LOCKE AND BURNET

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Amongst the anonymous critics of Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* was a writer of very considerable contemporary eminence, Thomas Burnet. As the author of *The Sacred History of the Earth,* he was addressed by Addison in a Latin ode which (in Thomas Newcombe's translation) begins

> No common height the muse must soar,
> That would thy fame in numbers try.

And Steele in the *Spectator* (No. 146), comparing a passage from Cicero with a passage from Burnet, gives the palm to Burnet.

Burnet's criticism is contained in *Remarks upon an Essay Concerning Humane Understanding* and in two subsequent sets of Remarks. The first and the second of the series came out in 1697, the third in 1699. In the form of a contemptuous postscript to his *Reply to the Bishop of Worcester's Answer to His Letter* (1697), Locke issued an Answer to the first set of Remarks. He took no other public notice of his critic, but he wrote a good many comments on a copy of the third set. This is now in the library of Yale University. Locke's comments were published by Noah Porter (with some inaccuracy) in the *New Englander and Yale Review,* July, 1887, under the title "Marginalia Locke-a-na".

In the first set of Remarks questions are raised with Locke as to the adequacy of his "principles" in relation to morality, certainty in Revealed Religion, and the immortality of the soul. The clash between Burnet and Locke on these issues will be discussed after some general account of Burnet has been given. Burnet has a doctrine of conscience which interestingly anticipates Moral-Sense theory in ethics. In the later part of the chapter dealing with the nature and knowledge of moral good and evil (in which also the issue concerning certainty in Revealed Religion is considered) Burnet's doctrine of conscience will be compared with Butler's, and will then be discussed in relation to different types of Moral-Sense theory. Making use of Burnet, the monograph also deals with the question: What Locke was supposing when he supposed that matter might think, and with the question: How the doctrine of innate knowledge is to be understood, criticizing in the course of the discussion what has become the standard account of the doctrine.

We shall make occasional use of the comments of a writer who published anonymously in 1702 *A Defence of the Essay of Human Understanding.* She was Catherine Trotter (1679-1749), later Mrs Cockburn, author by 1702 of *The Fatal Friendship* and two other plays.[1] She campaigned for a purer stage, and was the friend of Congreve and Farquhar, who admired her beauty. She subsequently engaged in further philosophical writing, and in support of Locke once again, she composed *A Vindication of Mr. Locke's Christian Principles from the injurious Imputations of Dr. Holdsworth,* which was published, however, only in the

posthumous collection of her *Works* (1751). (At the time she wrote the *Defence* she was a convert to Catholicism; long before she wrote the *Vindication* she had returned to Anglicanism.)

Justifying her undertaking a defence of Locke's *Essay,* she explains in her Preface that though there were some who wished that Locke *"had leisure to answer the Difficulties objected against his Principles by the Remarker",* she, herself, did not think they needed *"so great a Hand to remove them".* Locke was delighted with the *Defence,* and finding out the name of its author, wrote to her saying: "You have herein not only vanquished my adversary, but reduced me also absolutely under your power".[2]

Leibniz was shown the *Defence* and commented on several of the matters it contained, in two letters to Thomas Burnett of Kemnay. (He is the "Burnet" involved in communicating to Locke the paper Leibniz wrote entitled *"Réflexions sur l'Essai de l'Entendement Humain de Monsieur Locke".*)[3] Leibniz praised the *Defence* warmly, but his agreements were with the author of the Remarks. Extracts from this letter, and one from the subsequent letter of Leibniz's, will be given later on when the issues to which they are relevant come up. One extract which has no particular place of relevance is given now:

> *Dans la dedicace elle exhort M. Lock à donner des demonstrations de morale. Je crois qu' il auroit eu de la peine à y reussir. L'art de demonstrer n'estoit pas son fait.*[4]

Quotations from Locke's postscript Answer to Burnet are from the first edition of his *Reply to the Bishop of Worcester's Answer to His Letter.* Quotations from his comments on Burnet's Third Remarks are from a corrected copy (supplied by Yale University Library) of Porter's "Marginalia Locke-a-na". Quotations from the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* are from the third edition, which is the one Burnet used. Quotations from other writings of Locke's, unless the contrary is indicated, are from the 1823 edition of his *Works.*

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[1] An account of her plays is given by Edmund Gosse in "Catherine Trotter, The Precursor of the Bluestockings" *(Transactions of the Royal Society of the United Kingdom,* Series 2, 1916).

[2] Locke to Mrs Cockburn, 30 December, 1702; Locke's *Works,* Vol. X, p.314.

[3] Locke to Molyneux, 10 April, 1697; Locke's *Works,* Vol. IX, pp.406-415. Burnett to Leibniz, 30 November, 1696; *Die Philosophischen Schriften von G. W. Leibniz,* (ed.) G. I. Gerhardt, Vol. III, pp.185-186.

This Thomas Burnett was a close friend of Catherine Trotter's. In his letters, as printed in *The Works of Mrs Catherine Cockburn* (1751), he appears as "George" Burnett. "George" and Thomas Burnett must be one and the same person. It is not only that some of the same things happened to Leibniz's correspondent as to Catherine Trotter's. According to information supplied by the National Library of Scotland, George Burnett of Kemnay was Thomas Burnett's son and was not born until 1714. The first of the letters from Burnett to Catherine Trotter is dated 14 October, 1701. Most probably, Thomas Birch who brought out the collection of Mrs Cockburn's writings after her death, got the name wrong.

[4] *Phil. Schrift.,* Vol. III, p.307. In this letter which is dated 26 May, 1706, the death of Locke is alluded to.

I

BURNET

Burnet was born "in or about the Year 1635".[5] In 1651 he went to Clare Hall, Cambridge, of which Ralph Cudworth was then Master, and there became friendly with his tutor, John Tillotson, later Archbishop of Canterbury. When Cudworth moved to Christ's College as Master, Burnet followed him and was himself made a fellow of the College in 1657. The first two books of *Telluris Theoria Sacra,* the work that made Burnet famous, were published in 1681, with an English version in 1684. The second two books were published in 1689, and an English version of them in the same year.[6]

The *Sacred Theory* traces the great changes of the earth from its beginning as a *"dark Chaos"* to its ending as a *"bright Star"*. It belongs to a species of writing which reached its peak at the end of the seventeenth century but lasted till the middle of the following century, which had as one of its aims the "harmonization" of the Bible and the new science. "Harmonization" is Katharine Brownell Collier's word in her study of this literature in *Cosmogonies of Our Fathers* (New York, 1968). Her contrast of harmonization with two other possibilities — one of them a compartmentalizing of the mind, the other a rejection of the new science (pp.13-14) — suggests rather more reconciliatory anxiety than the material assembled shows. The *Sacred Theory,* besides its influence on subsequent writing of this sort, is typical of it. And while Burnet does indeed speak of justifying "the Doctrines of the *Universal Deluge,* and of a *Paradisiacal* state . . . from the Cavils of those who are no well-wishers to Sacred History", and of freeing them from "those misconceptions or misrepresentations which made them sit uneasie upon the Spirits even of the best Men, that took time to think" (Preface, p.17), this concern can be over-emphasized. The *Sacred Theory* is more like a geology than a nineteenth-century work of theological Fundamentalism, written to defend the Bible against threat from geology; it is, in fact, a geology which takes the Bible as one, especially important, source of data.

The most celebrated British work, subsequent to the *Sacred Theory,* to treat of the Deluge, *Reliquiae Diluvianae* (1823), by William Buckland, professor of mineralogy and geology at Oxford, did not go to the Bible for data as Burnet did, and its geology is therefore, not fanciful in the way Burnet's is. It shared, however, the apologetic purpose which was one of the purposes of the *Sacred Theory.* The *Edinburgh Review* praised its tone, but warning against attempts "to connect the details of Scriptural narrative with the results of physical inquiry", it invoked a passage from Burnet which conveys something of the spirit in which the *Sacred Theory* was written: "It is a dangerous thing to engage the authority of Scripture in disputes about the natural world, in opposition to reason; lest Time, which brings all things to light, should discover that to be evidently false, which we had made Scripture to assert".[7]

We inhabit a ruined world, Burnet maintains. Consider the mountains. They are placed

> in no order one with another, that can either respect use or beauty; And if you consider them singly, they do not consist of any proportion of parts that is referrable to any design, or that hath the least footsteps of Art or Counsel. (II.xi; p.112)

(Willey, in his Introduction to the *Sacred Theory,* quotes a passage expressing a different — but, as he remarks, a passing — mood, in which the sight of the mountains suggests thought of the Infinite.) Considerations of theological aesthetics weigh heavily with Burnet. As evidence that the universe was not made only for man, he points to the disposition of the stars:

> And no doubt if the principal end of them had been our pleasure or conveniency, they would have been put in some better order in respect of the Earth; They lie carelessly scatter'd, as if they had been sown in the Heaven, like Seed, by handfuls; and not by a skilful hand neither. What a beautiful Hemisphere they would have made, if they'd been plac'd in rank and order, if they had been all dispos'd into regular figures, and the little ones set with due regard to the greater, Then all Finisht and made up into one fair piece or great Composition, according to the rules of Art and Symmetry. What a surprizing beauty this would have been to the Inhabitants of the Earth? what a lovely Roof to our little World? (II.xi; p.220)

But it is not primarily aesthetic considerations which show that we inhabit a ruined world. A world like ours now is could not, without catastrophe, have resulted from one having the origin assigned to the world in Genesis, nor could the catastrophe of the Flood have taken place in the world as it now is.

The great problem with the Flood is, where the water came from — counting all the seas as one ocean, not fewer than eight oceans would be needed if the earth then was in its present form. Burnet's solution of the problem enables him to infer the form of the antediluvian earth. To its solution he brings together, typically: supposition, some record from antiquity, observation of the behaviour of nature, Biblical statement. Suppose that the surface of the earth was once uniform — a supposition which has some support from antiquity — less water would be needed to engulf it; earthquakes and inundations are often connected; in the Mosaic account of the Flood there is the pregnant statement, and elsewhere in the Bible are statements linked in with it, that "the fountains of the great deep were opened". We have in outline considerations that will take us to the conclusion that the Flood was caused by the cracking of the uniform surface of the primaeval earth and its precipitation into the abyss of waters on which it rested, producing in consequence our terraqueous earth with its piled up mountains.

Burnet was able to reverse the process of inference. It is stated in the Bible, and it was the general opinion of the learned in antiquity, that the world arose from a Chaos. This Chaos was a "fluid Mass". The present form of the earth is "not deducible from a Chaos, by any known laws of Nature, or by any wit of Man" (II.xi; p.227). The deduction to be drawn is of an earth shaped like an egg with a uniform surface enclosing an abyss of water, as the shell encloses the white of an egg. The truth in the "ancient doctrine of the Mundane Egg" has been shown (II.xi; p.200).

That gives some little idea of the science of the *Sacred Theory* but conveys less

than nothing of the Miltonic[8] grandeur of the work.

Locke had some things to say[9] about (the first part) of the *Sacred Theory*:

> The *New Theory of the Earth* I have read in *English,* and cannot but like the style and way of writing upon thoughts wholly a man's own; but . . . though it be a good while since I read it, and that but cursorily; yet there sticks with me still some of those objections, which rose in my way as I perused it, and which offered themselves against the truth or probability of his hypothesis, which made me not able to reconcile it either to philosophy, scripture, or itself.

The objections are wide-ranging. There are objections to various items in Burnet's account of the antediluvian earth, but his main failure, Locke thought, lay in the accomplishment of what seemed to be his principal design, an explanation of the Flood and its results. One very unsatisfactory feature of the explanation is that it does not make available enough water. "I imagine", Locke writes, bringing his criticism to a close, "if I should trouble you with my fancies, I could give you an hypothesis that would explain the deluge without half the difficulties, which seem to me to encumber this."

In 1685 Burnet was appointed Master of the Charterhouse where he resisted the attempt of James II to introduce a Catholic as a pensioner. He was restored to royal favour when William III, to whom he was appointed chaplain-in-ordinary, became king. He had "a fine Prospect before him", his biographer remarks (Memoir, p.xxiii), "when he published in the Year 1692 his *Archaeologiae Philosophicae*". The book traverses some of the ground of the *Sacred Theory,* developing points here and there. In particular, special interest is taken in the right approach to the understanding of Biblical statements.

