

X. LOCKE AND HIS CRITICS ON THE POSSIBILITY OF MATERIAL MINDS

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Draft for Wolfe and Symons (ed.), *History and Philosophy of Materialism*

June 9, 2023

X.1 Introduction

Human beings think, but do they think because thinking is a power of their material body, or because there is an immaterial thinking part of them? This is a question John Locke asked in his *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, to which he responded agnostically. Locke thought that we do not know either of those answers to be correct, but also do not know either of them to be incorrect. Notably, Locke said that one version of the materialist view might be true: that it is possible that we think because God has superadded the power of thought to matter in us. I begin in section 2 by reviewing some main relevant texts in the *Essay*. These offer contrasting views about God (a thinking thing who must be immaterial) and human minds (which think, but may for all we know be material). I then look in section 3 at Locke's views about non-human finite minds: the minds of animals and angels. Section 4 focuses on Locke's suggestion that God might superadd thought to matter.

Having looked at Locke, I consider two important examples of the early critical reaction to Locke's discussion of materialism. Here, as in later sections, I focus on the Anglophone reaction to Locke. Section 5 is about criticisms made by Edward Stillingfleet, the Bishop of Worcester, in three works of late 1690s, to each of which Locke replied in print. Section 6 then looks at another critic of the same period, the anonymous author of three sets of *Remarks* on Locke's *Essay*, who seems likely to have been another Anglican clergyman, Richard Willis. Both Stillingfleet and the author of the *Remarks* discuss Locke's talk of materialism and superaddition.

In the last three sections I consider other responses to Locke's discussion of materialism, trying to illustrate the wide range of reactions Locke's readers had. Section 7 looks at Anthony Collins and John Toland, both of whom are thought of as materialists, and held philosophical views connected to Locke's. I ask whether either of them held a view one could reasonably regard as Lockean materialism. In section 8 I approach the question of Locke and materialism from a different angle by looking at the work of William Carroll, who argued that Locke himself was a Spinozistic materialist. Finally, in section 9 I look at the treatment of materialism in William Duncan's Lockean logic textbook. Duncan uses materials from the *Essay* to construct a dualistic Lockean view.

X.2 Locke: Main Texts

John Locke is well known for several philosophical works: the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, the *Two Treatises of Government*, and writings on toleration, education, and Christianity. The *Essay* was first published in 1689 and went through four editions in Locke's lifetime, in which he made significant revisions. The four books of the *Essay* are devoted to,

respectively, arguing that there are no innate principles or ideas; explaining the ultimate origin of all our ideas in experience; explaining the workings of language; and presenting a theory of knowledge, judgment, assent, faith, reason, and enthusiasm. Within all that, we find Locke discussing what we can and cannot know about the nature of the human mind.

Early in the *Essay* Locke seems to reject the investigation of the nature of the mind.

This, therefore, being my *Purpose* to enquire into the Original, Certainty, and Extent of humane Knowledge; together, with the Grounds and Degrees of Belief, Opinion, and Assent; I shall not at present meddle with the Physical Consideration of the Mind; or trouble my self to examine, wherein its Essence consists, or by what Motions of our Spirits, or Alterations of our Bodies, we come to have any Sensation by our Organs, or any *Ideas* in our Understandings; and whether those *Ideas* do in their Formation, any, or all of them, depend on Matter or no: These are speculations, which, however curious and entertaining, I shall decline, as lying out of my way in the design I am now upon (*Essay* 1.1.2).¹

First, Locke rejects an investigation of the physical process of sensation and the formation of ideas. Second, he rejects physiological investigations of the mind in general, and the search for explanations of its workings in terms of the motions of spirits; Locke is not going to give us an equivalent for the understanding of the physiological aspects of Descartes's *Passions of the Soul*. Third, Locke rejects an investigation of the essence of the mind. Though Locke sticks to the first two rejections, he does not stick to the third. The essence of the mind is never his main topic, but he does eventually comment on it. It is worth noting three significant discussions: one in *Essay* 2.23, a chapter on ideas of substances; one in *Essay* 4.3, a chapter on the extent of our knowledge; and one in *Essay* 4.10, a chapter on the existence and nature of God.

