, with the Law of Moses, and secondly, the second covenant with the coming of Christ. Locke writes that Jesus did not come to dissolve the Law of Moses, but only to fulfil it. This is what he takes to be meant by the Greek work *πληρῶσαι*, meaning fulfil, as Christ came to make the law ‘more full and strict’. Although Locke sees them as part of God’s Law of Nature, he distinguishes between the Moral law, Civil and Ritual Law. As Locke explains in ‘the Law in short’:

The Civil and Ritual part of the Law delivered by *Moses* obliges not Christians, though, to the Jews, it were a part of the Law of Works; it being part of the Law of Nature, that man ought to obey every Positive Law of God, whenever he shall please to make any such addition to the Law of his Nature. But the Moral part of *Moses's* Law, or the Moral Law, (which is every where the same, the Eternal Rule of Right) obliges all men every where, and is to all men the standing of Law of Works.⁶⁰⁴

Now the question is, according to Locke are humans saved according to the Law of Works or the Law of Faith? And which Law is it that Christ fulfils? In the next step, as Locke puts it, 'We must therefore examine and see what God requires is to believe not under the Revelation of the Gospel.'⁶⁰⁵ That is, what is the new that Christ adds to the Law for the 'belief in one invisible, Eternal, Omnipotent God, maker of Heaven and Earth, etc. [which] was required before as well as now.'⁶⁰⁶ For Locke, the answer to this is set down plainly in the Gospel of John, as he writes, 'What we are now required to believe to obtain Eternal Life, is plainly set down in the Gospel. St. *John* tells us, *John* III. 36. *He that believeth in the Son, hath eternal life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life.*'⁶⁰⁷ Therefore the answer is to *believe* that *Jesus is the Messiah the Son of God*, or '*the Son of the living God.*'⁶⁰⁸ Therefore, according to Locke the Law of Works is delivered by Moses, and the Law of '*Faith and Truth came by Jesus Christ*', referring to John I. 17.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁴ WR, 2002: 100

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 101

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 102

⁶⁰⁷ Op. Sit.

⁶⁰⁸ Op. Sit.

⁶⁰⁹ WR, 2002: 98

However, since Jesus Christ came most importantly to *fulfil* the Law of Moses, it is the case that we are saved, by both the Law of Works and the Law of Faith. Faith thus fulfils the Law of Works, as Locke states:

For were there no *Law of Works*, there could be no *Law of Faith*. For there could be no need of Faith, which should be counted to men for Righteousness, if there were no Law to be the Rule and Measure of Righteousness, which men failed in their Obedience to. Where there is no Law, there is no Sin; all are Righteous equally with or without Faith.⁶¹⁰

Here I would like to make a brief comparison between Locke and Hobbes. As we have seen in earlier sections on Hobbes, he argues in the *Leviathan* that there is no definition or distinction between concepts such as right and wrong in the state of nature. Locke argues contrary to this both in the *Two Treatises*, and in the *Reasonableness* as there is *in the very nature* of man, by virtue of being *created* in the *image* of God, already a right and a wrong defined. In this way Locke argues that the *moral* law is both inherent and knowable through the *combination* of reason and revelation. That is by using one's *reason* in understanding and accepting revelation. In this sense salvation is not arbitrary but always in the hands of the faith and actions of the individual. What this means exactly I shall return to in the last section of this chapter.

Therefore, humans are not righteous by following either the Law of Works or the Law of Faith alone, but through the *combination* of understanding and following *both*. As

⁶¹⁰ WR, 2002: 99

Locke writes, ‘the Rule therefore of Right is the same that ever it was, the Obligation to observe it is also the same’, meaning the same as it ever was since the promise of the coming of Messiah and the fulfilment of law. Here he continues making a very astute observation in distinguishing the two laws:

The difference between the *Law of Works* and the *Law of Faith* is only this; that the *Law of Works* makes no allowance for failing on any occasion. Those that obey are Righteous and those that in any part disobey are unrighteous, and must not expect Life the Reward of Righteousness. But by the *Law of Faith*, Faith is allowed to supply the defect of full Obedience; and so the Believers are admitted to Life and Immortality as if they were Righteous.⁶¹¹

Therefore, the Law of Faith is, in other words according to Locke, what he calls the *Moral* part of the Law of Moses. For when the St. Paul wrote that ‘the Gospel establishes the Law’, according to Locke, ‘he could not mean the ceremonial or Political part of it’ but only the ‘Moral part of the Law of *Moses*.’⁶¹² What it means that Jesus Christ was the Moral law, I shall return to when discussing Locke’s Christology, and the nature of Christ.