In the *Sacred Theory* the approach was in general line with that described by Newton in a letter to Burnet:

> As to Moses I do not think his description of ye creation either Philosophical or feigned, but that he described realities in a language artificially adapted to ye sense of ye vulgar. Thus where he speaks of two great lights I suppose he means their apparent, not real greatness.[10]

In the *Archaeologiae Philosophicae* something of the sort is said, but in this book the tone is different both from that of Newton and from that of Burnet himself, formerly. Burnet now writes: "I say, *Plebeian* [style], and not Fabulous, although this last Word might have been used, did we speak of a profane Author".[11] Whatever Burnet's intention — perhaps it was to do no more than satirize a misplaced Biblical literalism — the tone is often exactly that of the Deist, Charles Blount, who made great use of Burnet in his *Oracles of Reason* (1693). The talk in which Eve, the Serpent, and God are represented as taking part was found particularly offensive. The following (in Foxton's translation) is a specimen:

> This Apple [God is speaking] shall cost you dear, and not only you, but your Posterity, and the whole Race of Mankind. Moreover, for this Crime I will curse and spoil the Heavens, the Earth, and the whole Fabrick of Nature. But Thou, in the first place, vile Beast, shalt bear the Punishment of thy Craftiness and Malice. Hereafter shalt thou go creeping on thy Belly, and instead of eating Apples, shalt lick the Dust of the Earth. As for you Mrs. *Curious,* who so much love Delicacies, in Sorrow shall you bring forth Children; you shall be subject to your Husband, and shall never depart

from his Side, unless having first obtained his leave.[12]

Burnet remained at the Charterhouse until he died, which was in 1715.

Writers on Locke who have occasion to mention the Remarks, all, so far as I know, ascribe them without question to Burnet. A passage in the Memoir of Burnet prefixed to the seventh edition (1759) of his *Sacred Theory of the Earth,* however, might seem to leave his authorship of them an open question:

> Dr. *Burnet* is said to have published three small Pieces without his Name, under the Title of *Remarks on Mr.* Locke's *Essay on human Understanding,* but as his Friend Mr. *Wilkinson* has taken no Notice of them, neither shall we, but conclude with observing; that those Books beforementioned, together with a Relation of the Proceedings at the *Charter-house,* upon Occasion of K. *James* II. his presenting a Papist to be admitted into that Hospital . . . are all the acknowledged Works of the celebrated Dr. *Thomas Burnet.* (p.xxxv)

An answer to the question thus ambiguously left open, and also to the question whether Locke ever knew who was the author of the Remarks is to be found in the Memoir written by Thomas Birch and prefixed to the *Works* of Mrs Cockburn. "The author of these Remarks", Birch writes, "was never known to Mr. Locke . . . But after the death of the ingenious Dr. Thomas Burnet, Master of the Charter-house, it appeared from his papers, that the Remarks were the production of his pen".[13]

It is perhaps worth adding that there is an agreement in ideas as between the Remarks and Burnet's other writings. Thus, for example, in the posthumously published *De Statu Mortuorum,* as in the Remarks, it is maintained that the soul always thinks; and, in a narrower coincidence, it is maintained in both that the unity of an immaterial soul is needed for the unifying operations of judgement and ratiocination. The argument for the existence of God from degrees of perfection, set out in the *Sacred Theory* (II.x; pp.215-217), forms a natural background to statements in the Remarks about ascribing moral "perfections" to God. Nothing is more characteristic of the Remarks than the talk in them of a "Natural Conscience" and its relation to the distinction between moral good and evil. In the *Sacred Theory* (II.x; p.217) it is asserted that "there is a Natural Conscience in Man, and a distinction of moral *Good* and *Evil*".

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[5] The principal source for the life of Burnet is the Memoir prefixed to the 7th edition (1759) of *The Sacred Theory of the Earth.*

[6] The English version of the whole work has recently been republished, with an Introduction by Basil Willey (London, 1965). Page references to *The Sacred Theory of the Earth* will be to this volume.

[7] "Geology of the Deluge", *Edinburgh Review,* October, 1823; *Sacred Theory,* Preface, p.16.

[8] *Cf.* Joseph Warton, *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope,* Sect. V (4th ed., 1782, Vol. I, p.281); Willey, Introduction to the *Sacred Theory,* p.5.

[9] In a letter to James Tyrrell, an extract of which was sent by Tyrrell (in 1687) to Robert Boyle, at his request. This is printed in Boyle's *Works* (1772), Vol. VI, p.620.

[10] Newton to Burnet, January 1680/1, *The Correspondence of Isaac Newton,* (ed.) H. W. Turnbull, Vol. II (Cambridge, 1960), p.331. In this letter, which takes up a number of matters dealt with in the *Sacred Theory,* Newton describes in reference to Burnet's account of the origin of mountains, the way in which liquified tin in a certain arrangement will congeal so as to produce irregularities

on its solidified surface. He adds: "All this I write not to oppose you, for I think the main part of your Hypothesis as probable as what I have here written, if not in some respects more probable". (*ibid.*)

[11] The *Archaeologiae Philosophicae* was written in Latin. The quotation is taken from Foxton's translation (p.11) published in 1729, after Burnet's death. Expressing regret in a letter (Memoir, p.xxv) for any offence given in the book to "pious and wise Men", Burnet mentions its having been written in Latin as an indication that he was not for the bandying about of sacred subjects.

[12] *Archaeologiae Philosophicae,* Ch. I; Foxton, p.7. Burnet's Latin for the last part of the passage is: *"Tu verò, curiosa & delicatula, in dolore liberos paries: mariti jugum feres, nec discedes unquam ab ipsius latere, nisi impetratâ venia" (Archaeologiae Philosophicae* (1692), II,vii, p.282).

[13] *Works of Mrs Catherine Cockburn* (1751), Vol. I, p.xv.

II

THE DISTINCTION OF MORAL GOOD AND EVIL

The phrase of Burnet's which forms the heading of this chapter was chosen for its slight ambiguity. It is slightly ambiguous as between two questions regarding moral good and evil over which Burnet and Locke are at odds. The first question has to do with the nature of the distinction between moral good and evil, the second with the manner in which good and evil are known, are distinguished.

Burnet's tone throughout the First Remarks is respectful if now and then a little patronizing, but Locke saw himself derided. "A Man that insinuates, as he does, as if I held, That the *distinction of Virtue and Vice* was to be *picked up by our Eyes, our Ears, or our Nostrils:* shews so much Ignorance, or so much Malice, that he deserves no other Answer but Pity" (Answer to Remarks). Burnet had said: "Your general Principle of picking up all our Knowledge from our five senses, I confess does not sit easily in my Thoughts, tho' you joyn Reflection to help us" (First Remarks, p.4); and had then said a few sentences later: "I do not find that my Eyes, Ears, Nostrils, or any other outward Senses make any Distinction of these Things", that is, of "Good and Evil, Virtue and Vice". And he seems to insinuate that Locke's epistemological principles have led him to falsify the nature of the distinction between moral good and evil.

> I allow that you may infer from Observation and Reason, that such a Distinction is useful to Society and Governments: But so the Politicians say, and that this is the only Bottom of Morality and Religion. Both Divines and Philosophers, you know, make a more immutable and intrinsick Distinction, which is that I cannot make out from your Principles. (p.5)

Moral good and evil — unless Burnet has misunderstood him — Locke supposes "to be such . . . by the Divine law". In a passage of the *Essay* (II, xxviii.5) to which Burnet directs attention, Locke states that good and evil having been shown to be nothing other than pleasure or pain, or what brings us pleasure and pain (the simple ideas of which he had remarked earlier arise from both Sensation and Reflection), moral good and evil are

> 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.*

What does Locke consider to be the ground of the divine law, Burnet asks (First Remarks, p.6) — the "Arbitrary Will of God"? the "good of Men"? the "intrinsick Nature of the Things themselves"?

That in some way the intrinsic nature of the things themselves is the ground of the divine law, is implied when Locke is speaking (*Essay*, II.xxi.56) of the person he describes as having "imposed upon himself wrong measures of good and evil"; having "vitiated his own Palate", he must suffer the consequences: "The eternal Law and Nature of things must not be alter'd to comply with his ill-order'd choice". And Locke's Moral-Sense metaphor could — by itself — suggest that the divine law is grounded on the intrinsic nature of things in the way Burnet held it to be, grounded in a way incompatible with its being *grounded* on what promotes the good of men. That the arbitrary will of God is not the ground of the divine law, is implied by Locke's speaking of this law as knowable "by the light of Nature", and of morality as being capable of demonstration. A remark of Burnet's in connection with the latter point indicates that he was genuinely in some doubt about Locke's view on the nature of moral good and evil, to begin with:

> And you having signified, in several parts of your Treatise, that you think *Morality* as capable of Demonstration, as Mathematicks; this gives me reason to suspect that it is not the deficiency of your Principles, but my own short-sightedness, that makes me at a loss, how to discern that Evidence [for the goodness of one thing and the badness of another, it would appear to be], or make out that Demonstration, from your Grounds. (First Remarks, p.5)

But to say that moral good and evil are only "the Conformity or Disagreement of our voluntary Actions to some Law, whereby Good or Evil is drawn on us" and that, in a passage (I.iii.6) which Burnet would also have noticed, "the true ground of Morality . . . can only be the Will and Law of a God, who . . . has in his Hand Rewards and Punishments", might well "seem to resolve all into the Will and Power of the Law-maker". Catherine Trotter deals with any appearance that Locke gives of establishing morality on the sheer will of God, by a distinction between the ground of the *content* of the Law of Nature and the ground of its having the *force* of a law:

> in all those places which the Remarker quotes out of Mr. Lock, where he seems to establish Morality upon the Will of God, and Rewards and Punishments, he is speaking of it as it has the Force of a Law; and the Remarker cannot deny . . . the *first Grounds of Good and Evil* . . . can only have the Force of a Law to us, considered as the *Will* of the *Supream Being* who can and certainly will Reward the Compliance with, and Punish the Deviation from that Rule which he has made knowable to us by the Light of Nature. (*Defence*, pp.14-15).[14]

To ascertain the content of the Law of Nature, to know (independently of Revelation) what the will of God requires, "we must know what is Good", Catherine Trotter writes (*Defence*, p.15), "by the Conformity it has to our Nature" — which is Locke's view, she maintains, as well as her own. It is the view clearly expressed by Locke in the Essays on the Law of Nature, which he did not publish. A trace of it appears in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Catherine Trotter quotes the passage (IV.iii.18) in which Locke speaks of "The *Idea* of a supreme Being . . . whose Workmanship we are, and on whom we depend; and the *Idea* of our selves, as understanding, rational Creatures" as being the foundation of a demonstrable morality.

Burnet does not seem to have had much doubt in the two later Remarks that

Locke supposed an arbitrary will in God. This is, perhaps, not surprising in view of the answer he obtained from Locke to his question about the ground of the divine law:

> Whoever sincerely acknowledges any Law to be the Law of God; cannot fail to acknowledge also, That it hath all that *Reason and Ground* that a just and wise Law can or ought to have; and will easily persuade himself to forbear raising such Questons and Scruples about it. (Answer to Remarks)

No ordinary law could be just and wise and have no ground other than the will of the law-maker, but the law in question is the divine law. A just and wise law proceeding from a God who is necessarily just and wise — someone might consider (we are not concerned with the logic of the position) — to have all the ground it *can* have, compatibly with the omnipotence of God, or ought to have, in being the expression of the will of such a God.[15] But Locke in his Answer to Burnet is not half-disclosing any such opinion. What he held, he is concealing from Burnet in rebuff. Burnet has issued his Remarks pretending to be asking for information, Locke accuses him, but really in order to instruct. Information, he was not going to get. Locke's view as to the ground of the divine law is a matter on which he is specifically refused it.

The adequacy of Locke's principles as a foundation for inference to the veracity of God was the issue Burnet raised with regard to certainty in Revealed religion. There can be no certainty there, unless veracity is known to be an attribute of God. Burnet was satisfied with Locke's proof of the metaphysical attributes of God. But the moral attributes? "Veracity is a Perfection", and if all our conceptions have to be obtained in the manner Locke prescribes, it is not clear to Burnet that Locke is entitled to the concept of perfection.

Catherine Trotter refers Burnet to the passage (*Essay,* II.xxiii.33) in which Locke derives the complex idea of God from simple ideas of Reflection: from the ideas of "Existence and Duration; of Knowledge and Power . . . and of several other Qualities and Powers, which it is better to have, than to be without" — from these ideas enlarged by the idea of infinity. And (unclear about Locke's meaning for "Reflection" as a source of ideas, or making a pun?) she expresses the hope that if Burnet "can by *Reflection* find Veracity, Justice, and Goodness, among the things that *it is better to have than to be without",* he will be helped "to deduce those Attributes of God from Mr *Locks's* Principles" (*Defence,* p.25).

Locke did not pass over in silence Burnet's doubt as to the adequacy of his principles in the matter of the divine veracity. It is no wonder to him, he says in his Answer to Burnet, that his critic wrote anonymously when he raised a doubt as to whether "an infinitely powerful and wise Being, be *veracious* or no". Locke made the anonymity of Burnet a matter of great complaint. "I think, of all Men I know", Burnet defended himself, "Mr Lock had the least Reason to make that Criminal, He, who hath writ so many Books without putting his Name to them, and some in confutation of the Principles of other Men"[16] (Second Remarks, p.3).