In *Essay* 2.23 Locke's discussion is about ideas of substances (mostly of substance kinds, though also of individual substances). Locke begins the chapter by discussing how such ideas are formed and structured, moves to discussing the ideas of body and spirit, and concludes by discussing the idea of God.

An idea of a substance kind is, for Locke, a complex idea. It has as parts the ideas of various qualities. In that way it is like what Locke had called in the previous chapter a 'mixed mode', which is a complex idea of a quality, state, or activity. The idea of a substance kind differs, however, by including an extra part: the idea of an underlying substratum, because "not imagining how these simple *Ideas* [or qualities] can subsist by themselves, we accustom our selves, to suppose some *Substratum*, wherein they do subsist, and from which they do result, which therefore we call *Substance*" (*Essay* 2.23.1).

¹ I give references to Locke's *Essay* by book, chapter, and section number, using Nidditch's edition (Locke 1975).

Locke's discussion of the ideas of body and spirit follows that general discussion, connected by the fact that these are ideas of substance kinds. One of Locke's main aims here is to block an argument for materialism. That argument moves from obscurities in, or perhaps the incoherence of, the idea of an immaterial spirit, to the conclusion that we ought not to believe there are any immaterial spirits. We can trace this discussion back, through Henry More's reply to Hobbes, to Hobbes's own claim that talk of incorporeal substance is insignificant, i.e., lacks the semantic property of signification (Hobbes 1994, 4.21, 5.5; More 1659, 64–74; Duncan 2022, 108–30). Locke replies that the idea of spirit is no more obscure than the idea of body: that the idea of a thinking, willing substance is no more obscure than the idea of a substance with "solid coherent parts" that communicates motion by impulse (*Essay* 2.23.30). Indeed, Locke emphasizes the puzzles involved in our understanding of body, especially puzzles about cohesion. From a Hobbesian perspective Locke's reply seems to miss the point: Hobbes was not worried about thinking beings, but about incorporeal ones. In *Essay* 2.23, though not in general, Locke appears to run those two notions together, something that his critics would notice and work with.

Locke opposes that Hobbesian argument, and does not give his own argument for the truth of materialism. In *Essay* 4.3 he does, however, give an argument for the possibility of materialism. Indeed, this is his most notable contribution to the debate.

Consider two prominent earlier views. Hobbes thought that 'incorporeal substance' was insignificant speech. This suggests that dualist views according to which human minds are incorporeal substances are not even possibly true, because they cannot be meaningfully stated. On the other side of the debate, Descartes thought the notion of an extended thinking thing was in error. For Descartes, there are some substances with the principal attribute of thinking (minds), others with the principal attribute of extension (bodies), and no possibility of some substance with both of those attributes. Given this framework, materialism about the human mind is not just false, but impossible.

Locke counters that materialism about human minds is, like dualism, a coherent hypothesis that is possibly true.

We 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 Matter a Faculty of Thinking, than that he should superadd to it another Substance, with a Faculty of Thinking; since we know not wherein Thinking consists, nor to what sort of Substances the Almighty has been pleased to give that Power, which cannot be in any created Being, but merely by the good pleasure and Bounty of the Creator (*Essay* 4.3.6).

God can do anything. Given that, God can give the power of thought to some systems of matter, such as human brains, over and above their other features. That process of adding an extra feature is what Locke calls *superaddition*. This process, and the subsequent workings of a material mind, are mysterious to us. Then again, the creation and workings of an immaterial thinking substance are also mysterious to us. We do not, and should not expect to, understand everything about the world. But as far as we can understand things, both a material mind and an immaterial one are possible, and either might be what is responsible for thought in a human being.

Locke thinks that a materialist account of human minds is possible. The same is not true for all minds: he denies that God could be a material being. Locke argues at length in *Essay* 4.10 that the eternal being—the existence of which he thinks he has proved—could not be an unthinking material being (*Essay* 4.10.9–12) and could not be a thinking material being (*Essay* 4.10.13–17). Nor indeed could there be two eternal beings, both God and matter (*Essay* 4.10.18–19). There is exactly one eternal being: a thinking, immaterial God. God has the power to make material beings think, but could not himself be material.

X.3 Locke: Finite Minds

Locke has told us that God cannot be material, but human minds could be. What about other finite minds, the minds of animals and angels?