Furthermore, to the puzzle concerning ‘the Devils’, who ‘believed and declared Jesus to be Messiah’, in response to St James II.19 which states, as cited by Locke ‘*The Devils believe, and tremble and they shall not be saved*’.⁶¹³ While this passage is often taken as the main evidence for salvation through the Law of Works above the Law of

⁶¹¹ WR 2002: 99-100

⁶¹² Ibid., p. 100

⁶¹³ Ibid., p. 167

Faith. Locke answers, first, that God never promised the devils salvation, because it was an ‘Act of Grace, shewn only to Mankind.’ And secondly, ‘That though the Devils believed, yet they could not be saved by the Covenant of Grace’, because they performed not the other Condition required in it, altogether necessary to be performed as this of Believing, and that is *Repentance*’.⁶¹⁴ Therefore, Locke concludes that ‘Repentance is as absolute a Condition of the Covenant of Grace, as Faith; and as necessary to be performed as that’.⁶¹⁵ For how else is God going to be able to forgive the human individual who is aspiring to be righteous unless he or she is repenting? Only through mercy is God able to *forgive* the resentful. Furthermore, in this way, Locke argues that *faith* complements the Law of Works, for it is within the *act* of repentance that works must be done. As he writes, ‘in doing works meet for Repentance, in a sincere Obedience to the Law of Christ, the remainder of our Lives.’ And thus Locke concludes:

These two, Faith and Repentance; i.e. believing in Jesus to be the Messiah, and a good Life; are the indispensable Conditions of the New Covenant to be performed by all those, who would obtain Eternal Life.

Therefore, we also find this a simple answer in accordance to Locke’s Doctrine of Redemption. Referring to the Gospel of John and the occasion of Christ’s preaching in the Temple, Locke writes:

He bids them, John XII .36. *To believe in the Light, whilst they have it.* And he tells them, ver. 46, *I am the Light come in to the world, that every one who*

⁶¹⁴ WR, 2002: 167

⁶¹⁵ Op. cit.

believes in me, should not remain in darkness, which believing in him, was the believing him to be the Messiah, as I have elsewhere showed.⁶¹⁶

Questions still remain for us to more fully understand Locke's Christianity. What *is* the nature of Christ? And what is it that the human reason is supposed to realize through the revelation, the Law of Faith that comes with Christ and the revelation of the New Testament? How is this attainable through reason and why is it, according to Locke, so hard for humans to do this? I shall turn to the first question at hand and examine Locke's his Christology and then conclude this chapter by giving an answer to the latter issues.

7.6 Locke's Christology

The question of the nature of Christ was the most contested point in Locke's own time, where a dubious stance on the nature of Christ was seen as heretical and would lead to accusations of Socinianism.⁶¹⁷ Socinians notoriously denied the divinity of Christ and thereby also the notion of the Trinity. It is notable in the *Reasonableness* that while Locke refers to the Gospel of John multiple times, he omits one of the most central parts. The Gospel of John is also known as 'the spiritual Gospel' as it establishes the *divinity* of Christ. The two most crucial passages are, John 1.1 which states 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' and John 1.14: 'And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.'⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁶ WR, 2002: 143

⁶¹⁷ See for example: John Edwards, *Some Thoughts concerning the Several Causes of Atheism* (1695)

⁶¹⁸ KJV

The gospel thereby argues that Christ was the Word of God incarnated. If Jesus Christ is divine he is also in *substance* the third component in the Trinity.

In this context it is striking that nowhere, in the *Reasonableness* does Locke refer to either John 1.1 or John 1.14. Because of this, it would at first appear that Locke is avoiding the issue of the nature of Christ. This has also become one of the main reasons for the presumption that Locke is denying the *divinity* of Christ and thus subscribing to the Socinian Heresy. According to this reading of ‘Messiah’ in Locke’s Christology he is merely arguing that Christ incarnated only as a messenger, that is a man like everyone else, human and mortal, and that Christ only received his divinity *after* the resurrection.

However, I argue that Locke is doing two things. First since Locke is not denying the divinity of Jesus Christ, I argue that we can understand him in the light of an incarnational Christology, where Christ is the Son of God, and also in nature part of God, and not an offspring of Adam. Secondly, the reason Locke can be misunderstood on this point is because he is still carrying from his epistemology and theory of personal identity the problem of using the term ‘substance’ as a concept. Therefore he is using a different type of language to convey a crucial system—one that is over and above the concept of the Trinity—that is, rather, according to Locke the direct relationship between God, Jesus Christ and the individual human being.

In my exposition of Locke’s Christology I am going to draw on Nuovo’s comparison between Locke’s Christology and that of St. Athanasius (c.296–373) but argue that he

comes to the wrong conclusion.⁶¹⁹ In this context Nuovo recognises two types of Christologies: ‘one represents Christ as mediator between God and man, the *λόγος*, the other as a heavenly man, the founder of a new race, the second Adam.’⁶²⁰ He adds that these two types are not necessarily contradictory and hence not exclusive of each other. Nuovo’s conclusion, however, is that Locke’s Christology should be characterized as a ‘Messianic’, that is, a definition of Jesus Christ as just a man, holding a Kingly office, rather than as a mediator between the nature of God and humanity.⁶²¹ I argue that we can take Locke’s understanding of Jesus Christ one step further, and say that he also holds that Jesus Christ has a mediating position between God and the individual human being, and is therefore more than just a man. In this way Locke’s Christology is *both* incarnational and Messianic. Let me first explain Nuovo’s comparison.