"I told you formerly", Burnet addresses Locke in the Second Remarks (p.18), "why I thought your Principles would not reach to the Proof of a Certainty in Reveal'd Religion", and he goes on to remind Locke of his reasons for this opinion. But now he is wondering whether Locke would want to provide for certainty here:

> There is a Passage in your late *Reply to the Bishop of Worcester,*[17] . . . which would incline one to believe, That you think there is no Certainty in Reveal'd Religion, seeing you do not allow the *Certainty of Faith,* but look upon that Expression as Jargon, or next to Nonsense. *To talk of the Certainty of Faith,* say you, *seems all one to me, as to talk of the Knowledge of Believing: A way of speaking not easie to me to understand.* (p.19)

Locke's denial of "certainty" to faith does not imply that, for him, faith is unsure. He wants to keep the word "certainty" for what he would regard as knowledge strictly so thought of. Faith is not knowledge, and, therefore, in his final reply to the Bishop of Worcester (who had asked "Why not certainty as well as assurance" of faith?) he tells him he will not speak of certainty in relation to faith but, with the Bible, of assurance.[18]

Something of Burnet's own view as regards the distinction of moral good and evil is implied in his criticism of Locke. He sees this distinction as "intrinsic" and "immutable". He does not amplify the meaning of these terms and he provides no further characterization of the distinction except negatively: good and evil cannot be constituted as such by any legislative will, and the *bonum honestum* is not the *bonum utile.*

Though Burnet provides only a minimal characterization of the distinction between moral good and evil, his predominant analogy when dealing with the knowledge of moral good and evil enables him to be understood, and also indicates why he might claim that a minimal characterization is all that is necessary or possible.

> the Distinction [he writes], suppose of Gratitude and Ingratitude, Fidelity and Infidelity, Justice and Injustice, and such others, is as sudden without any Ratiocination, and as sensible and piercing, as the difference I feel from the Scent of a Rose, and of Assafoetida. (First Remarks, p.5)[19]

If the distinction between moral good and evil is as familiar to us as the distinction between fragrant and foul, it needs only minimal characterization; and if it is like that distinction, minimal characterization is all it can be given.

Another analogy (linking Burnet with eighteenth-century moral rationalism, in particular, with Samuel Clarke) removes the suggestion carried by the analogy with opposite smells and tastes, that the distinction between moral good and evil is a matter of the way in which we are affected by what we approve of or condemn. Moral good and evil are compared with even and odd in numbers. And the "Relations of Moral Things" seem to Burnet "as necessary, as the Relations of Figures and Numbers" (Second Remarks, p.27). Continuing, he connects the two analogies:

> I am also apt to believe, That the Differences of Good and Evil, Just and Unjust, *Turpis & Honesti,* would be as sensible to us (in Nature pure) as Physical or Mathematical Differences, as *sweet* and *sowr, straight* and *crooked;* if Interest, Appetites, Passions, and Lusts did not deprave our Taste and Judgments in those Intellectual Things.

In one important respect, Burnet was more aware of what he was about than Clarke was going to be. Listing a number of moral propositions — that the life of an innocent person should be preserved rather than destroyed, is one of them — Clarke refers to them as "plain and self-evident".[20] But as readily, he compares moral propositions with this sort of axiomatic character to simple theorems in geometry (p.51, p.80), and he says of the fundamental moral obligations that

they are "in general, deducible, even demonstrably, by a Chain of clear and undeniable reasoning" (Introduction, p.10). With no real recognition of it, Clarke in fact maintained what for Burnet was a declared principle, that the fundamental obligations of morality are knowable without ratiocination.

It is not to be expected, Burnet remarks, that ignorant people would have to engage in deduction in order to find out what is morally required. Nor do they have to. Moral good and evil are distinguished by "Natural Conscience" which is

> a Natural Sagacity to distinguish Moral Good and Evil, or a different perception and sense of them, with a different affection of the Mind arising from it; and this so immediate as to prevent and anticipate all External Laws, and all Ratiocination. (Third Remarks, pp.7-8)

Comparing moral and mathematical propositions, Burnet uses as examples the proposition that the malicious killing of an innocent person is wicked, and the proposition that the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles: two truths, the one "As clear, eternal, and unalterable, as the other" (Second Remarks, p.26). But is not "ratiocination" needed to arrive at the truth that the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles? Burnet was comparing moral and mathematical truths in point of immutability, and perhaps his view of the unratiocinative character of moral discernment was absent from his mind. If not, something he goes on to say, having given as an instance of an immutable moral truth the wickedness of killing an innocent person, indicates how he might answer:

> . . . Moral Cases are commonly more Complex, and so not so easily stated; but in those that are Simple and General, or clearly stated, Propositions about them are as certain as other Truths. (Second Remarks, p.27)[21]

Ratiocination is needed in "stating" a complex case.

Burnet speaks of conscience as a law, and of conscience as dictating laws. Objecting in reiterated comment,[22] Locke insists (in accordance with the idiomatic locutions in which the word "conscience" figures) that a person's conscience cannot come into operation in the absence of what he takes to be a right and wrong by which his conduct must be regulated. Conscience is our judgement upon ourselves, acquitting or condemning. This, strongly asserted in comment upon Burnet, is what conscience is said to be, though more casually, in the characterization given to it in the *Essay* (I.iii.8). But to Burnet's claim for conscience, Locke has an objection of a more fundamental kind than this conceptual one:

> Such an inward distinguishing sensation antecedent to all sense or supposition of an external moral rule should be proved, till then the supposeing of it is but laying down a foundation for Enthusiasme. ("Marginalia", p.38)

The entry in Dr Johnson's *Dictionary* under "Conscience" (which is very Lockean) and in the *Oxford English Dictionary,* respectively, indicate in a striking way the inflation of role ascribed to conscience by the end of the nineteenth century. To this Butler's influence made a great contribution. Burnet's doctrine of conscience is less an anticipation of Butler's *specific* doctrine than it might seem. The most distinctive feature of Butler's doctrine is its account of the authority of conscience in the economy of human nature. To that feature of Butler's doctrine, the "different affection of the Mind", which Burnet has

accompany the perception by conscience of good and evil, has no correspondence. Even when Burnet describes conscience as "the Supreme Law" (Third Remarks, p.11), there is again only the perception of good and evil by conscience (here implied) and the opposite affection of the mind towards each.

It is Burnet's talking of the immediacy of the operation of conscience which most strongly suggests comparison with what is to be found in Butler. In a famous passage Butler wrote:

> There is a superior principle of reflection or conscience in every man, which distinguishes between the internal principles of his heart, as well as his external actions: which passes judgment upon himself and them; pronounces determinately some actions to be in themselves just, right, good; others to be in themselves evil, wrong, unjust: which, without being consulted, without being advised with, magisterially exerts itself, and approves or condemns him the doer of them accordingly.[23]

A strong sense of the immediacy of *an* operation of conscience is conveyed at the end of this passage: its operation in judgement upon the agent for his action. The immediacy of this operation is easily, but without warrant, taken to characterize the judgement on the goodness or badness of the actions, which Butler, like Burnet, ascribes to conscience. What interests Burnet, is *how* conscience effects the determination of the goodness and badness of actions. Unratiocinatively, with the immediacy of sensation, he thinks. Butler, though usually regarded as an Intuitionist — with doubtful justification, as John Kleinig shows in an unpublished thesis[24] — does not declare himself upon the cognitive procedure of conscience. (He therefore largely disappoints the hope that might be raised by his undertaking in the Preface to the *Sermons* to examine human nature so as to ascertain the course of life which meets its requirements. This turns out to be, above all, conduct which has the approval of conscience. The disappointed hope was that the examination of human nature would disclose the *grounds* on which conscience stamps conduct as right or wrong.)

We shall now consider Burnet's doctrine of conscience in relation to Moral-Sense theory. First, a few remarks on types of Moral-Sense theory and on the question of analogy between types of Moral-Sense theory and types of theory in the philosophy of sense perception.

In a paper entitled "Some Reflections on Moral-Sense Theories in Ethics"[25], C.D. Broad distinguishes various possible types of Moral-Sense theory. One of these he calls the "naively realistic" form of the theory: "I am fairly certain", he says, "that adherents of the moral sense theory did not interpret it in this way; for they did not, I think, put a naively realistic interpretation on visual sense-perception" (p.198). Burnet might be called a naive realist as regards moral perception, one pauses to reflect. And something corresponding to a theory of representative perception will be the usual type of Moral-Sense theory. But no. Broad sees most proponents of Moral-Sense theory as putting forward, though not always clear-headedly, the view that "X is right" asserts that (various qualifications being written in) there is a disposition in people to have feelings of a certain kind in the contemplation of actions of the same kind as X. This view is not an analogue of the theory of representative perception. The rightness of a right action is not on this view perceived indirectly, represented by its effect on those contemplating the action. This view corresponds to a *phenomenalist* position in the philosophy of sense perception and, in fact, in *Five Types of Ethical Theory* Broad calls the account of goodness in terms of general approval,

the "phenomenalist analysis" of the concept.[26]

In Broad's paper on Moral-Sense theories, the term "phenomenalist" is not used to describe a form of Moral-Sense theory, and it is not any simple omission that no analogue of the theory of representative perception is ever mentioned. The physical and physiological facts involved in sense perception can seem to force a theory of representative perception upon us. There is nothing comparable in moral perception that could lead us to think that rightness or goodness is a characteristic of some actions, never directly perceived, known only inferentially, from our response to it. The fact of moral disagreement, brought against "naive moral realism", has no tendency at all to suggest a theory intermediate between that view and "moral phenomenalism".

Since nothing in the range of Moral-Sense theory corresponds to a theory of representative perception, types of Moral-Sense theory are misleadingly related to types of theory in the philosophy of sense perception. There would thus be no incongruity at all in Burnet's holding the view he does as regards moral perception and his holding, as he very likely did (there is some vague indication of it in *The Sacred Theory of the Earth*), a theory of sense perception of the same general kind as Locke's. The analogy operating in Burnet's view of moral perception is not between moral perception and any *theory* of sense perception, but between moral perception and sense perception as this presents itself before philosophical reflection. There is, of course, a large coincidence between a description of sense perception as it presents itself prior to theory, and "naive realism" as a theory endorsing the phenomenological claim of a sense to make manifest features of things as they are, altogether outside of perception. But in sense perception viewed prior to theory, there is something notable which is unstressed, if it is there at all, in naive realism. It is, in Berkeley's words, that the senses "make no inferences". This is the feature to be emphasized in Burnet's analogy between sense and moral perception: his Natural Conscience distinguishes good and evil by an immediate perception, without ratiocination.

Let us now compare Burnet's doctrine first with that of Shaftesbury, who originated the use of the term "Moral Sense" as a term of theory, and on whose thought Cudworth had some influence, and then with that of Hutcheson, whose name is central in the history of Moral-Sense theory.

There seem to be two components in Shaftesbury's Moral Sense, corresponding to the "perception and sense" of good and evil and to the consequent and opposite "affection", which are the components of Burnet's Natural Conscience. There is, Shaftesbury says, an "Apprehension or Sense" of right and wrong, a "Notice" of good or bad, a "Sentiment or Judgment" as regards the thing done.[27] But this first component has a considerable tendency to become the second, which is — and the words indicate another aspect of Shaftesbury's moral theory — the affection towards what is *beautiful* in disposition and conduct and the aversion from what is *deformed*. Thus, when the dispositions and conduct of persons are represented, "the Heart cannot possibly remain neutral", Shaftesbury says; the heart "finds the difference" (I.ii.3).

Whether or not Shaftesbury's Moral Sense, like Burnet's Natural Conscience, has two distinguishable components, Shaftesbury's speaking of the "heart" as finding the difference indicates a point at which he and Burnet diverge. Burnet's own answer to his question to Locke as to the ground of the divine law — an arbitrary will, human good, the intrinsic nature of things themselves? — would be that it is the intrinsic nature of the things themselves, though, of course, he

would see the doing of what is intrinsically good as promoting the good of men. Shaftesbury, by contrast with Burnet, takes a teleological view of the virtues: their excellence is primarily their fitting a person for his part in that whole, which is first human society, and then the whole universe as a divine economy. Fellow-feeling and kind affections, all that comes from a good heart, eminently fit a person for living in harmony with others, and, accordingly, Shaftesbury speaks of the heart as finding the difference between good and evil.

A contrast between what is in itself good, and what is good because it serves the good of men, is not the primary contrast Burnet intended. The primary contrast he intended can be stated in Shaftesbury's words:

> Virtue is really something *in it-self,* and in the nature of Things: not arbitrary or factitious . . . 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.[28]

In the eighth letter (dated June 3, 1709) of *Several Letters Written by a Noble Lord to a Young Man at the University,*[29] in a passage connecting an intrinsic moral standard with moral innateness, Shaftesbury flatly accused Locke of grounding moral good and evil ultimately on the mere will of God.