Considering animal minds, and given the prominence of Cartesian views in his time, Locke also faced a more basic question, namely whether animals had any minds at all. Descartes thought that non-human animals lacked the general power of reason and the ability to use language. He denied that non-human animals possess minds, immaterial thinking substances. And he consequently denied that non-human animals had sensations in the fullest sense, because the final and highest act of sensation is a perception in that immaterial mind. A non-human animal is, for Descartes, a sort of biological machine, carefully designed to respond to its environment in certain ways, but not a being that really thinks about that environment, or about anything else.

Locke, on the other hand, believes that animals do think. Every animal has at least the basic mental power of perception, even such a simple thinking thing as an oyster. Many other animals do not merely perceive, but also have other mental abilities. Locke does grant that there are some mental abilities all non-human animals lack: perhaps reason (*Essay* 4.17.1) or the power of abstraction (*Essay* 2.11.5). Still, for Locke, non-human animals are clearly thinking things. Perception is indeed what distinguishes animals from plants, which do react to the world around them, but do so by “bare Mechanism” alone, not perception (*Essay* 2.9.11).

Are thinking animals purely material beings, or do they have immaterial minds? Locke surely did not think that we knew that non-human animals had immaterial minds—else why not say the same about humans? The interpretive question is, then, did Locke think we knew materialism was true of animal minds, or did he think that we should be agnostic about their nature, as

about the nature of human minds? It is surprisingly difficult to find a text in which Locke directly states his view on this matter, but there is one. In writing to Stillingfleet, Locke appears to say that the ability of irrational animals to sense is the result of God's superaddition of sense to matter (Locke 1824, 3.462). This is a materialist view, but one that involves superaddition. If God had not superadded sense, says Locke, there would just have been "dull dead earth". A materialist account involving superaddition may or may not be true about us, but it is true about non-human animals.

The other non-human finite thinkers Locke acknowledges are angels. Here too there had been disputes about their nature. Hobbes, indeed, had proposed a materialist account of them.² Locke accepts that there are angels, and that they are higher beings than us because of their greater mental perfections (*Essay* 4.3.17). He suggests, indeed, that angels "can assume to themselves Bodies" (*Essay* 2.23.13). But despite that, he thinks that angels are indeed immaterial beings (*Essay* 4.16.12).

Consider then Locke's picture of the hierarchy of thinking beings. At the top is God, who is immaterial. Beneath God but above us are angels, who are also immaterial. Our nature is unknown: perhaps we think because we possess immaterial minds, but perhaps we think because God has superadded thought to the matter in us. Beneath us in the hierarchy are thinking animals, who think in the ways they do because God has superadded that power to matter. And beneath them, out of the hierarchy of thinking beings entirely, are plants, which react to the world by mechanism alone, without perception.

X.4 Locke: Superaddition

The notion of superaddition, possible and actual, is central to Locke's story about the natures of thinking beings. But what is superaddition? In some sense it is what it says it is—to superadd is to add on top, so to superadd a feature to a substance is to add that feature on top of those that are already present.

How can this be done? The first answer to that question is, by the power of God. But then another question arises, namely, how does this superadded feature relate to the body's other features? It seems plausible that changes in the superadded features will supervene on changes in the underlying qualities of the body, but that alone is not a full picture, and different interpreters of Locke give different accounts of the details here. One central question on which those accounts differ is whether Locke thinks superadded qualities "flow from the nature, or real essence" of the bodies to which they have been superadded, in a way in which he seems to think qualities usually do (Connolly 2015, 53).³

² In chapter 34 of *Leviathan* Hobbes defends his materialism against the objection that scripture shows there are immaterial substances, including angels.

³ Locke talks of 'flowing' in *Essay* 2.23.3 and 3.3.17.

One might think that superadded qualities still do flow from natures—that this ‘flowing from’ is a persistent Lockean view, which he does not give up in talking of superaddition. On this reading, God will have to do something else to the body to which he superadds a quality, in order then to produce the quality. That something might be the rearrangement of the small parts of the body, to produce a new structure that then gives rise to the superadded quality (Ayers 1991) or it might involve changing the underlying nature of the thing (Downing 2007). Once God has set up this new system, the presence of thought in the body will flow from, and be explained by, its nature.