Nuovo’s explains the distinction between the Messianic Christ and the incarnational Christ:

A Messianic Christ achieves this goal through deeds, and, he being a king, the benefits of his saving activity are distributed to those who become his subjects after a judicial process; an incarnational Christ, although not inactive, accomplishes salvation through the communication of his divine being, which he makes available to his beneficiaries by becoming human.⁶²²

⁶¹⁹ WR, 2002: 86

⁶²⁰ Ibid., p. 76

⁶²¹ Op. cit.

⁶²² Op. cit.

Athanasius was also part of the so-called Philonic Logos-tradition and the view that Adam and all his posterity as possessing the *intellectual* capacity to contemplate and reach back to the divine nature. This ‘intellectual capacity’ is the consequence of the fact that mankind was created in the *image* of God and this image is itself a permanent reflection of the divine Logos.⁶²³ In this way, according to incarnational Christology, Christ *is* the incarnation of the Word of Gd, the Logos. He therefore also pre-existed the rest of the creation. According to Athanasius, knowledge through our intellectual capacity, if it is kept pure, becomes the means by which we find truth and the path that leads us beyond the sensible world to contemplation of the divine Logos.⁶²⁴ The Logos is the Son itself, the very expression of the ineffable Father. Athanasius explains that Adam’s Fall was ‘a descent into sensuality and desire, and its consequence is intellectual blindness, irrationality, and death, which, although the soul remains immortal nevertheless is the loss of all that fallen mankind had come to value and hold dear.’⁶²⁵

According to Nuovo, both Athanasius and Locke represent the Fall as a departure from ‘true knowledge of God’. Though, both believe that it is possible, in the present human condition, ‘for a few thoughtful individuals [to] realise a proper intellectual and moral understanding of God’.⁶²⁶ Salvation is thus found through actively contemplating ‘therewith the Word of the Father, in whose image they were made in the beginning’.⁶²⁷ Furthermore, Nuovo writes that both Athanasius and Locke recognize that this salvation is only found through Christ. However, according to Nuvo, it is on the Christology that they differ.

⁶²³ WR, 2002: 76

⁶²⁴ Ibid. See also Athanasius, *Contra Gentes*, §2.

⁶²⁵ Nuovo, 2011:86

⁶²⁶ Op. cit.

⁶²⁷ Ibid., See also Athanasius, *Contra Gentes*, §34.

Nuovo concludes that Locke's Christology is Messianic, and his office is mainly *Kingly*, and thereby Nuovo argues that Locke definition of Second Adam, is just a man of 'vicegerent' of God.⁶²⁸ For Athanasius the work of salvation is accomplished because Christ *is* the Divine Logos, incarnated and thereby restoring the image of God. Nuovo attributes the reason for this difference to 'the fact that Athanasius was a Platonist, whereas Locke was a mere empiricist'.⁶²⁹ However, I would conclude and argue that on my reading of Locke's understanding of reason, he is not that far from being a Platonist himself. Just like Athanasius who is using the concept of the divine *Logos*, Locke is arguing that Christ restores the image of God and eternal life in mankind and thereby fulfils the promise of salvation. This is why revelation is a rational exercise, because the word of God is only *apprehended through* reason.

Furthermore, according to Athanasius, in order to bestow his grace upon mankind, God has therefore first promised that he shall sent the Messiah, and restore the image. He has therefore sent his own *Word*, which is the same as God's reason. Thus the concept of the Logos incarnated *among* humans as Christ, in order so that he, as the image of his Father, might be able to restore man to his true image. As in John 1.14 when 'the word was made flesh', Jesus Christ is therefore a personification of the word of God, the Logos. Similarly, Locke states in the *Reasonableness* that Christ *is* the only *mediator* between God and the individual.

Jesus is the only true *Messiah*; Neither is there any other Person but he given to be a Mediator between God and Man; in whose Name we may ask, and

⁶²⁸ Nuovo, 2011: 87

⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 88

hope for Salvation.⁶³⁰

Locke is here clearly referring to Christ as a mediator, as the word incarnated. This interpretation of the *mediator* fits my previous reading of Locke's conception of reason as Platonic, which we have seen evidence of through in his humble epistemology, where divine knowledge is achieved by those 'who considering themselves as made both of body and soule' and 'in a state of mediocrity make use and follow their reason'. Furthermore, Locke seems to argue that if one minds the state of mediocrity, one can make *right* use of reason, as I have previously discussed in my section on reconsidering Locke's epistemology and Locke's use of the term 'meditation' meditation as a form of '*right* use of their faculties'⁶³¹ Further to this, we now find that Locke is in the *Reasonableness* even referring to reason as 'the Candle of the Lord', in clear echo of term from the Cambridge Platonists. Locke writes:

Yet God had, by the Light of Reason, revealed to all Mankind, who would make use of that Light, that he was Good and Merciful. The same spark of the Divine Nature and Knowledge in Man, which making him a Man, shewed him the Law he was under as a Man; Shewed him also the way of Attonig the merciful, kind, compassionate Author and Father of him of his Being, when he had transgressed that Law. He that made use of this Candle of the Lord, so far as to find what his Duty; could not miss to find also the way to Reconciliation and Forgiveness, when he had failed of his Duty: Though if he used not his

⁶³⁰ WR, 2002: 191

⁶³¹ *Essay*, I.iv.15

reason this way; If he put out, or neglected this Light; he might, perhaps see neither.⁶³²

In this passage of the role of reason or ‘the Candle of the Lord’ is that which humans are meant to humbly see both their *own* faults and mistakes but also the way by which they *realise* God’s merciful nature. That is, humans have been promised the possibility to seek for forgiveness and find righteousness through works, faith and redemption.

Locke therefore argues that the soul can and will be restored to its original metaphysical state, through the faith in Christ. This is in a sense the true relation between reason and revelation. Revelation can only be received through proper understanding and exercise of reason, with the assistance of Christ, God’s Logos, *incarnating* in the world. Thus far, I have highlighted Locke’s relation to the Cambridge Platonists and that he did partake in their work, understanding and application of the concept reason, as the *Candle of the Lord*, as we have seen both in the Essay and in the *Reasonableness*. Therefore we can conclude that Locke’s concept of reason is closer to the Philonic Logos and that Christ as the image carries the status of being *both* a mediator and in nature Divine. And what corresponds to the human mind – our reason, the candle of the Lord.

Furthermore, Locke writes that ‘the Son of God, who are in this like their Father, made after his Image and Likeness’:

⁶³² WR, 2011: 190

But that our Saviour was so, he himself farther declares, John X. 18. Where speaking of his Life, he says, *No one taketh it from me, but I lay it down from my self: I have power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it up again.*

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In this passage Locke concludes that Jesus *could not have* restored the image ‘if he had been a Mortal Man, the Son of a Man, of the Seed of *Adam*’.⁶³⁴ Therefore, this was a voluntary action by Christ to sacrifice his life. Again, reminding ourselves of what is stated in I Corinthians 15.22: ‘For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.’⁶³⁵ Locke thus argues that had not Christ been of the seed of Adam, he would not have been immortal, and thereby not the capacity to *restore* the image. Because Christ’s nature is then not the seed of Adam he must *be* the image, just as argued by Athanasius. Locke continues:

Jesus is the only true *Messiah*; Neither is there any other Person but he given to be a Mediator between God and Man; in whose Name we may ask, and hope for Salvation.⁶³⁶

This definition resonates with Christ *as* the Logos, the *mediator*. Locke avoids commenting on the nature of Christ as a substance, however, he denies that Christ is of the same ‘*Seed of Adam*’. Here, we I would remind the reader what the Cambridge Platonists said about the analogy of *seed*, as I highlighted in my earlier section on Locke’s proof of the existence of God. Locke to applies here the use of seed, as the image of eternal life, similar to as we saw More argue that God, through the human

⁶³³ WR, 2002: 171-172

⁶³⁴ WR, 2002: 171-172

⁶³⁵ *KJV*

⁶³⁶ WR, 2002: 191

reason, 'sets his *Seed* of everlasting Life in our hearts.'⁶³⁷ And furthermore it is striking in this context, that Locke argues that Christ is the 'Second Adam' and not of the same seed from Adam, instead the seed of Christ, restores everlasting life, through the immediate seed (the image!) of God. Locke is therefore also clearly echoing Whichcote's use of the analogy as the seed to represent 'the second Adam.' Again, to reiterate Whichcote's statements that God, through the Candle of the Lord, fills the world with 'Holinesse, and meer Imaginary Rightiousnesse' as 'an *imortall seed* of Grace into the hearts of the true Believers.'⁶³⁸

In this way, revelation is reason enlarged, because it is through reason we can apprehend Christ, faith and true righteousness. This is also what Locke means when he writes that Jesus Christ comes with the 'Law of *Morality*', because, as Locke explains,

this plain, there was need of one to give such a Morality, Such a Law, which might be the sure guide to those who had a desire to go right; And if they had a Mind, need not mistake their Duty; But might be certain when they had performed, when failed in it. Such a Law of *Morality*, Jesus Christ hath given us in the New Testament; But by the latter of these ways, Revelation.⁶³⁹

It is therefore also through the right application of reason, that revelation *and* the Moral Law is apprehended. Reason can therefore be enlarged and enlightened, and in that process revelation is understood, and both faith and grace is bestowed. The further point Locke is making here is that *if* Christ was just a *man* that is a mortal

⁶³⁷ Patrides, 1969: 208

⁶³⁸ Ibid., p. 104

⁶³⁹ WR, 2002: 97-198

human being, 'the seed of Adam', then his word would just have been like any other man's word. Because even if there have been some rational, for example, wise philosophers, then what *obligation* could their theories possibly put us under? There could only be *obligation* by Christ's word and the *moral Law*, as Locke calls it, *if* Jesus Christ was *divine* i.e. not just a human *man*. The purpose of Locke's political works such as the *Letters of Toleration*, *Two Treatises* is to find a rational ground for a *civil* government that reflects the forgiving and humble nature of Christianity while at the same time allows a tolerant environment that safe guards against arbitrary power by human individuals, which is inevitable when we leave either scriptural interpretation or political power up to an infallible interpreter or executer of power.