> THUS virtue, according to Mr. LOCKE, has no other Measure, Law, or Rule, than *Fashion* and *Custom:* Morality, Justice, Equity, depend only on *Law* and *Will:* And GOD indeed is a perfect *Free Agent* in his Sense, that is, *free to anything, that is however Ill:* For if he wills it, it will be made Good; Virtue may be Vice, and Vice Virtue in its Turn, if he pleases. 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. (pp.40-41)

Mrs Cockburn, who apparently had not previously seen the *Letters,* again defended Locke against this accusation, writing to a niece in 1748. She recognizes that there are some grounds for it, "slight", she calls them (which they undoubtedly are when seen in the light of the distinction she made between the content of the Law of Nature and its having the force of a law), but it is "slander", nevertheless.[30] Locke had been Shaftesbury's tutor. What is strange is his certainty in the matter.[31] Burnet, it is true, seems to have become fairly certain that Locke supposed an arbitrary will in God after Locke's Answer to the First Remarks, but that was, presumably, because he saw in the passage quoted earlier (p.8) evasiveness and not just churlishness. (One of Locke's annotations to the Third Remarks complains of Burnet's imputing to him "what is not mine. For where is it I so much as mention much less assert **an arbitrary difference of good & evil**", "Marginalia", p.36.)

Mrs Cockburn's defence of Locke this time added a criticism of him: "Yet I must own to you, I am not myself satisfied upon a review of what Mr. *Locke* has said on moral relations . . . I fear he has given occasion to the interested scheme so much in fashion of late, but carried, I dare say, far beyond what he intended". Locke's account of moral motivation[32] draws some comment — not a great deal — from Burnet:

> I think you should tell us also, What is *the Love of God* (the Fountain of Vertue and Piety) according to your Principles; and how it is distinguish'd from *Self-love:* Which, in your way, it seems to be in the last Resolution of

> it. We love God . . . because he will reward our Love and Obedience. Without this Motive, you seem to leave no Argument to love Him, or Vertue, or Piety . . . (Second Remarks, pp. 24-25)

How is the distinction, then, preserved, Burnet asks, between the *"Bonum Utile & Honestum"?* There is not much more than that in Burnet's comment on Locke's account of moral motivation. He had none of Shaftesbury's and Hutcheson's preoccupation with self-interested notions of human conduct, and his rejection of them does not affect his doctrine of moral perception as Shaftesbury's and Hutcheson's rejection of them does their doctrine of a Moral Sense.

Early in the First Remarks, Burnet expressed obscure dissatisfaction as to the epistemological adequacy of Locke's "principles" in the area of morality. For Hutcheson, it is not Locke's *principles* that are at fault; he agrees with Locke that we have no "simple" ideas underived from sense or reflection, and from the uniqueness of moral ideas, he infers a Moral Sense.[33] The operation of Hutcheson's Moral Sense, like that of Burnet's Natural Conscience, is "antecedent to *Instruction*",[34] and immediate. Both are propellants to action. But what does Hutcheson's Moral Sense perceive?

At the end of the Introduction to his Inquiry Concerning Moral Good and Evil, Hutcheson sets out what he will attempt to prove. It is in part that

> some Actions have to Men an *immediate Goodness;* or that by a *superior Sense,* which I call a *Moral one,* we perceive Pleasure in the Contemplation of such Actions in others, and are determin'd to love the Agent . . . without any View of further *natural Advantage* from them. *(Works,* Vol.I, p.106)

That by the Moral Sense we do not perceive anything in actions, but experience something within ourselves when we contemplate actions of a certain kind — that this is what Hutcheson is to be understood as maintaining in the Inquiry Concerning Moral Good and Evil, is an implication of what is said in the preface common to this treatise and the treatise on Beauty which goes with it in the work entitled *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725). The preface moves through a discussion of varieties of pleasure and pain to an explanation of Hutcheson's special use of the term "sense":

> THESE *Determinations to be pleas'd with any Forms or Ideas which occur to our Observation, the* Author *chuses to call* SENSES; *distinguishing them from the Powers which commonly go by that Name, by calling our Power of perceiving the* Beauty *of* Regularity, Order, Harmony, *an* INTERNAL SENSE; *and that Determination to be pleas'd with the Contemplation of those* Affections, Actions, *or* Characters *of* rational Agents, *which we call* virtuous, *he marks by the name of a* MORAL SENSE. *(Works,* Vol.I, p.vi)

Interested primarily in a comparison between Hutcheson's position and that of Burnet, we need not attempt to discover precisely what Hutcheson's moral theory is[35] insofar as it is of a kind governed by this definition of the Moral Sense.[36] But there are appearances of another view in Hutcheson. The first section of the Inquiry Concerning Moral Good and Evil is headed: "Of the Moral Sense by which we perceive Virtue and Vice, and approve or disapprove them in others". Several commentators have drawn attention to the fact that a distinction seems to be intended between the perceiving and the approving. What sort of view would this other view be, if the distinction here between perceiving and approving is intended? It would be a view up to a point at least, very like Burnet's whose

Natural Conscience has a "different perception" of good and evil with a "different affection" of the Mind arising from it. If there is a perception by Hutcheson's Moral Sense which is not its "perception" of pleasure or pain when good or bad actions are contemplated, the object of this perception must surely be a goodness or badness supervenient on some character of the action. It could hardly be the character whatever it is, from which this goodness or badness results — benevolence in the one case, say, malice in the other; such a character would no more be perceived by a moral sense than the colours of a painting by a sense of beauty.

The secondary view in Hutcheson is described by Jensen, who holds that the indications of it cannot be explained away, as "a naively realistic theory of the moral sense" — "entirely foreign", he adds, to Hutcheson's "general epistemological outlook".[37] That consideration should be played down. Hutcheson's dominant view, if in fact there are discrepant views to be found in his writings, is also foreign, being one of moral *phenomenalism,* to his general epistemological outlook. As was argued earlier, there is no place in the range of Moral-Sense theory for a view analogous to a theory of representative perception.

But is it to be supposed that a philosopher has held, as a result of some inadvertency, that regarding an action as good is a matter of regarding it with a certain sort of pleasure, and also, though not so strongly, that its being good is a (supervenient) quality possessed by the action independently of any attitude to it? A detached critic may ask what is the difference between a subjectivist view of the Moral Sense, and an "objectivist" view of it which has to admit that it can be mistaken, but has no procedures for distinguishing between its mistakes and its veridical declarations? Whatever weight is to be assigned to that question, the fact remains that the two views are felt opposites. We shall try therefore to explain away the indications of a view in Hutcheson inconsistent with his definition of the Moral Sense. We shall begin with a point which is of general significance for the analogy between a moral sense and the senses.

Hutcheson puts an objection to the Moral Sense grounded on the very conception of it. (The objection is aimed at forcing an admission that we must know *"antecedently* what is *morally Good* or *Evil* by our *Reason* before we can know that our *moral Sense* is *right"*.) May not there be, the objection goes,

> a *right* or *wrong State* of our *moral Sense,* as there is of our other *Senses,* according as they represent their Objects to be *as they really are,* or represent them otherwise? So may not our *moral Sense* approve that which is *vicious* and *disapprove Virtue,* as a *sickly Palate* may dislike *grateful Food,* or a *vitiated Sight* misrepresent *Colours* or *Dimensions?*[38]

Hutcheson's reply develops the analogy with the senses: we discount perceptions arising from any "Disorder in our *Organs*", ascribing qualities to objects "according to our *ordinary Perceptions,* or those of others in *good Health"* (p.282).

D.D. Raphael's book, *The Moral Sense* (1947), criticizes the notion of a moral sense on the ground that there appears to be no moral-sense organ, and was derided for this by its reviewer in *Mind* (July, 1948). Certainly, a criticism which merely itemizes this difference in point of analogy as between a moral sense and the senses, invites the comment that the Moral-Sense theorist was presumably aware of the difference. The difference, in fact, has a significant consequence. Hutcheson's attempt to counter the objection he has stated runs into serious theoretical difficulties in the absence of anything analogous to a sense organ,

since what the aberrant perceptions which are to parallel the results of "a *wrong State* of our *moral Sense*" are due to, is a disordered state of some sense organ.

The contrast between a right and wrong state of the Moral Sense which Hutcheson's reply to the objection accepts, would, taken in isolation, have a very considerable tendency to suggest that there is to be found in him a view according to which there is something quite other than pleasure or its opposite perceived by the Moral Sense, and that what this is, is a goodness or badness independent of the perception of it. But in wanting, as he uncontestably did, to establish a *universality* in the Moral Sense, a universality of approval or disapproval, Hutcheson had a sufficient reason for distinguishing between its true and its aberrant perceptions.

It is specifically in connection with the universality of the Moral Sense that Hutcheson adduced grounds for the diversity of moral "sentiments" quite unrelated to any ordered or disordered state of the Moral Sense. These grounds all have to do with variation in *opinion*. The Moral Sense, dependent on the opinions it is presented with, itself operates uniformly. Various "Opinions of *Happiness,* or *natural Good,* and of the most effective Means to advance it", constitute the first of the grounds for the diversity of moral sentiments.[39] There is a difference here from Burnet which is quite separate from any subjectivist-objectivist issue as to the perceptions of the Moral Sense. Burnet's Natural Conscience does not have this utilitarian character. This character is the rectifying principle in a passage where Hutcheson exhibits the Moral Sense as being open to a certain kind of correction by "Reason". Spontaneously reacting against the disciplining of a child or the execution of a criminal, the Moral Sense is corrected when reasoning makes evident "the *superior Good* arising from them in the whole"; thereupon it determines approval accordingly.[40]

There is a kind of statement made by Hutcheson (but by no means peculiar to him) which contributes through its ambiguity to the impression that his writings contain an objectivist view of the perceptions of the Moral Sense. Examples of this kind of statement are the following:

> *Esteem* . . . *Dislike* . . . are entirely excited by some *moral Qualitys,* Good or Evil, apprehended to be in the Objects . . .[41]
>
> we may observe, that no Action of any other Person was ever approv'd by us, but upon some Apprehension, well or ill grounded, of some *really good moral Quality.*[42]
>
> The *Apprehension* of morally good Qualities is the necessary Cause of *Approbation,* by our moral Sense . . .[43]

These passages are quoted by David Norton, arguing against a "non-cognitivist" interpretation of Hutcheson's Moral Sense, in connection with one of the points which he sees in Hutcheson's analogy between sense perception and moral perception. This point of the analogy is that "The moral sense, as well as the external senses, is said to apprehend objective reality through perceptions presented directly to consciousness". The passages are quoted as "representative instances of such cognitive terminology".[44]

Good and evil qualities objectively in actions, indisputably there are — benevolence and malice, for instance. But no registering of *that* objectivity by Hutcheson expresses an objectivist view of the perceptions of the Moral Sense, for qualities such as benevolence and malice, as we have already had occasion to notice, cannot be thought of as perceived by the Moral Sense. They present themselves to ordinary perception and inference.

Jensen[45] draws attention to a passage in Hutcheson's *System of Moral Philosophy*[46] as strongly suggesting the view that "moral goodness" is an "objective quality". Much more than the passages we have just now been considering, it has the right sort of objectivist look; that is, it suggests the view that the *goodness* of a good quality is as independent of anyone's perception of it as the quality itself is.

> when we admire the virtue of another [Hutcheson wrote], the whole excellence, or that quality which by nature we are determined to approve, is conceived to be in that other; we are pleased in the contemplation because the object is excellent, and the object is not judged to be therefore excellent because it gives us pleasure.[47]

The context of this passage makes a considerable difference to its interpretation. Hutcheson's linking of a "sense of Beauty" with the Moral Sense[48] in the *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* was a reason for one's wanting to treat as inadvertencies of expression, what might appear to indicate a secondary objectivist view of the perceptions of the Moral Sense. Beauty and virtue are again linked in the following sentence which leads into the passage we want to interpret:

> As, in approving a beautiful form, we refer the beauty to the object; we do not say that it is beautiful because we reap some little pleasure in viewing it, but we are pleased in viewing it because it is antecedently beautiful. Thus, when we admire the virtue of another . . .

Hutcheson has certainly altered his opinion as to what the word "beauty" should properly be said to denote. In the treatise on beauty in the *Inquiry* (I.xvii; *Works,* Vol.I, p.13), it is asserted that "Beauty, like other Names of sensible Ideas, properly denotes the Perception of some Mind". The doctrinal implication of calling beauty a "perception" is obvious; not so the implication of Hutcheson's now speaking of beauty as being in the object for that may only be a return to an ordinary way of speaking. He can hardly be taken to mean that *besides* the qualities, objectively in the object, which evoke aesthetic response, there is a beauty in it existing independently of anyone's response. Beauty and moral excellence are still linked. Moral excellence is accorded an objectivity like that of beauty. It is not an objectivity that a subjectivist would deny.

A final comment on Burnet's position in its historical relationships. Not holding any *theory* of a moral sense, merely using the analogy, in point of immediacy (and implied objectivity), between moral perception and sense perception, he could, without strain, compare moral with mathematical truths as equally "clear, eternal, and unalterable". Burnet and Reid are considerably alike here. Reid put forward no theory of a moral sense, but he held that "moral distinctions" could rightly be spoken of as perceived by a moral sense — provided a sense is not thought of as a source of mere subjective feeling[49] — and for him, as for Burnet, "true or false in morals . . . is necessarily so".[50]

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[14] Catherine Trotter thus largely anticipates an account of Locke's position, making it consistent, which was put forward in the discussion subsequent to W. von Leyden's edition of the *Essays on the Law of Nature* (Oxford, 1954). See J. W. Lenz, "Locke's Essays on the Law of Nature" *(Philosophy and Phenomenological Research,* XVII, 1956-57): "Locke's voluntarism is throughout the *Essays* one where logical order, right, and good are independent of God's will but where obligation is not" (p.110).