Other readings take Locke to think that superadded qualities do not ‘flow from’ bodies’ natures. The presence of superadded qualities cannot be explained simply with reference to the nature of bodies, even their nature after the act of superaddition. Indeed, it cannot be properly explained without invoking God. One might take the presence of a superadded quality in a body to be simply the result of God’s will (Wilson 1999, 196–214), or to be the result of God’s will in a more complicated way that involves laws of nature (McCann 1994).⁴ In my own work (Duncan 2022, 154–7) I have argued for a version of this view, based on Locke’s use in *Essay* 4.10 of principles about the causation of perfections. The natures of bodies, even after superaddition, are simply not perfect enough to cause the presence of thought in those bodies—only God could do that.

X.5 Edward Stillingfleet against Locke

Edward Stillingfleet, the Bishop of Worcester, engaged in a lengthy public dispute with Locke, involving three publications by each participant.⁵ Stillingfleet’s first criticisms of Locke are in his *Discourse in Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, a work that is chiefly targeted at authors Stillingfleet describes as Socinians and unitarians. In chapter X, Stillingfleet addresses “The Objections Against the Trinity in Point of Reason” (Stillingfleet 1697a). His discussion begins with John Toland’s *Christianity not Mysteries*, which uses Lockean epistemic views (see section X.7 below) but Stillingfleet soon brings in Locke himself as one of “the Gentlemen of the new way of reasoning” (Stillingfleet 1697a, 234). He focuses initially on what Locke says about our ideas of substance, and repeatedly quotes *Essay* 2.23. But Stillingfleet comes also to Locke’s comment about superaddition in *Essay* 4.3, worrying that, given Locke’s views on that issue, “it is impossible to prove a Spiritual Substance in us, from *the idea of Thinking*” (241). Moving on again, Stillingfleet continues to think about the *Essay*, looking at the discussion in 4.10 and Locke’s views on essences before eventually returning (Stillingfleet 1697a, 262) to his discussion of Toland.

Locke responded to Stillingfleet’s criticisms, prompting an *Answer* from Stillingfleet later in 1697. I will not focus on Locke’s responses, but it is worth noting that Locke says here that

⁴ See also Stuart (2013, 273) arguing that Locke has no theory of how God might superadd thought to matter.

⁵ Stillingfleet (1697a; 1697b; 1698). Locke’s responses are collected in Locke 1824, vol. 3. On Stillingfleet, see Stewart (2000) and Stuart (2015).

although we cannot know whether materialism or dualism is the correct account of the human mind, it “it in the highest degree probable, that the thinking substance in us is immaterial” (Locke 1824, 3.33, cf. 3.37). We also find Locke defending his account of ideas of substances, emphasizing that on his view we have ideas of both “bodily” and “spiritual” substances. These appear to be the ideas of “something extended, and solid, and figured” on the one hand, and of “something that thinks” on the other (Locke 1824, 3.29). That is, the idea of a spiritual substance here is not the idea of an immaterial substance, which is surely what Stillingfleet was concerned about.

Indeed, Stillingfleet notes just that issue in his *Answer*—that “*Thinking Substance is in your Sense a Spirit*” but “The question I put is, Whether *Matter* can think or not” (Stillingfleet 1697b, 48). Stillingfleet quotes Locke in *Essay* 2.23 defining an immaterial substance as a thinking substance (Stillingfleet 1697b, 51–2). Picking up on this comment of Locke’s, Stillingfleet can raise considerable questions about what Locke is trying to do. For Locke’s statement that “by putting together the *Ideas* of Thinking and Willing ... joined to Substance ... we have the *Idea* of an immaterial Spirit” (*Essay* 2.23.15) is not easily reconciled with the claim that God might make us think by superadding thought to matter. We might think Locke is simply being careless in adding ‘immaterial’ in 2.23.15, but if one takes that use seriously, the later discussion of superaddition seems to be undermined.⁶