This is why Locke argues, contrary to Shaftesbury's reading of Locke that there is an objective *moral law*, over and above the human clouded with opinions and fashion, which is the only bidding law that can be known through reason *and* revelation. Shaftesbury is therefore clearly wrong in his reading of Locke as a moral conventionalist, but it would require the *right* use of human *reason* to understand, something it is evident that Shaftesbury failed to do. Unmistakably, Locke even writes in the *Reasonableness*, that '*Plato*' is 'the most soberest of the Philosophers.' No human individual, not *even* someone as enlightened as Plato, can reach full salvation, without having also partaken in the revelation of Christ. The point is that 'Philosophers and wise Men; however excellent in themselves, and well intended by them; could never make Morality, whereof the World could be convinced, could never rise up to force of a Law that Mankind could with certain depend on.'⁶⁴⁰

⁶⁴⁰ WR, 2002: 197

This way of Reconcillation, this hope of Attonement, the Light of Nature revealed to them. And the revelation of the Gospel having said nothing to the contrary, leaves them to stand and fall to their on Father and Master, whose Goodness and Mercy is over all his works.⁶⁴¹

It is therefore Divine Nature and Knowledge *in* Man, it is what makes humans human. The image of God. Therefore, Locke's view of human is therefore also following his fellow Platonists, because it is through the rational part of nature, that humans are also deified.

To conclude then, and tie Locke to Smith and Philo's Philosopher as the true Prophet who is like Plato's philosopher Kings, applying their *right* reason, in a state of mediocrity, in applying and meditating the message of Christ, and thereby apprehending truth and righteousness. Therefore, it is up to each and every individual to make use of his or her reason. As Philo writes that *through* reason 'pouring as it were a noontide light into the whole soul, we, being masters of ourselves, are not possessed by any extraneous influence.'⁶⁴² A method Locke himself certainly applied, as we have seen him previously reporting to van Limborch also in 1695, regarding the progress of his 'careful reading of the New Testament': '...and the doctrine of the Gospel opened up to me as it appeared to me brighter than the noontide light ...'⁶⁴³

⁶⁴¹ WR, 2002: 190

⁶⁴² Hillar, 2012: 62

⁶⁴³ Locke to van Limborch, 10 May 1695 see De Beer, L1901

Chapter 8

Conclusions and Further Research

8.1 Conclusions

In this thesis I have contextualized Locke's philosophy in the Platonic tradition and in seventeenth-century debates drawing on Platonism. In particular, I have compared Locke's metaphysical understanding of the concept of reason to that of the Cambridge Platonists in contrast to Hobbes's definition of reason as purely instrumental. I have further argued that there is a clear influence on Locke from the Cambridge Platonists, placing him in a tradition that can be traced back to Philo's understanding of the Logos through a synthesis of Plato, the Stoics, and the Law of Moses. I therefore argue that Shaftesbury's Hobbist reading of Locke is based on a misreading of Locke's concept of reason, which, when corrected, has major consequences both for his epistemology and theology.

In this context, I have highlighted that in sharing a mutual polemic against Hobbes on the one hand and the religious 'enthusiasts' on the other, we find both the Cambridge Platonists and Locke as aiming to strike 'a middle ground'. This 'middle ground' position allows them to take a humble approach to epistemology, to accept empirically based knowledge, and at the same time allow Christian revelation on the basis of a metaphysical relationship between creaturely reason and divine revelation, that is between the qualities of the human individual and God. In so doing, I have demonstrated that Locke accepts a richer account of reason which can be applied to give us significant insights into other problems of interpreting his philosophy, such as

his argument for the existence of God, his so-called concept of ‘thinking matter’ and the relationship between his theology and theory of personal identity.

Chapter summary

In the first chapter we have seen the third Earl of Shaftesbury accusing Locke for being a ‘Hobbist’. That is, someone who commits to a materialism and moral conventionalism. Shaftesbury bases this critique on three main points: First, the rejection of innate ideas, which leads to the second, moral conventionalism, and which is strengthened by the third, his commitment to theological voluntarism. In this way Shaftesbury’s reading represents a common interpretation of Locke, raising some problems for his empiricist philosophy and how it squares with his religious philosophy. If Locke rejects the concept of innate ideas, then how can he account for moral knowledge without accepting that morality is only a response to non-moral influences, such as hedonism, social order and upbringing? Furthermore, given a standard reading of Locke’s empiricist epistemology – where all knowledge is based on external impressions (such as all knowledge comes from the senses) – how can we have any knowledge of the afterlife, revelation and the immateriality of the soul? Religion and Christian revelation becomes vulnerable to a form of skepticism that is, on this reading, present in all Locke’s thinking. Furthermore, if Locke holds that ‘Morality, Justice, Equity’ is indeed entirely dependent upon the ‘*Law and Will* of God’, as Shaftesbury, harking back to the ‘Euthyphro dilemma’ points out, then even Christian moral prescriptions would be arbitrary to some extent.