[15] Thus, Descartes writes: "if any reason for what is good had preceded [God's] preordination, it would have determined Him towards that which it was best to bring about; but on the contrary because He determined Himself towards those things which ought to be accomplished, for that reason, as it stands in Genesis, *they are very good*" ("Reply to Sixth Set of Objections", *Philosophical Works,* trans. Haldane and Ross, Vol. II, p. 250).

[16] Amongst the writings of Locke published anonymously are *Two Treatises of Government* (1690), the Letters on Toleration (1689-92), and *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695). The first of the two Treatises was written against the "False Principles" of Sir Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha.*

[17] It was to this Reply that Locke's Answer to the First Remarks was appended.

[18] *Works,* Vol. IV, p.275.

[19] The rejection of an "arbitrary will" in God and the assertion of an "immutable" distinction between good and evil, together with other linguistic touches, suggest the influence of Cudworth. In the Cudworth manuscripts there are anticipations of Burnet's view of the manner in which the distinction between good and evil is perceived, which might have come his way through his association with Cudworth at Cambridge. The following is part of a quotation taken by J. A. Passmore (*Ralph Cudworth,* Cambridge, 1951, p.66) from one of the manuscripts: "As the first spring of vital action is not from the speculative understanding, so neither is dry and insipid ratiocination the only measure and rule of good and evil . . . It is not sapless speculative knowledge that is the proper rule or judge of good and evil but what touches, tastes and savours".

[20] *A Discourse Concerning the Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion* (1706), Prop.I, p.50.

[21] In the first letter commenting upon Catherine Trotter's *Defence,* Leibniz wrote *(Phil. Schriften,* Vol.III, p.307): *"Je tiens que nous nous appercevons souvent sans raisonnement de ce qui est juste et injuste, comme nous appercevons sans raison de quelques theoremes doe Geometrie; mais il est tousjours bon de venir à la demonstration".* The comment follows a reference to Locke, but probably was made with some thought of the views Burnet held, for Catherine Trotter brings together (*Defence,* pp.6-7) — though not to raise the point raised above — "this sudden perception without Ratiocination" and Burnet's comparison of the moral and the mathematical truth.

[22] For example: "Conscience is the judg, not ye law"; "conscience dictates not but acquits or condemns upon the dictates of a superior power" ("Marginalia", p.40, p.44).

[23] Joseph Butler, *Sermons* (1726), II.

[24] Library, University of Western Australia.

[25] *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society,* XLV, 1944-5; reprinted in *Broad's Critical Essays in Moral Philosophy,* (ed.) D.R. Cheney (London, 1971). The page reference is to this volume.

[26] *Five Types of Ethical Theory* (London, 1934), p.109.

[27] Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Inquiry concerning Virtue or Merit* (I.ii.3; I.iii.2). A version of the *Inquiry* was published without Shaftesbury's consent in 1699 — the same year as Burnet's Third Remarks. He published a revised version in his *Characteristicks* (1711).

[28] *The Moralists* (1709) II.iii. *The Moralists* is part of the collection which makes up the *Characteristicks.*

[29] The *Letters* were published in 1716.

[30] *Works of Mrs Catherine Cockburn,* Vol.II, pp. 242-3. Mrs Cockburn had come deeply under the influence of Samuel Clarke. She wrote "in vindication" of his principles a work published in 1747 to which William Warburton, the author of *The Divine Legation* and Pope's editor, contributed a preface. Her views — so far as these can be made out from the *Defence* of Locke — seem, however, to have changed significantly only on one point. As regards the *content* of the Moral Law, she had all along held it to be grounded (in the language she had come to adopt) on "the reason and nature of things". As regards moral *obligation,* her opinion had changed: this, she had come to believe, had the same grounding as the content of the Moral Law.

[31] R. L. Brett quoting from Shaftesbury the passage quoted above, simply takes Shaftesbury's word for it that, according to Locke, good and evil are made such by the will of God. "It is on this point that Shaftesbury disagrees so radically with his own tutor" *(The Third Earl of Shaftesbury,* London, 1951, p.79).

[32] For Locke's account of moral motivation, see *Essay,* II.xxviii.5, I.iii.6; for his account of motivation in general, see *Essay,* II.xxi.31ff.

[33] Francis Hutcheson, Illustrations upon the Moral Sense (1728), II; *Works of Hutcheson* (Hildesheim, 1971), Vol.II, p.250.

[34] Inquiry Concerning Moral Good and Evil, IV. vii; *Works,* Vol.I, p.193.

[35] W.K. Frankena in "Hutcheson's Moral Sense Theory" *(Journal of the History of Ideas,* June, 1955), argues that Hutcheson holds a form of the view that moral "judgements" express feelings.

[36] Burnet, whose *model* for moral perception is outward sense, on one occasion has a secondary moral discernment made by "Inward Sensations". There is no move in this passage in a Hutchesonian direction; these sensations are not sensations of moral pleasure and pain: "As our Outward Senses are sufficient . . . to give us notice of what is convenient or inconvenient to the Body: So those Inward Sensations were design'd to direct us to what is agreeable or disagreeable, good or hurtful to the Soul" (Third Remarks, p.9).

[37] Henning Jensen, *Motivation and the Moral Sense in Francis Hutcheson's Ethical Theory* (The Hague, 1971), p.107.

[38] Illustrations upon the Moral Sense, IV; *Works,* II, p.281.

[39] Inquiry Concerning Moral Good and Evil, IV.iii; *Works,* Vol.I, p.183.

[40] Illustrations upon the Moral Sense, I; *Works,* Vol.II, p. 237.

[41] Inquiry Concerning Moral Good and Evil, II.ii; *Works,* Vol.I, p.128.

[42] Inquiry Concerning Moral Good and Evil, IV.ii; p.180.

[43] *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions,* IV.i; *Works,* Vol.II, p.88.

[44] "Hutcheson on Perception and Moral Perception", *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie,* Vol. 59 (1977), No. 2. Norton's paper is the second of two papers — the other one is "Hutcheson's Moral Sense Reconsidered" *(Dialogue,* March, 1973) — written in the belief that the way to an understanding of Hutcheson's Moral Sense is through an understanding of his general theory of perception.

[45] *op. cit.,* p.47.

[46] Published after Hutcheson's death, but worked on earlier. See Jensen, p.5.

[47] *System of Moral Philosophy,* I.iv.1; *Works,* Vol.V, p.54.

[48] Burnet mentions a sense of beauty in connection with Natural Conscience only in passing, and to make the point that Natural Conscience is only one of several natural dispositions.

[49] Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Active Powers,* V.vii; *Works,* (ed.) Sir William Hamilton, Vol.II, p.674.

[50] *Essays on the Intellectual Powers,* VI.vi; *Works,* Vol.I, p.454.

III

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL AND THE QUESTION OF THINKING MATTER

> The Immortality of the Soul [Burnet writes], was a third Thing which I cou'd not clear to my self, upon your Principles. You suppose that the Soul may be sometimes absolutely without thoughts of one kind or other, and also that God may, if he pleases, (for any thing we know by the Light of Nature) give, or have given to some Systems of Matter, a Power to conceive and think. Upon these two Suppositions, I cou'd not make out any certain proof of the immortality of the Soul, and am apt to think it cannot be done. (First Remarks, p.8)

To be "always thinking, always in action" is perhaps, Locke states, "the Privilege of the infinite Author and Preserver of things, *who never slumbers nor sleeps;* but is not competent to any finite Being, at least not to the Soul of Man" (*Essay,* II.i.10). Why the soul is *unable* to be always thinking, Locke does not say, and within lines he is saying that whether the soul always thinks, is a matter about which we can be "no farther assured, than Experience informs us". It is for those who hold the doctrine that the soul always thinks, to substantiate it from experience, Locke contends. But just how does he conduct the appeal to experience *against* the doctrine, and how does he apply his principle that there is no thinking without a consciousness of it?

"I wonder how you can observe", Burnet addresses Locke, "that your Soul sometimes does not think; for when you do observe it you think" (First Remarks, p.8). Locke does speak in passing of his not perceiving that his soul always thinks (II.i.10), but the argument he puts forward against the doctrine makes no self-refuting appeal to experience. It goes to experience only for the fact that dreamless sleep (or, not to beg the question, apparently dreamless sleep) occurs. The principle that there is no thinking without a consciousness of it, is used quite differently than by way of simple invocation against a view that the soul always thinks but, at intervals, unconsciously. For Locke's argument is directed against a form of the doctrine according to which there is no unconscious thinking. If one has construed the argument correctly, the principle does essential work in an attempt by Locke to produce from the doctrine in this form implications of such paradoxicality as to destroy it.

"The Soul, during sound Sleep, thinks, say these Men" and Locke is speaking for them, though in anticipation of the objection he is going to bring up, when he continues — *"Whilst it thinks* and perceives . . . *it must necessarily be conscious of its own Perceptions".* Locke's objection is that the soul "has all this apart: The Sleeping Man, 'tis plain, is conscious of nothing of all this" (II.i.12).

The implication that Locke wants drawn is that the sleeping man is not

thinking, for he is not conscious of thinking. And the picture this produces is of two persons in the sleeper, one thinking, one not. It is a picture of the implications of the doctrine to which Locke has no entitlement. A man "consisting of Body and Soul" (II.i.11), if the soul united to the body thinks, the man thinks — whether he is awake or asleep.

The suggestion that there are two persons in a sleeping man if the soul always thinks, is altogether illusory. It is otherwise with the imputation that the sleeping man, and the waking man emerging from dreamless sleep, will or could be different persons. There is now no question of the man's soul thinking and the man not thinking because not conscious at the time of his soul's thinking. The waking man, however, has no consciousness of what goes on when he is asleep, which might be as rich in thought and feeling as his waking experience, and as different from that, as that is from the experience of someone living at another time and place. It would be very natural in such a case to describe the sleeping and the waking man as *different persons.*[51]

Burnet declared himself unable to understand the point of Locke's "Discourse about the Identity or Non-identity of the same Man, sleeping and waking"[52] (First Remarks, p.12), but a consideration he adduces to explain forgetfulness on waking might be thrown into the discussion: correlated with the state of the brain, the experience of the soul during sleep is dim and flickering.[53]

Suppose that there are times during which the soul entirely ceases to think. What gets it thinking again?, Burnet asks Locke. "You say Matter cannot produce a Thought; and you say an unthinking Substance cannot produce a Thought: and I know nothing in (unthinking) Man, but one of these two.[54] "What is it then that lights the Candle again, when it is put out?" (First Remarks, p.9). What, indeed, is the soul when it is not thinking; how distinguished then "from Nothing and from Matter"? ("This Carcase of a Soul I cannot understand", Burnet wrote in the changed tone of the Second Remarks.)

Catherine Trotter answers both questions for Locke in a Lockean manner. If we do not understand how the soul passes from not thinking to thinking, neither do we understand how it "passes from one Thought to another" (*Defence,* p.31). We are "equally ignorant what the Soul is, when we do think, as when we do not" (p.37). She cannot make out, she tells Burnet, how it is of any consequence for the soul's immortality whether or not it is always thinking. The reason Burnet gives is that if the soul is not always thinking, we have no security that at death it will not forever cease to think.

In a piece in his Journal written some years before he published the *Essay,* Locke had drawn the same inference as Burnet. If the soul could exist in a state of insensibility for an hour, "it may also have the same duration without pain or pleasure, or anything els, for the next hower, and soe to eternity". And dreamless sleep makes it manifest that the soul enters into states of insensibility.[55] Locke is attacking the argument for the soul's immortality from its indestructibility, as directed towards establishing something that is to no purpose. Since its eternal insensibility is possible, we would have no better prospects with an immortal soul than with the certainty that God can, and "the strong probability amounting allmost to certainty" that He will, "put the souls of men into a state of life or perception after the dissolution of [their] bodys" (p.130). This takes place at the Resurrection. It is a consequence of the Fall of man, Locke maintains in *The Reasonableness of Christianity,* that he incurs death, and dying, has "no more life or sense than the dust . . . out of which he was made".[56]

"*The Immortality of the Soul is another Thing,* he says, *he cannot clear to*

himself, upon my Principles." Locke's Answer refers his critic to the Bishop of Worcester's undertaking "in the Letter he has lately honoured me with in Print", "to prove, upon my Principles, the Soul's immateriality; which I suppose, this Author will not question to be a Proof of its *Immortality*. But if that will not serve his turn", Locke adds, "I will tell him a *Principle* of mine that will *clear* it to him; and that is, The Revelation of Life and *Immorality* by Jesus Christ, through the Gospel".