Stillingfleet also invokes Locke’s discussion in *Essay* 4.10, where Locke argues that God must be immaterial. Stillingfleet suggests that “the same Reason will hold, as to any thinking Substance. Because the Argument is not drawn from any thing peculiar to the Divine Perfections, but from the general *Idea* of Matter” (Stillingfleet 1697b, 77–8). He also argues that superaddition as described by Locke involves God in doing something that simply cannot be done, for “while he continues the Essential Properties of Things, it is as impossible for Matter to think, as for a Body by Transubstantiation to be present after the manner of a Spirit” (Stillingfleet 1697b, 79). Locke’s claims about superaddition are, says the Anglican Stillingfleet, as bad as Roman Catholic claims about transubstantiation, and indeed for similar reasons. These alleged metaphysical wonders are simply not possible, and one does not in any good sense limit God’s power by denying he can do them.⁷

Stillingfleet’s *Answer* prompted a second response from Locke, which in turn prompted Stillingfleet’s *Answer to Mr. Locke’s Second Letter* (Stillingfleet 1698). Stillingfleet does not focus on superaddition there, but we do find him criticizing Locke for making the immortality of the soul a matter of faith (Stillingfleet 1698, 28). This second *Answer* of Stillingfleet’s itself in its turn prompted a response from Locke, the final part of this exchange. There would be many other criticisms of Locke in the future, and his exchange with Stillingfleet can seem “long-winded, repetitive, and pedantic” (Stuart 2015, 369) but Stillingfleet did raise significant issues

⁶ This discussion gives Stillingfleet occasion to introduce Hobbes’s materialism to the discussion (Stillingfleet 1697b, 55–6).

⁷ Here Stillingfleet manages to include the thought that one way to make matter think would be to do so as Spinoza did (on a materialist reading of Spinoza).

that persisted in later discussions, particularly around whether and how Locke's claims about the mind in *Essay* 2.23, 4.3, and 4.10 fit together.

X.6 Three Sets of *Remarks* on the *Essay*

Between 1697 and 1699 a series of three works criticizing Locke—the *Remarks*, *Second Remarks*, and *Third Remarks on an Essay Concerning Humane Understanding*—was published anonymously (Anonymous 1697a; 1697b; 1699). These have often been attributed to Thomas Burnet, the author of the *Telluris Theoria Sacra* and a chaplain to William III, but Walmsley et al (2016) argue the author was Richard Willis, another clergyman—indeed, another of the many chaplains to William III—who himself later became a bishop.

Each of the sets of *Remarks* touches on superaddition. In the first (as indeed the second) that discussion is embedded in a discussion of immortality. The initial discussion of immortality is introduced with the worry that, given two Lockean principles, it may be impossible to prove the immortality of the soul. These two principles are, first, that the mind is not always thinking (*Essay* 2.1) and second, that it is possible that God has superadded thought to matter (Anonymous 1697a, 8). If the soul is not “a Substance, distinct from Matter” then it will be “dissolv'd” with that body, rather than being immortal (Anonymous 1697a, 12). The author also finds it “unconceivable” that “Cogitation shou'd be a Property or Modification of Matter it self” (Anonymous 1697a, 13).

Locke's brief reply to the *Remarks* does not address superaddition (Locke 1824, 3.186–9). On immortality, Locke makes two replies: first, that Stillingfleet has offered a proof of the soul's immateriality on Lockean principles (“which, I suppose, this author will not question to be a proof of its immortality”), and second, “a principle of mine that will clear it to him; and that is, the revelation of life and immortality of Jesus Christ, through the gospel” (Locke 1824, 3.188). All of which is in fact consistent with Locke's anonymous critic being correct that it is impossible to prove the immortality of the soul on the principles found in the *Essay*.

The critic continues to worry about superaddition in the *Second* and *Third Remarks*. In the *Second*, he suggests that the soul seems, in the system of the *Essay*, to be a power of, or attached to, the body—“whether that be a Superior Divine Power, distinct from Matter, as a *vis movens*; or a Power fastned [sic], I know not how, to the Body”—and that any such view, no matter how the details are worked out, will imply that the soul ceases to exist when the body does (Anonymous 1697b, 14). That might seem, from a Lockean perspective, simply to show the importance of Locke's account of personal identity as something that does not depend directly on any substance, material or immaterial.