I have used Shaftesbury’s critique of Locke’s philosophy as a representation of a prevalent interpretation of Locke’s philosophy both amongst his contemporaries and

in modern scholarship. I have therefore also demonstrated why it is possible to hold such a reading of Locke and where in Locke's writings it is possible to find support of this reading. Locke's *Essay* can still be read as presenting an empiricist epistemology, however, one in which knowledge comes from 'sensation *and* reflection'. On a Hobbist reading of Locke it has been taken that by 'reflection' Locke only refers to the part of our minds that processes external information – information that impresses itself on the mind through external physical causes – processing as it were, the simple ideas that come in through the senses into complex ideas. By this account, reason is merely instrumental in structuring inputs that come through our sensory organs. Thus concepts such as 'good' can only be constructed from our experiences of pain and pleasure. The general conclusion from Shaftesbury to the present day has been that this reading of Locke is obvious and the conclusion is drawn that, whether he liked it or not, Locke was a 'Hobbist'.

Furthermore, if it is indeed correct to read Locke as a 'Hobbist', then that reading must also accept that was influenced by the same sources as Hobbes. In Chapter 2, I have briefly provided a cross section of the historical context to Hobbes' philosophy: from Epicureanism to the Epicurean revival in the 17th century with Gassendi's empiricism and theological voluntarism. Gassendi thought the Epicurean philosophy suited his empirical project with its theory of matter and formation of ideas, including the mortal soul. But he also retained theological concepts of providence and the immateriality of the soul (Gassendi believed humans consists of both) attempting to combine Christianity with Epicurean philosophy. Hobbes, however, while adopting a similar voluntarist theology, did not keep other aspects of Christianity. For example, based on his philosophical mechanism and a materialist view of the human nature, he

took the revival of Epicureanism further and also rejected the immateriality of the soul.

In Chapter 3 I have demonstrated that alongside the Epicurean revival there was also an opposing Hellenistic influence at work in 17th century thought. As a preamble to the 17th century context, I have given an account of some of the most crucial aspects of Platonism in the Hellenistic period, then the Stoic Logos and the development of these two schools in the work of Philo of Alexandria, and the significance Philo's synthesis between Platonism and the Stoic Logos had on his understanding of reason and the Law of Moses. I highlighted that Philo's understanding and application of Hellenistic philosophy in his interpretation of the Old Testament was immensely influential on the Early Church Fathers and therefore an important transmitter of Hellenistic thought into Christianity. Philo's particular understanding of human reason as the Logos also became crucial in the developments of the theory of natural law in the 17th century.

Therefore, in Chapter 4 I looked at how the Philonic concept of Logos was revived in the 17th century. In the first section, I have specifically highlighted that there was a significant growing philo-Semitic sentiment at that time and that the debate concerning two interpretations of reason was very much alive in the period. Philo was an influential source as part of the concept of *right reason*, as exemplified in Hugo Grotius' theory of natural law, which was the crucial source for the revival of natural law theory in the 17th century. It was the revival of natural law theory that sparked a debate in the 17th century concerning law, morality, and reason. This debate became especially pertinent when the new science was viewed as a threat to ethics and

Christian morality. In England Selden and Hobbes both argued, contrary to Grotius, for an *instrumental* account of reason. The Cambridge Platonists then responded to Hobbes by arguing for retaining the classical understating of reason as not merely instrumental.

In the second part of Chapter 4 I have specifically traced the Philonic Logos and philo-Semitism in the philosophy of the Cambridge Platonists, particularly in the works of Ralph Cudworth. This section has given an account of their distinctive conception of reason as ‘the Candle of the Lord’ and how it relates to both the concept of the Logos and of Christ. The Cambridge Platonist’s conception of reason, like the Philonic conception, sees reason as an internal gift from God, as the seed that makes the human individual by nature able to participate in the divine.

In chapter 5 I have specifically examined Locke’s relation to the Cambridge Platonists. Rogers and Nuovo are amongst the few who have recognised that there are some Platonist aspects of Locke’s philosophy, but have been limited in the conclusions they draw. I go on to demonstrate that we can trace both Philo and philo-Semitism in Locke’s intellectual context through looking at his intellectual context at Oxford, his reading, and his manuscripts. I also looked at Locke’s personal encounters with Whichcote as early as 1670 and his later readings of Cudworth after the 1680s, prompted to some extent through meeting Cudworth’s daughter, Lady Damaris Masham, in 1682. I go on to give an account of the influence Damaris had on Locke through correspondence and later co-habitation. The best documented aspects of their relationship are found in the correspondence that took place in 1682 where they discuss their mutual reading of Smith. In Locke’s private notes we can see that he

read Smith and Cudworth over at least two significant periods, in 1682 and in 1688. At these times, the topics he is taking notes on are Divine knowledge, Enthusiasm, and the immortality of the soul. Locke also made notes on Smith and Cudworth with regards to understanding prophesies and theories of revelation. Strikingly, some of these notes also include references to Philo. By this I have demonstrated that Locke was engaging with Philo and the Cambridge Platonists and that Platonist conceptions of reason and the divine were familiar and live options for Locke and his contemporaries.