The misprint did not escape Burnet's eyes. His reply to being sent by Locke to the Gospel is that while the Gospel of course provides a confirmation of the immortality of the soul, "we are speaking of Proofs to be made by the Light of Nature, and particularly by the Principles of Humane Understanding, as you have represented them" (Second Remarks, pp. 9-10). What does Locke now offer in the way of a proof of the immortality of the soul? For a proof of this "You refer me (whether ludicrously and sarcastically, or no, you best know) to the Lord Bishop of *Worcester's* Arguments, taken from your Principles". Burnet was reasonably astonished. The Bishop of Worcester's undertaking was to prove the immateriality of the soul by way of a proof making use of "no other Principles or *Ideas*" than are to be found in Locke's *Essay*, that *"a material Substance cannot think"*.[57]

The first of the two suppositions of Locke's which Burnet found difficult to fit in with a proof of the immortality of the soul was that the soul "may be sometimes absolutely without thoughts", the second was that God might give, might have given, to "some Systems of Matter" the power to think. How, on this second supposition do we know that "our Soul is not Matter" (First Remarks, p.13), destined to be dissolved with the dissolution of the body?[58]

Before observing Locke and Burnet in argument over the possibility of thinking matter, we stop to notice a summary in the Third Remarks (p.16) of the notions against which, Burnet complains, Locke had provided inadequate security. He meant also, of course, that they were notions which Locke at least leaned towards. *"Cogitant Matter, a Mortal Soul . . . a God without Moral Attributes . . . and an Arbitrary Law of Good and Evil"*.[59]

As to the possibility of thinking matter, Burnet will not have resort made to the power of God; he will allow nothing "unconceivable" to be possible without "positive Assurance Divine or Humane, that it is Possible". There is some ambiguity in Burnet's description of thinking matter as unconceivable. His lesser meaning is that we have no comprehension of the manner in which matter would think. This is how Locke chooses to understand Burnet — in line with what he himself had said with regard to our being unable to conceive of creation out of nothing (*Essay*, IV.x.19).

By the unconceivability of thinking matter, Burnet usually means, however, not our mere inability to form a conception of it, but our being blocked by the conception we do have of matter from any conception of *thinking matter*. We experience a unity in our "perceptions" which is "incompetent to Matter, by reason of the Distinction or Division of its Parts" (Third Remarks, p.17). "All our Perceptions", Burnet continues, "whether of Sense, Passions, Reason, or any other Faculty, are carried to one *Common Percipient*, or one common Conscious Principle". Tell us, he addresses Locke, "what part of the Body is that, which you make the *Common Percipient*". Locke's reply is that he makes "noe part of the body soe. But how any part of the body may or can be soe I will undertake to tell when y^{u} shall tell how any created substance may or can be so" ("Marginalia", p.45).

Having argued the need for a Common Volent as well as a Common Percipient and their conjunction in the same subject, Burnet sums up his position:

> We allow that a spirit may act and Cogitate in Matter, and be so united to some systems of it, that there may be a reciprocation of Actions and Passions betwixt them, according to the Laws of their Union. But still all these Cogitations are the Powers of the Spirit, not of the Matter. (Third Remarks, p.22)

Locke replies:

> y^{u} *allow* here of suppositions as unconceivable & as unexplicable as any thing in the thinking of matter. For to use y^{r} way of argueing. 1st I desire y^{u} will help me to conceive an unextended unsolid created substance for y^{t} I suppose y^{u} mean here by spirit. 2. to conceive how such a substance acts & cogitates in a solid substance. 3. to conceive how it is united to some systems of matter. 4. to conceive how it can act on or suffer from matter &c: For to use y^{r} own words . . . ***It would not be fair nor satisfactory to give us a short answer and tell us every thing is possible to god . . . & If we grant such arbitrary powers of w^{ch} we have noe Idea nor conception — there will be noe end of imputeing powers according to every ones Fancy or Credulity.*** According to w^{ch} rule of y^{rs} all that is allowed beyond what we can conceive must goe for ***Fancy & Credulity.*** And therefor pray let us see that phylosiphie of y^{rs} bounded by such rules as may keep us from unconceivable suppositions. ("Marginalia", p.49)

We now try to determine just what it was that Locke supposed when he supposed the possibility of thinking matter. He needs to be quoted at some length. It is beyond our capacities to determine

> 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 our *Idea* of 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 . . . What certainty of Knowledge can any one have that some perceptions . . . should not be in some bodies themselves, after a certain manner modified and moved, as well as that they should be in an immaterial Substance, upon the Motion of the parts of Body . . . Motion, according to the utmost reach of our *Ideas,* being able to produce nothing but Motion, so that when we allow it to produce pleasure or pain, or the *Idea* of a Colour, or Sound, we are fain to quit our Reason, go beyond our own *Ideas,* and attribute it wholly to the good Pleasure of our Maker. For since we must allow he has annexed Effects to Motion, which we can no way conceive Motion able to produce, what reason have we to conclude, that he could not order them as well to be produced in a Subject we cannot conceive capable of them, . . . as in a Subject we cannot conceive the motion of matter can any way operate upon? *(Essay,* IV.iii.6)

If a notion of the *adding on* to matter of a faculty of thinking is really intended, then Locke's supposition is not that thinking might *result* from some complexity of material organization, but that it might *inhere* in material, instead of immaterial, substance. One of Burnet's remarks is appropriate to the strangeness

of the implication carried by the word "superadd" (an implication reinforced by the suggestion very naturally seen in the reference to what God might do if He pleased). Burnet's remark is to the effect that a power of thinking "impress'd" upon matter "could not be call'd the Power of Matter, no more than Motion is the Power of Matter" (Third Remarks, p.21). Locke, unfortunately, made no comment on this remark.

At issue is Locke's conception of substance. A conception of substance which has been attributed to Locke accommodates very nicely the mere inherence of a faculty of thinking in material substance. This is the conception of substance as being an "undifferentiated substratum". A conception of substance which, if Locke held it, would exclude this mere inherence is one according to which the substance of a particular thing is identical with what Locke called its "real essence". In a paper entitled "The Ideas of Power and Substance in Locke's Philosophy"[60] M. R. Ayers argues demolishingly against attributing to Locke the first of these conceptions. He argues persuasively in favour of attributing to him the second of them, too little troubled, though, by the recalcitrance of the terms "substratum", "support", "subject of inherence" to the silent transformation of meaning he is supposing them to have undergone in Locke.[61]

How, if for Locke the substance of a particular thing and its real essence are identical, is his supposition to be understood, that God might, "if he pleases", "superadd to Matter a Faculty of thinking"? First, what is the force of this "if he pleases"?

There is a reference in the passage to God's pleasure in another connection than that of the possibility of thinking matter — in connection with the production of sensations by "the Motion of the parts of Body". Motion, "according to the utmost reach of our *Ideas,* being able to produce nothing but Motion", when we "allow it to produce" sensations, "we are fain to quit our Reason, go beyond our *Ideas,* and attribute it wholly to the good Pleasure of our Maker". Locke's meaning, Ayers writes (p.23) is,

> not that we have to postulate a miracle, "arbitrary" in the modern sense and so unintelligible in principle to any intellect, but that we can say no more about ["a causal power unintelligible to us"] than what is true of every power whatsoever: for everything is thanks to God, and it is taken as a theological presupposition of the discussion that the power of thinking "cannot be in *any* created being but merely by the good pleasure and bounty of the Creator".

This interpretation makes Locke's reference to God's pleasure too like the "D.V." at the end of the announcement on the notice-board informing passers-by that "the Gospel is preached in this hall every Lord's Day". It is not all power of which Locke is speaking, but of power the exercise of which is incomprehensible to us, and his point is contained in his question:

> For since we must allow [God] has annexed Effects to Motion, which we can no way conceive Motion able to produce, what reason have we to conclude, that he could not order them as well to be produced in a Subject we cannot conceive capable of them . . . as in a Subject we cannot conceive the motion of Matter can any way operate upon?

The account to be given of the precise force of the reference to God's pleasure is not, however, very important. What is important is whether — to adapt a remark made by Ayers — any warrant can be found for reading into it ontological instead of merely epistemological claims. We shall come back to this question later.

We now consider how the possible "superaddition" of a power of thinking to matter is to be understood. It is to be understood, Ayers maintains, in accordance with the implications of the following statement in IV.iii.6: "Other Spirits, who see and know the Nature and inward Constitution of things, how much must they exceed us in Knowledge?" The presence of that utterance in a context in which both the possibility of thinking matter and the action of body on mind are under consideration is certainly of very considerable significance. "All is intelligible, but not to us", Ayers represents Locke as maintaining (p.22). In the light of this claim, what Locke meant by the "superaddition" of a power of thinking to matter, is a question with far-reaching implications for the understanding of his philosophy.

Ayers interprets Locke thus: "To 'superadd' to matter the power of thought would naturally be a more complicated business [than to put matter into motion]: hence Locke envisages the possibility that God 'annexes' the power not to any body but to 'some Systems of matter, fitly disposed' ". Interpreted, the possibility that Locke envisages is that of "a cleverer maker of physical clocks, so to speak, than we are capable of comprehending", contriving a "material mechanism" of which thinking is an "effect or operation" (p.23).

If, for Locke, the superaddition of a power of thought to matter is like the putting of matter into motion, then the inference would seem to be that he cannot have regarded thinking as being, possibly, an *effect* of some organization of matter, for he did not consider motion could so result. But perhaps all that should be read off from the analogy between the superaddition of motion to matter, and of a power of thought to matter, is that in both cases God does something which matter left to itself could not do. The superaddition of motion to matter would need a creation *ex nihilo;* the superaddition of a power of thought might need only the manipulation of matter into the right sort of system. In Locke's Second Reply to the Bishop of Worcester, not only is motion superadded to matter, so also are "the properties of a rose, a peach, or an elephant".[62] To suppose all this superaddition to be of the same sort as the superaddition of motion to matter,[63] is to suppose a mere receptivity in Nature out of keeping with Locke's attitude to the Corpuscularian philosophy.

There are, however, two passages in the *Essay* which are greatly in the way of construing the superaddition of a power of thought to matter in terms of a manipulation of matter. To both of these passages Burnet drew Locke's attention.

It seemed to Burnet that Locke was committed to ratifying the argument against thinking matter, drawn from the complexity of matter. "You say", he wrote:

> in a System of Matter, 'Tis *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* [*Essay,* IV.x.17]. Put *Cogitation* now in the Place of *Motion* and the same Argumentation holds good: As thus, 'Tis impossible that any one part or particle should know the Cogitations of any other Parts or Particles or the whole know the Cogitations of every particular. (Third Remarks, pp.17-18)

This is Locke's comment:

> 'Twould be impossible if it were supposed to be in matter as matter. But if god gives it to a certain systeme of matter soe disposed it is then in that systeme. ("Marginalia", p.46)

When Locke says that something is "in matter as matter", he means that it is in all matter, in every particle of it. The suggestion in his comment is not that the knowledge in question could *result* from the working of a system of matter disposed in some way as it could not result from the behaviour of separate particles; Locke seems plainly to be contemplating an endowment bestowed upon the system.

In the second passage Locke is asserting that

> 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. (IV.x.16)

Burnet confronts Locke with this passage with the remark that "If being put together in a System, add nothing *new* but a new Position; then, as it does not add Thought and Knowledge, so neither does it add a *new* capacity of Thought or Knowledge" (Third Remarks, p.19). Locke makes no comment.

Can anything be done with this passage on behalf of the manipulative interpretation of the superadding of a power of thought to matter? Well, why should not the impossibility spoken of be one only "according to the utmost reach of our *Ideas*"? If Locke's assertion is read with this qualification, it matches "Motion . . . able to produce nothing but Motion" in IV.iii.6. To the proposal to read Locke in this way, however, it must be objected that Locke thinks he sees that the impossibility of the generation of cogitative by non-cogitative being is of the same sort as the impossibility of the production of something by nothing (IV.x.11).

And we need to look again at the "production" of sensation by motion spoken of in IV.iii.6. There is a reason for seeing more significance than we brought out in Locke's reference in this connection to God's good pleasure. Defending the notion of creation *ex nihilo,* Locke points to a comparable mystery. What

> causes rest in one [hand] and motion in the other? Nothing but my Will, a Thought of my Mind . . . Explain this and make it intelligible, and then the next step will be to understand Creation. (IV.x.19)

If transactions between body and mind are like creation, then what their effects are, has to be put down simply, and not in virtue of our limited comprehension, to the pleasure of God. Appropriately, Locke says of sensations that they are effects "annexed" by God to motion.

This doctrine does not look reconcilable with an interpretation of Locke which has him holding that "all is intelligible", though not to us; it is of a piece with his supposition, understood in accordance with the meaning which the word announces, that God might "superadd" a power of thinking to matter.

If, as the weight of the evidence we have been examining strongly indicates, this is how Locke's supposition is to be understood, the result has one clear implication for his conception of substance. It is that the substance of a thing is not to be identified with its "real essence". It does not follow that, in spite of appearances, Locke must have had an undifferentiated-substratum conception of substance. He might have conceived of substance both as having a nature of its own and also as being able to support a superadded faculty; how he might have seen the possibilities, can only be conjectured.