We find some further discussion in the *Third Remarks*, where Locke's critic addresses the capabilities of matter (Anonymous 1699, 16ff). Here we find a more developed discussion of superaddition and materialism. An argument against the possibility of thinking matter is introduced by the thought that we should focus on what is conceivable or otherwise by us, rather than what is possible for God. We should not, the author continues, say anything

unconceivable is possible without some “positive Assurance” (Anonymous 1699, 17) that it is so. But Locke has no “positive Evidence” (Anonymous 1699, 17) of the possibility of matter thinking, which is in itself unconceivable by us. And so, it appears, we should not say it is possible for matter to think.

That is followed by a series of arguments for the claim that thinking matter is unconceivable. The first involves there being a unity of perception—perception involving one “Common Percipient” (Anonymous 1699, 17)—that is inconsistent with the divisibility of matter. It seems less to be divisibility that is at issue, and more that fact that one special bit of matter would have to be that common percipient. The author connects this to some of Locke’s own comments in *Essay* 4.10.17. The critic then moves on to pointing out oddities in the thought that some part of the human body has free will (Anonymous 1699, 18–20), before questioning whether one can give a purely corporeal account of memory (Anonymous 1699, 20).

There’s also a rejection of any simple appeal to the power of God to ground the possibility of materialism. Even granting that God can make anything that is possible, it may be (and the critic has been arguing) that a material human mind is impossible. A little later, the author speculates that Locke’s underlying view is that of those who think there are fundamentally two things, God and matter, what the critic calls “Philosophical Deism” (Anonymous 1699, 22). This is a view that Locke appears to argue against in *Essay* 4.10.18–19. The core of the critical issue in the *Third Remarks* is, however, whether thinking matter is in any sense possible. If it is impossible, then it cannot be brought about, even by the power of God.⁸

X.7 John Toland, Anthony Collins and Lockean Materialism

In looking at Stillingfleet’s comments and those in the *Remarks*, I have been focusing on criticisms of Locke. But there were other, more sympathetic reactions. In this section I look briefly at two authors whom we might be tempted to think of as Lockean materialists: philosophers who were each influenced by Locke, and who seem to have held materialist views.⁹

John Toland’s *Christianity not Mysterious* uses Lockean epistemological views to argue that “That there is nothing MYSTERIOUS, or ABOVE Reason in the GOSPEL” (Toland 1696, 66). That claim itself is not Lockean—Locke says that some issues are above reason, and properly the matter of *faith* (*Essay* 4.18.7). But the Lockean principles involved meant this book was associated with Locke, particularly indeed by Stillingfleet. They also provide the most obvious evidence that Toland, as a philosopher, was a sort of Lockean. Toland was also a sort of materialist. Leibniz, from conversations, described Toland’s view on this issue in 1702 as being

⁸ Locke was defended by Catherine Trotter (later Cockburn), who in 1702 published *A Defence of the Essay of Human Understanding, written by Mr. Lock* (Cockburn 1751, 1.73–112). She starts on the topic of superaddition, and remarks upon the lengthy discussion in the *Third Remarks*, at Cockburn (1751, 1.87).

⁹ This section draws on Duncan (2022, 177–82).

“precisely that of Hobbes, that there is nothing else in nature than its shapes and motions” (Leibniz 2011, 293).

Toland was thus both a Lockean and a materialist. Stuart Brown (2001, 149) describes Toland’s view in the 1702 discussions as seeming to be “a kind of materialistic Lockeanism,” apparently because of Toland’s attachment to “a Lockean empiricism”. It is not obvious, however, that Toland’s materialism is closely connected to his Lockeanism. Toland admired Locke and used Lockean epistemic principles. But his materialism seems not to be connected to Lockean principles and makes no use of the Lockean notion of superaddition. Thus, I suggest, Toland was a Lockean and a materialist, but not a Lockean materialist.

Anthony Collins is another author we might be tempted to think of as a Lockean materialist.¹⁰ In his debate with Samuel Clarke in the early years of the eighteenth century, Collins defended the view that matter can possibly think. Collins’s contributions are set in a Lockean framework, and unlike Toland he uses the notion of superaddition. For example, in response to Clarke arguing that a thinking being must be unified in a way matter cannot be, Collins asks why God could not superadd the power of thought to a material system (Clarke and Collins 2011, 48). Collins is less clearly a materialist than Toland, but the views he has that approach materialism are much more clearly Lockean: he uses the Lockean notion of superaddition, and defends the possibility of matter thinking, rather than its actuality.