In Chapter 6, which is my ‘keystone’ chapter, I applied the new sources that we have gained from the intellectual background from Philo to the Cambridge Platonists, as a new way to reinterpret two crucial and particularly puzzling parts of Locke’s philosophy as presented in his *Essay*: his proof of God’s existence in book IV.10 and his ‘passing remark’ that God might have superadded thought to matter in IV.iii.6. By re-examining these passages in the light of our new understanding of Locke’s concept of reason as emerging in the context of the Platonic *right reason*, I argued that we can see that there is conformity between his epistemology, his rejection of materialism, and his proof of the existence of God.

I argued that in Locke’s epistemology when we find that he holds that knowledge comes from ‘sensation *and* reflection’, we should understand *reflection* to be the work of an internally *active* and non-instrumental reason. Secondly, I argued in this chapter that we can understand puzzling aspects of Locke’s proof of the existence of God in the light of the direct influence of Cudworth’s Platonism, which fits with Locke’s presentation of reason in the earlier chapters of the *Essay*, as well as his general

rebuttal of materialism. Therefore, thirdly, I demonstrated that Locke's passing remark on 'thinking matter' should be understood as in fact part of Locke's *rebuttal* of materialism.

Having established that Locke is not a materialist and his Platonist concept of reason is compatible both with his epistemology and his proof of God's existence, I argued in Chapter 7 that his Platonist conception of reason and reflection also fits with his idea of personal identity and his theology. I concluded that Locke's theory of consciousness fits with his Doctrine of Salvation, and messianic Christology. A platonic reading of Locke therefore unites the *Essay* with his theology in the *Reasonableness*.

8.2 A Reply to Third Earl of Shaftesbury

We now have in place all we need to reply to Shaftesbury's critique of Locke. The critique rested on three aspects of Locke's philosophy. First, was the rejection of innate ideas. I have demonstrated in this thesis that Locke is not a hardcore empiricist like Hobbes or Hume. Locke says that ideas come from the senses *and from reflection*, which a Platonist understanding of Locke's concept of reason helps us to see is an active power or source to gaining ideas, just as well as the external senses are giving ideas about the external world, internal reflection is responsible of giving ideas of our experience of our own mind, and self. Only the combination of these two sources gives the higher order of understanding characteristic intelligent, reasoning beings. Even if the ideas themselves are not produced until we start gaining experience, this experience has two influences, the internal workings of the mind and the external

workings of our bodily senses. Shaftesbury only understands an oversimplified version of Locke's rejection of innatism. In this way Locke is not rejecting an active internal mind, only rethinking the way in which ideas are delivered to that mind.

The second point of Shaftesbury's critique is that Locke, like Hobbes, endorses moral conventionalism because moral ideas are mixed modes. My answer here is that while a mixed mode account may be necessary for a conventional understanding of morality, it does not follow that Locke accepts this view. Rather, Locke thinks that moral knowledge requires the proper application of reason, especially through meditation upon the teachings of the New Testament. In my exposition of Locke's *Reasonableness*, I show how the objective, true morality will be available to any individual who properly applies their *own*, God-given reason. And so Locke's metaphysics meets his epistemology: we are created in the image of God as thinking beings, but also as individuals – which means that to appreciate life we must both experience the world (through our senses) and reflect upon it (through reason). Locke's Platonism becomes particularly clear when he emphasises that the weakness of the fallen humanity lies in an imbalance between sense and reflection and allowing passions to take control. In this way he argues for a state of mediocrity, that is endorsing a state, between the body and the mind by endorsing both and making active use of one's reason. Furthermore, Locke argues when individuals give up their reasoning process to other individuals, and not make the efforts themselves to reflect and meditate, then they deny their very nature, that is, God's *gift* to mankind. What is left leads to a state of darkness and eventually a mortal death.

Turning to Shaftesbury's third and final criticism, we find Locke's apparent commitment to theological voluntarism. Does the moral law stem from God's will or from His reason? I think the simple answer is that, just as we have seen in the Cambridge Platonists, Locke takes the answer to be 'both'. Therefore Locke's commitment to voluntarism does not have the consequence Shaftesbury thinks it does. It is not possible to make a clear cut distinction between God's will and his reason, or place Locke exclusively on one side of the debate or the other. Moral obligations stem from both God's will *and* from the exercise of our reason, which is a gift from God by which we participate in God's own reason. However, what we have seen in Locke's *Reasonableness*, the Law is given to mankind in stages, and the Law was completed through the coming of Christ, who incarnated and gave the moral law, the Law of Faith as appose to Mosaic Law which is the Law of Works.