The character of Locke's supposition as to the possibility of thinking matter had an historically interesting consequence. In Joseph Priestley's *Disquisitions*

Relating to Matter and Spirit, written with the desire of seeing materialism, hitherto obnoxious, become "the favourite tenet of *rational Christians*",[64] a legacy from Locke obscures even from Priestley himself what he is most importantly contending for. Only when the book is more than half done is a contrast drawn which exhibits this contention plainly. "I have been asked", Priestley quite suddenly writes,

> whether I consider the powers of sensation and thought as *necessarily resulting* from the organization of the brain, or as something independent of organization, but *superadded* and *communicated* to the system afterwards; having expressed myself doubtfully, and perhaps variously, on the subject.
>
> I answer, that my idea *now* is, that sensation and thought do necessarily result from the organization of the brain when the powers of mere *life* are given to the system. (XIII; pp.302-3)

For his doubtful, and perhaps various, expression on the subject, Priestley refers not to anything in the earlier part of the *Disquisitions,* but to a remark in one of the essays introductory to his "edition of Hartley" (which was published in 1775). He quotes himself as having said: "I rather think that the whole man is of some uniform composition, and that the property of perception, as well as the other powers that are termed mental, is the result (whether necessary or not) of such an organical structure as that of the brain" (pp.302-3). Is the contrast between a result that is necessary and one that is not, the same as the contrast between "necessarily resulting from" and "superadded to"? The difficulty is that the latter contrast, however it is to be understood, seems to be made *within* Priestley's materialism, whereas the setting of the remark in the introduction to Hartley[65] shows Priestley only as disposed to reject a dualism of spirit and matter, as leaning towards materialism.

A good example of the confusion to be found in Priestley as between "resulting from" and "inhering in" is provided by an answer he gives (*Disquisitions,* X; p.281) to the difficulty that "we can have no conception how sensation or thought can arise from matter, they . . . bearing no sort of resemblance to any thing like *figure* or *motion*". *"Different",* Priestley answers, "as are the properties of sensation and thought, from such as are usually ascribed to matter, they may, nevertheless, inhere in the same substance, unless we can show them to be absolutely *incompatible* with one another".

Locke is criticized by Priestley (IV; p.246) for allowing that "the faculty of thinking may be a property of the body" and yet holding it to be "more probable that this faculty inhered in a different substance". A philosopher ought to apply the great rule of philosophizing — "we are to suppose no more *causes* than are necessary to produce the *effects*". In the *Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever,* published subsequently to the *Disquisitions,* this rule is again invoked but with a different application. Since "all the phenomena of perception and thought depend upon the organization of the brain", the powers of perception and thought, whatever their nature, "*must,* according to the received rules of philosophizing, be ascribed to that organization. We are not to multiply causes without necessity".[66] And a consideration of a Lockean type is subjoined, though without mention of Locke's name. This is that no difficulty is removed by ascribing those powers "to an invisible or immaterial spirit, because there is no more perceivable connexion between what is *invisible* than what is *visible,* and those *powers*". Nothing other than a being able to understand the organization

which is the cause of perception and thought, can be the cause of that organization, Priestley continues. Priestley thus came to hold what Locke, we have argued, was not envisaging as a possibility when he supposed that God might have superadded to matter a power of thinking.

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[51] Catherine Trotter directs attention to Locke's systematic account of personal identity, according to which, as she says, two *"incommunicable Consciousnesses"* make "two distinct *Persons,* tho' in the same Substance" (*Defence,* p.29).

[52] "A Discourse about the *non Identity of the same Man"*, Catherine Trotter allows, would "be very hard to understand": a duality of *persons* in a man sleeping and waking was, however, the issue (*Defence,* pp. 27-28).

[53] In the first letter in which he comments on Catherine Trotter's *Defence,* Leibniz remarks *(Phil. Schriften,* Vol.III, p.307): *Je tiens . . . que l'ame n'est jamais sans perceptions, mais elle est souvent sans apperception, car elle ne s'apperçoit que des perceptions distinguées, dont elle peut manquer dans un sommeil, dans une apoplexie etc.".*

[54] Locke had said *(Essay,* IV.x.10) that unthinking matter could not produce a thought.

[55] *An Early Draft of Locke's Essay together with Excerpts from his Journals* (ed.) R.I. Aaron and Jocelyn Gibb (Oxford, 1936), p.122.

[56] *Works,* Vol.VII, p.7.

[57] *The Bishop of Worcester's Answer to Mr. Locke's Letter* (1697) p.69.

[58] In the second letter in which Leibniz comments on topics which Catherine Trotter had raised, he writes *(Phil. Schriften,* Vol.III, p.311): *"je crois que l'immortalité de l'ame seroit peu probable, si l'on detruişoit son immaterialité, et si le sentiment pouvoit estre produit et detruit dans la matiere comme une de ses modifications. Il faudroit apres cela un miracle pour le faire subsister ou restituer".* It is the too frequent miracle otherwise, he goes on to explain, that inclines him to regard souls as also pre-existent.

[59] "You know", he tells Locke, "what Philosophers (Ancient or Modern) your Principles are said to imitate" (Second Remarks, p.12). Burnet would certainly have in mind Hobbes, and most probably, Spinoza as well. Referring to Hobbes's materialism in his *Answer to Mr. Locke's Letter* (1697), the Bishop of Worcester wrote (p.56): *"But what is all this to you?* I hope nothing at all". In his *Answer to Mr. Locke's Second Letter* (1698), a reference to Spinoza in connection with the notion of thinking matter (pp.29-30) is plainly pointed at Locke. Locke, in his final reply to the Bishop of Worcester (1699), claimed (*Works,* Vol.IV, p.477) not to be well enough read in Hobbes and Spinoza ("those justly decried names") to be able to state their opinions on the matter of the immortality of the soul. Newton — a friend of Locke's — apologized to him in a letter for having taken him to be a "Hobbist" in morals (Lord King's *Life of Locke,* p.226). In the Third Remarks (p.26), the Epicurean philosophers and Locke are assigned similar epistemological principles from which a number of similar consequences are drawn.

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[60] *Philosophical Quarterly,* January, 1975.

[61] Applying to perceptible shape Locke's phrases, that it is among those properties, actions, powers which are "of themselves inconsistent with existence", which therefore have "a necessary connection with inherence or being supported", Ayers explains Locke to mean that it "falls among the properties which call out for explanation in terms of something more ultimate" (p.14). Berkeley changed the meaning of the terms (but gave some notice of it) when he described the mind as the "substratum", "support", "subject" of ideas: they exist in the mind but "not by way of mode or property" *(Three Dialogues,* III). Compare the Berkeleyan translation with the one proposed for Locke. "Inconsistent with existence" goes across smoothly for Berkeley, the notion

of *incompleteness of being* is preserved: ideas cannot *exist* unsupported by the mind; that is, ideas cannot *exist* unperceived. The phrase is made meaningless, or forced to take on a meaning unconnected with existence, on the rendering of Locke proposed by Ayers.

[62] *Works,* Vol.IV, p.460.

[63] In one sentence the word "frames" is used instead of "superadds" — "to some parts of it [matter] he superadds motion . . . other parts of it he frames into plants".

[64] Preface to the 2nd edition, 1782; *Theological and Miscellaneous Works of Joseph Priestley,* Vol. III, p.210.

[65] See *Theological and Miscellaneous Works,* Vol. III, pp.181-2.

[66] *Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever,* Part I, Letter XI; *Theological and Miscellaneous Works,* Vol. IV, p.385.

IV

THE DOCTRINE OF INNATE KNOWLEDGE AND ITS INTERPRETATIONS

One recalls having felt on first encountering Locke's polemic against innate knowledge that it must be as great a cannonade as any in the history of thought. And, assuredly, something is reduced to rubble: the belief — if what no-one could ever hold can be so styled — that the soul brings into the world with it truths as visible to its sight as "*Starres* in the *Firmament* to our outward sight". The quotation comes from Henry More, from a passage in which he is explaining how he is not to be understood when he asserts the existence of innate knowledge.

J. W. Yolton, in an historical account of the doctrine of innate knowledge which has been very influential,[67] distinguishes what he calls a "dispositional" form of the doctrine from its "naïve" form. More is one of the writers he quotes for the dispositional form, Burnet another.

> And when I say *actuall Knowledge* [More writes], I doe not mean that there is a certaine number of *Ideas* flaring and shining to the *Animadversive faculty* like so many *Torches* or *Starres* in the *Firmament* to our outward sight . . . but I understand thereby an active sagacity in the Soul, or quick recollection, as it were, whereby some small businesse being hinted unto her, she runs out presently into a more clear and larger conception.[68]

For the dispositional version of the theory in Burnet, Yolton quotes Burnet's description of "Natural Conscience" as being

> a Natural Sagacity to distinguish Moral Good and Evil, or a different perception and sense of them, with a different affection of the Mind arising from it; and this so immediate as to prevent and anticipate all External Laws, and all Ratiocination.[69]

Innatist theory in its dispositional form, Yolton writes (p.40), claimed that there was knowledge which was "implicit in the soul and merely required experience to elicit awareness of it" — that there were truths "implicit in man waiting to be recognised once the light of reason has been turned upon them", is how he put it in a later book.[70]

A form of the doctrine of innate knowledge is very opaquely characterized when it is said to regard such knowledge as being *implicit* in the soul. That word, which Innatist writers used, and to which Locke assigned a meaning (*Essay*, I.ii.22) which would make all truths, however arrived at, innate, declares only one thing with any lucidity at all, namely that the truths in question have not been present from the time of his origin to the consciousness of the person possessing innate knowledge of them. Will the naïve form of the doctrine be, correspondingly, then, that these truths have always been before the

consciousness of their possessor? This interpretation fits what Yolton refers to (p.26) as "the naïve form of the doctrine of innateness as it was formulated by Locke", who allowed to the Innatist no postponement until maturity, of our awareness of the truths inscribed upon the soul. It is, however, at odds with Yolton's description of the naïve form when he writes in *John Locke and the Way of Ideas* (p.29):

> The naïve form claimed that God wrote into or impressed upon the soul or mind at birth certain ideas and precepts (or a developed conscience capable of deciding what is right and wrong, independent of custom or learning) for the guidance of life and the foundation of morality, even though we do not become aware of these innate principles (or of the conscience) until maturity.[71]

On this description, Burnet's doctrine of Natural Conscience, which Yolton had cited as an example of the dispositional form, would become an example of the naïve form of the doctrine of innate knowledge. The development Burnet allows Natural Conscience is that of any power within us which comes into operation, and into improved operation, by degrees. Conscience does not have to *learn* by being taught, or in any other way, how to distinguish right and wrong.

Should a form of the doctrine of innate knowledge, described so as to fit what Locke regarded as the only proper form of the doctrine, be called the "naïve" form? It should not. A naïve view may very well be false, but its falsity will not be grossly obvious. On the contrary, it is likely to appear to unsophisticated contemplation as obviously true. The notion that men are born with truths flaring and shining to the animadversive faculty would be rejected as soon as proposed.

There is another reason for not calling this notion the "naïve" form of the doctrine of innate knowledge. (We shall refer to it from now on as the "explicit-formula" interpretation of the doctrine.) It is not primitive, not that from which a more sophisticated view is reached. It makes its appearance in accusation or disclaimer. Like the dispositional view, it is reached by reflection on something primitive and undifferentiated. This is the original doctrine of innate knowledge: the doctrine that we are born with, come into existence with, truths inscribed, stamped, indelibly written upon the soul, mind, understanding. More held this doctrine and gave it a dispositional interpretation. The view he disclaims is another interpretation of it. Burnet held the doctrine and disclaims the interpretation of it disclaimed by More — "Does any one assert that there are such express . . . Propositions in the Mind of Man?" (Third Remarks, p.7). Whether Burnet should be regarded as putting forward a *dispositional* interpretation of the doctrine, is an unimportant question. The word is vague enough not to be inapplicable, but for More, the mind supplements experience from within itself, whereas Burnet's Natural Conscience works in an outward directed way as the senses do — as sight does (though sight is not Burnet's chosen sense).

And so Burnet's interpretation of the doctrine of innate moral knowledge strongly resembles an interpretation of the doctrine of innate knowledge to be found in the following passage, which Yolton quotes from Sir Matthew Hale:

> there are some truths so plain and evident, and open, that need not any process of ratiocination to evidence or evince them; they seem to be objected to the Intellective Nature when it is grown perfect and fit for intellectual operation, as the Objects of Light or Colour are objected to the Eye when it is open.

The truths thus immediately assented to "seem upon this accompt", Hale writes, "to be congenite with us, connatural to us, and engraven in the very frame and compages of the Soul".[72] Locke distinguishes between the self-evident and the innate. In what is here quoted from Hale (to which might be added a further remark of his in the same place about the truths in question, that they are "immediately united . . . by a kind of intuition" to the intellect), the self-evident appears both as an account of what innate truths are, and as accounting for Innatist language.

There is, then, the primitive, undifferentiated, unreflected upon doctrine of innate knowledge (which might therefore properly enough be called the naïve doctrine), and there are various interpretations of the doctrine. Failure to distinguish between the doctrine and its interpretations can hardly fail to produce some misunderstanding of Innatist utterance.