Neither Toland nor Collins, then, is obviously a Lockean materialist: Toland because his materialism seems not Lockean, Collins because as a Lockean he appears, at least in his initial letter to Clarke, to stop short of materialism. In the next section however I look at an author, William Carroll, who thought there really was a Lockean materialist, namely Locke himself.

X.8 William Carroll: Locke as a Spinozist Materialist

In 1706 William Carroll published *A Dissertation upon the Fourth Chapter of the Tenth Book of Mr. Locke’s Essay, concerning Humane Understanding*, a book “wherein”, the title continues, “That Author’s Endeavours to Establish Spinoza’s Atheistical Hypothesis ... are Discover’d and Confuted”. All of which might sound surprising given any more or less standard account of what Locke was up to. Carroll has a distinctive place in the history of thinking about Locke and materialism, because he thought (1) that Spinoza was a materialist atheist, who believed the only substance was a material substance, and (2) that Locke held the same view and promoted it in his *Essay*. Much of the early part of Carroll’s book is devoted to finding this view in earlier chapters of Locke’s *Essay*, before that discovery is applied to *Essay* 4.10, the chapter on God, matter, and thought.¹¹

¹⁰ Uzgalis (2021) begins “Anthony Collins (1676–1729) was a wealthy English free-thinker, deist and materialist”.

¹¹ Carroll also gives a clear presentation of a materialist reading of Spinoza. His campaign of finding hidden Spinozism continued in Carroll (1609). On Carroll see Brown (1996) and Lennon (1993, especially 327–9).

Few readers have been convinced by Carroll's view that, according to Spinoza and Locke, "there is but *One Single Material Substance in the whole World*" and "*all particular distinct Beings, are but bare different Modifications of their pretended One Only Material Substance*" (Carroll 1706, 5).¹² Nevertheless, Carroll does make a case that Locke's *Essay* argues for both of those claims.

Carroll finds Locke saying that substances are merely distinguished by their qualities, and are in a sense all the same underneath—our idea of substratum, the underlying support, is the same in all cases. One might read Locke here as focusing on ideas, and refusing to engage in the sort of substance-essence metaphysics that Carroll, or indeed Spinoza, is interested in. Carroll thinks Locke is interested in such views, but is advancing his case superstitiously. According to Carroll, there is in Locke's system one metaphysical support of all apparent substances. Indeed, that metaphysical support just is the one substance, and the apparent substances are merely modifications of that substance.

That one substance is, according to Carroll's reading of Locke, a material substance. Locke clearly says that thinking substances do not have to be immaterial (Carroll 1706, 33). He also thinks, according to Carroll, that there is only one substance. That substance clearly possesses the modifications of solidity and extension, which are characteristic of matter. Thus Carroll concludes that the one substance is material. Perhaps he ought to say instead that the one substance is metaphysically neutral. And sometimes he seems close to that, saying that there is one substance which can be "*differently modified*" (Carroll 1706, 34). It is "*the Modification of Thinking that makes it a Spirit, and the Modification of Solidity or Extension, that makes it Body or Matter*" (34). But from this Carroll does not conclude that there is one neutral substance, but "*that That One Single Substance is Material*" (Carroll 1706, 34). Locke is then, on Carroll's account, a Spinozistic, monistic, materialist atheist.

X.9 William Duncan: A Lockean Textbook and Lockean Dualism

In the sections above I have looked at discussions of Locke's work in the decade from 1697. In this final section I look at a work from the middle of the eighteenth century. This shows the enduring relevance of Locke's work in philosophical discussions. It also helps illustrate the range of ways in which one could engage with Locke's discussions of materialism, for in it we see someone constructing a Lockean dualism from material in the *Essay*.

The book in question is William Duncan's *Elements of Logick* (1748). At the time of its writing Duncan was working in London as a translator. In 1652, he was appointed as a professor of philosophy in Marischal College, Aberdeen. Duncan's logic had its own enduring popularity—it went through numerous editions in Britain and North America in the following six decades.¹³

¹² Klever (2012a; 2012b) is unusual in agreeing with Carroll.