The epistemology of voluntarism is assuming that we have knowledge of God *a posteriori*, that is we can only know God's will after revelation. The epistemology of rationalism assumes this *a priori*, that is, reason contains certain truths or that the structure of reason is so set that it automatically discovers a certain set of *a priori* truths. According to Locke, however, just as there are no infallible interpreter of scripture, ultimately, we cannot *know* God's will, and the law is God's will. However, Locke adds a rationalist premise to the voluntarist premise. Reason is sufficient to guide us with respect to the moral law because it is aligned with God's reason (i.e. his *will*). In this way, Locke accepts voluntarism but God's will and God's reason are not opposed. God's will is not arbitrary.

Therefore, to conclude my reply to Shaftesbury, I find his critique, along with the ‘Hobbist’ reading of Locke which persists to the present day, a simplistic reading of select passages of his works. His narrow account would be true if we chose to ignore Locke’s platonic conception of reason, but that is to ignore the subtlety of Locke’s thought and its development in a context where Hobbist instrumental reason was only one option. Reason, properly understood, is the red thread bringing coherence to Locke’s philosophy.

8.3 Further research

With Locke’s diverse range of topics covering natural and revealed theology, metaphysics, epistemology, science and politics, it is easy to, as Pyle writes, ‘sacrifice depth for breadth or vice versa’.⁶⁴⁴ Locke’s life’s work is considerable and not to mention all the access and material we have in terms of private notes and letters. Furthermore, *God* and *reason* are themes that can be traced throughout Locke’s thought and his life’s works, including his private notes and letters. Therefore, I have found that almost every topic, in that sense, is interconnected, in particularly as I have taken a more holistic approach to understanding his thought.

In order to make the project manageable, my focus has therefore been on contextualising two of Locke’s published works: the *Essay* and the *Reasonableness*. By focussing on these two important later works of epistemology and religion respectively, I hope to have shown that my interpretation of Locke’s epistemology and theology is coherent as it helps us to address some long-standing interpretive

⁶⁴⁴ Pyle, 2012: 2

puzzles. I have combined my study of these two works with some foundational work in the history of ideas, through demonstrating an important strand from Plato, to Philo, and to the revival of natural law theory and the Cambridge Platonists in the 17th century. By placing Locke in this context, I have specifically looked at his readings of the Cambridge Platonists, his engagement with their sources and his correspondence with Lady Damaris Masham, daughter of Ralph Cudworth. This work has taken us through some of Locke's private notes, in particular those he made in 1682 and in 1688. These were crucial periods for Locke and for his formation of the *Essay*, and we can therefore claim that what he was thinking about at the time would have also had an influence on the *Essay*. However, there is more work to be done on this topic, and a more thorough search of his manuscripts between 1682-1688 would be a first stage.

Also with regards to Locke's theory of Natural Law, more specific work can be done by tying his earlier writings to his later works, establishing that there is further a continuum between his early and later thought, and that they are namely part of one view of reason, God and the individual, with only the particulars changing as the details are spelled out. There is also undoubtedly more work to be done on looking at Locke's view of God. This further research would also include a further clarification of the complex relationship between Locke's voluntarism and his rationalism. Furthermore, I have had to exclude commenting on all of Locke's adversaries, and there is an abundance of work to do to elaborate my interpretation by looking at his letters and replies, especially for example to Bishop Stillingfleet and the adversaries of the *Reasonableness*. The focus on the *Essay* and the *Reasonableness* has been to establish the coherence of the interpretation and the plausibility in context.

Ultimately, however, it will have to be tested against a fuller survey of Locke's writings.

Furthermore, with regards to Locke's friendship with Damaris, I have only discussed their correspondence in 1682 on particular philosophical topics. What their life was like after 1690, and what influence Damaris would have had on Locke through their long-standing friendship is something which requires more research. Once Locke is living at Oates, we cannot read their relationship and conversations in letters, so are forced to piece together what it would have been like through looking at their separate correspondences. In this context it would also be interesting to also compare Damaris's own writings, such as *A Discourse Concerning the Love of God* (1696) and *Thoughts in reference to a Vertuous or Christian Life* (1705) to what Locke was writing at the time. After all, we can expect they were sharing and discussing drafts with each other. Hopefully a greater interpretive openness to the Platonistic themes in Locke will reveal an extensive region of mutual interest. And as for Damaris, I think she is an overlooked philosopher in her own right, as has recently been drawn to attention by Sarah Hutton.

Until further research can be commenced, let me therefore conclude this thesis with an appeal to the reader to make use of his or her own reason and to keep in mind Locke's words: 'Every man carries about him a touchstone, if he will make use of it, to distinguish substantial gold from superficial glitterings; truth from appearances.'⁶⁴⁵

⁶⁴⁵ *Conduct* §98

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