¹³ On the editions see Howell (1971, 361). More generally, Howell (1971, 345–61) is a good introduction to Duncan's book.

Reading the *Elements*, it is easy to be struck by just how Lockean it is. Parts of it read very much like Locke presented in textbook form.¹⁴ Early on Duncan surveys the abilities of the mind, from consciousness, to perception, to judgment, proof, and reasoning. Knowledge is mentioned when perception is said to provide “Materials of Thinking and Knowledge” (Duncan 1748, 5), but sense perception is not said to be knowledge, even though it does involve “Attention of the Understanding to the Objects acting upon it” (Duncan 1748, 5). Knowledge only enters this story when we get to judgment, and to the Lockean notion of intuitive knowledge. Then there is another sort of knowledge, demonstrative knowledge, which as in Locke is said to be less certain than the intuitive sort. Nor is this Lockean air confined to the early sections of the book. It continues later, as when, for instance, Duncan argues that other areas of enquiry, such as morality, can have the same demonstrative structure and certainty as mathematics (Duncan 1748, 148).¹⁵ This is a Lockean point (and indeed an anti-Humean one).

What, however, about the nature of mind and body? The general account of the material substances is mechanical: their “Variety ... arises wholly from the different Configuration, Size, texture, and Motion of the minute Parts” (Duncan 1748, 33). This is connected to a discussion of inner constitutions and essences that we need not focus on here. It is notable, however, that Duncan seems to tend towards a monism about the material world, so that “the several Species of *corporeal* Substances ... differ only as different Modifications of the same Substance” (Duncan 1748, 37–8). That might look like the monism Carroll saw in Locke, but is not that, for Duncan distinguishes thinking substances entirely from material ones. He argues that different structures and motions of material parts can never give rise to thought (Duncan 1748, 35–7). This is clearly reminiscent of some of Locke’s discussions in *Essay* 4.10.¹⁶

Thought, then, does not belong to bodies, but to spirits, body and spirit being “really distinct Kinds of Substances” (Duncan 1748, 38). And “*Spirit* is something altogether distinct from Body, nay and commonly placed in Opposition to it; for which Reason, the Beings of this Class are called *immaterial*, a Word that implies not any thing of their Nature, but merely denotes its Contrariety to that of Matter” (Duncan 1748, 38). This running together of the notions of thinking substance and immaterial substance, and the use of ‘spirit’ for such beings, is itself clearly reminiscent of Locke’s discussion in *Essay* 2.23. Thus, by focusing on 2.23 and 4.10, Duncan appears to have constructed a dualist Lockeanism out of materials he found in the *Essay*.¹⁷

Locke’s *Essay* provided resources for a variety of approaches to the mind. Both Stillingfleet and the author of the *Remarks* challenge Locke’s claim that God can make matter think. Stillingfleet

¹⁴ There are departures from Locke, most obviously in the discussion of syllogisms, but also in the influence of the *Port-Royal Logic* (Howell 1971, 350).

¹⁵ Price (1999) emphasizes this aspect of Duncan’s approach.

¹⁶ Perhaps also, in the discussion of consciousness (Duncan 1748, 36), of Clarke.

¹⁷ He also acknowledged the existence of God as a different sort of spirit, and argued against a sort of monism about spirit that would have paralleled his monism about material substance (Duncan 1748, 39–40).

also points out the tensions between Locke's various statements in *Essay* 2.23, 4.3, and 4.10. Putting those statements together in different ways allows one to develop different Lockean positions. Emphasizing 4.3, one can with Collins defend the possibility of thinking matter. Emphasizing aspects of 2.23 and 4.10, one can with Duncan develop a Lockean dualism. Both of those positions are clearly Lockean, much as they are inconsistent with one another. Meanwhile, reading those passages more suspiciously in the manner of Carroll, one can make Locke himself a materialist. And one can, with Toland, weld other aspects of Locke's philosophy to a more straightforward, Hobbesian materialism. Locke changed the debate by emphasizing the possibility of superaddition. But he also provided several (possibly inconsistent) claims and arguments to think about, which led later thinkers in different directions.

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