Consider the reasons Yolton gives in *John Locke and the Way of Ideas* (p.43) for suggesting that one of the writers he discusses might have gone back on an earlier view and come to accept "the naïve form" of the doctrine. William Charleton in *The Immortality of the Human Soul* (1659), speaks of "Notions, that are as it were engraven on our Minds", but he explains, Yolton says, that "by 'innate' he means only that which is 'potential'." Yolton adds a footnote:

> Charleton may have changed his views, for in a still later work, *Natural History of the Passions* (1674), in large part a translation of Jean François Senault's *De L'Usage des Passions* (1641), the early portions contain positive assertions of the naïve form of innateness which are not to be found in Senault's work. Equating knowledge with the natural instinct of animals, he speaks of such knowledge as 'being by the omnipotent Creator, in the very act of their Formation, infused, and as an indelible Character impress'd upon their very principles or natures' . . . Later he writes of 'a law engraven upon their hearts' . . .

This equation of innate knowledge with a natural instinct surely implies some sort of dispositional view. And that Charleton spoke in the later book of an *indelible character* and of a law *engraven* on the heart signifies no change of opinion; he spoke in just that way in the earlier book, explaining that by "innate", he meant only that which was potentially present (or which the mind has "an essential power to form", he also says in explanation).[73]

In general, no talk of inscribing, imprinting, stamping, engraving, of "alphabetical characters" or of "heavenly beams of light", signalizes the presence of a naïve form of the doctrine as opposed to a "dispositional" one. "The naïve form of the theory", Yolton writes in *Locke and the Compass of the Human Understanding*, used the terminology of a truth "'stampt' and its 'characters' indelibly written in the hearts of men, of 'red letters', 'heavenly beams of light'" (p.173). So did writers who happen to have indicated that they interpreted the doctrine dispositionally — though a particular expression, such as "red letters" might be missing from the range of expressions they employ. *It was the terminology of the doctrine.* And once again, Yolton himself provides evidence of this in a quotation further down the page, from Culverwel, whom he mentions here, along with More, as advancing a dispositional claim for innateness: "There are stamp't and printed upon the being of man some clear and indelible principles, some first and Alphabetical Notions; by putting together of which it can spell out the Law of Nature".

Anyone holding one of the interpretations of the doctrine of innate knowledge

also holds the doctrine, but the doctrine may be held, no doubt very often was held, uninterpreted. Or half-interpreted. One is not at all suggesting that with Hale, for example, to speak of innate knowledge was simply to speak of self-evident truth. Interpretation is much more so with Burnet than with Hale. But even when Burnet is identifying innate practical principles with Natural Conscience — "Practical Principles, or what I call Natural Conscience" — the inscriptionist language of the doctrine leads him into saying that these Principles or "Natural Impressions", "compar'd with perfect knowledge are but general, obscure, and indistinct Notices" (Third Remarks, p.7).[74]

To have shown, comprehensively, against whom Locke's polemic was directed is a signal merit of *John Locke and the Way of Ideas*. But who held the specific opinion on innate knowledge that was the target of so much of Locke's shot and shell? Who conceived of innate truths as inscriptions on the soul as visible to its sight as stars to outward sight, and conceiving of them thus, thought they existed? One declines to believe that anyone ever did. Proof, indication even, of someone's holding the doctrine of innate knowledge in its explicit-formula interpretation will not be supplied by any profusion of reference to inscribing, or engraving, by the use of any metaphorical expression. What would be needed is some such record as that of a person's making, or having his attention drawn to, the sort of distinction More makes, and then rejecting the position More adopted in favour of a position of the sort which he disclaims. Dependably, this record will not be found.

Against the doctrine in its explicit-formula interpretation Locke's argument is deadly. He need have done no more than mention the absence from the consciousness of children, idiots, and Indians of such truths as that What is, is; but he does far more. He uses that consideration to turn the Innatists' talk of general assent against them. He does likewise with the claim that being assented to as soon as proposed and understood is a mark of innate truth. It is so far from being such a mark, that it is

> a proof of the contrary: Since it supposes, that several, who understand and know other things, are ignorant of these Principles till they are propos'd to them. (*Essay*, I.ii.21)

Further, the principles immediately assented to connect ideas, such as that of identity, which it cannot be believed that we are born with, which we acquire only after we have learned to abstract. Finally, an argument directed against the existence of innate practical principles: We are never told how many of these there are, yet if there were any there could be "no more doubt about their number, than there is about the number of our Fingers" (I.iii.14).

One might have expected Burnet to meet Locke's demand on the Innatists for a catalogue of innate moral principles, with the reply that the possession of Natural Conscience makes any catalogue of the sort unnecessary; and something obscurely to this effect does seem to be included in the reply he in fact makes. You call for "a List of the Laws or Principles of Conscience", it begins, "And so the Papists doe for a Catalogue of *Fundamentals*". Burnet completes his remark about Christian fundamentals with a hit at Locke — the catalogue could easily be provided if there was only one fundamental, "as a certain late Author supposes".[75] He then goes on to speak obscurely of principles of conscience and of conscience as a source of direction:

> As to the Dictates or Principles of Natural Conscience, (call them Laws of

> Nature, or what you please) we say, in general, that they are for the distinction of Moral Good and Evil: But the Cases are innumerable, (as in other Cases of Conscience) wherein there may be occasion for their Exercise. The general Rule is, *Appeal with Sincerity to your Conscience* for your Direction: If that be obscur'd, perverted or sear'd, we cannot help it. So your great Topicks or Demands of Universal Consent, Universal Practice, *Invincible Evidence*, are not to be found in this miscellaneous World, and under all the corruptions of Humane Nature. These Principles of Conscience, are Seeds, as we said before, that may die, or may thrive, and spring more or less, according to the Soil they are set in, and according to the care and culture that is had of them. (Third Remarks, p.15)

In this passage, Natural Conscience, which one had supposed Burnet thought of as operating not only with the immediacy but with the particularity of sight or taste, generates principles. It seems also to apply principles (and to that extent to operate ratiocinatively). Perhaps the "principles" even in this context are only Burnet's figurative way of speaking of Natural Conscience. With so little to go on, an attempt to interpret him reconcilably with himself would not be worthwhile.

Locke had commented earlier both on the notion of an innate conscience which succumbs to the corruptions of human nature, and on the alternative — principles or faculty — in an account of innate moral knowledge. His comment on the first of these points was occasioned by Burnet's having written that if moral rules

> be neglected more or less by Men, or appear little amongst some People, this is no good Proof that there are no such Principles. As it is no sufficient Argument that there is no Sun in the Firmament, because his Light is obscured in Cloudy Days, or does not appear in Foggy Regions. (Third Remarks, p.12)

Against this Locke writes:

> This Author abounds much in similes w^{ch} have y^{e} ill-luck when brought to y^{e} paralel to be ag^{t} him. As here though the sun be in heaven yet those y^{t} are in the darke who manifestly doe not guide their steps by it shew that his light is not innate. ("Marginalia", p.40)

Locke's comment on the alternative — principles or faculty — one studies with some interest. It is no implication of his doctrine of Natural Conscience, Burnet had claimed, that "young Children would be able to distinguish Moral Good and Evil": you would not expect to find flowers and fruit in the seed. Noah Porter presents Locke's comment on this with the remark that Locke makes "a somewhat remarkable concession" ("Marginalia", p.38):

> If moral Ideas or moral rules . . . are innate, I say children must know them as well as men. If by moral principles y^{u} mean a faculty to finde out in time the moral difference of actions. Besides y^{t} this is an improper way of speaking to cal a power principles: I never denyd such a power to be innate, but y^{t} w^{ch} I denyd was y^{t} any Ideas or connection of Ideas was innate.

Locke concedes nothing. If there are innate moral principles they must be known even to children — as in the *Essay* (I.ii.5). As in the *Essay (ibid.)*, it is an abuse of language to speak of principles and mean by that a power. But if a power is meant, Locke has never denied the innateness of a power to find out the moral

difference of actions. He concedes nothing to Burnet as to the manner in which this power is exercised. In the *Essay,* when innate knowledge is reduced to a power, it is reduced to the vacuous capacity to arrive at the knowledge that is arrived at. The innate power as regards moral knowledge which Locke has never denied, is a capacity of this sort.

An innate power is no bare capacity, Leibniz maintained in his criticism of Locke's *Essay: "c'est une disposition, une aptitude, une preformation, qui determine nostre ame . . .".* Leibniz continues:

> *Tout comme il y a de la difference entre les figures qu'on donne à la pierre ou au marbre indifferement, et entre celles que ses veines marquent déja ou sont disposées à marquer si l'ouvrier en profite.*[76]

(Besides the contrast of veined and blank stone or marble, another contrast of imagery should be observed, that between Leibniz's comparison of innate truths with the statue of Hercules *implicit* in the unworked material, and the talk — in which he also engaged — of innate truths as *inscribed, imprinted, impressed, stamped.* These were the terms Locke encountered, and their implications of explicitness no doubt encouraged his insistence that if there are innate truths, the soul must always be conscious of them.)

Isolated from his assertions that the alternative for Innatists to conscious awareness of truths is the bare capacity to arrive at a knowledge of them, Locke has an argument against innate cognitive tendencies:

> I deny not, that there are natural tendencies imprinted on the Minds of men; and that, from the very first instances of Sense and Perception, there are some things, that are grateful, and others unwelcome to them . . . But this makes nothing for innate Characters on the Mind, which are to be the Principles of Knowledge, regulating our Practice. Such natural Impressions on the Understanding, are so far from being confirm'd hereby, that this is an Argument against them; since if there were certain Characters, imprinted by Nature on the Understanding, as the Principles of Knowledge, we could not but perceive them constantly operate in us, and influence our Knowledge, as we do those others on the Will and Appetite; which never cease to be the constant Springs and Motives of all our Actions, to which, we perpetually feel them strongly impelling us. (*Essay,* I.iii.3).

Burnet quotes from this passage, asking that Locke acknowledge in the soul a similar natural tendency towards moral goodness and away from moral evil (Third Remarks, p.9). Locke's comment ("Marginalia", p.38) is that this natural tendency had not fallen under his observation.

What did Locke take his polemic against innate knowledge to have accomplished? He took it to have shown that the mind at birth is like a sheet of white paper. Like a sheet of white paper in two respects. First, in being "void of all Characters". What does that mean when stripped of metaphor? That we are born with no knowledge of any truths, that all our knowledge is acquired. The other respect in which Locke thought, and would take himself to have shown, that the mind is like a sheet of white paper is in receptivity: "white Paper receives any Characters". The mind has no disposition against or towards any belief. One infers that, for Locke, this is a matter of positive and negative observation. That the mind will let in anything no matter how wild, or wicked, anyone who looks about him or reads traveller's tales can see. (The Mingrelians, "a people professing Christianity . . . bury their Children alive without scruple. There are places where they eat their own Children", *Essay,* I.iii.9.) Negatively, if there was

a disposition against or towards any belief, this would make itself felt.

Whether, then, innate ideas and truths are supposed to have explicit or dispositional being in the mind, Locke saw himself as rejecting them very much on observational grounds. If they had explicit being everyone would be aware of them. If they existed as a disposition or tendency, this like other natural tendencies of the minds of men, would give some empirical sign of its presence — unless, of course, it is not really a tendency at all but nothing more than the capacity of the mind to arrive at all the ideas and truths it does arrive at.

A modern equivalent to asking whether there is innate knowledge, is, you might suppose, the question, whether there is any *a priori* knowledge, and if there is, what is its range? And on this supposition you would take a refutation of the opinion that there are innate truths to establish, if not a general epistemological empiricism, then empiricism with regard to some kinds of truth for which *a priori* knowledge might be claimed. But no argument that Locke uses in his polemic touches the issue of *a priori* truth. None seems intended to. A conceptual empiricism, given emphatic declaration at the beginning of the second book of the *Essay*, is asserted incidentally during the polemic. (For the purposes of the polemic against innate truths or ideas, it was sufficient that all our ideas have an origin during the course of our lives, no matter what kind of origin.) But no sort of propositional empiricism is even hinted at.

We might take up the matter as to whether there is any propositional empiricism implicit in the polemic against innate knowledge by asking whether Locke, who allowed self-evident but not innate truths, and thought that truths have been supposed to be innate because self-evident, regarded self-evident truths as being of a single logical kind. There is a long-standing opinion, which continues to receive endorsement, that Locke (for all his empiricism) maintained the existence of what came to be called synthetic *a priori* or synthetic necessary propositions.[77] Our concern with that issue is incidental, and we shall, accordingly, avoid the complexity of discussion required by an examination of Locke's distinction between "trifling" or "verbal" and "instructive" propositions, and the associated distinction between "contained in" and "necessary consequence of". We shall confine our attention to the principal things he says of self-evidence under that name or under the name of "intuitive knowledge".

With a sense of doing something new, Locke undertakes to show what the ground of self-evidence is:

> There are a sort of Propositions, which under the name of *Maxims* and *Axioms,* have passed for Principles of Science: and because they are *self-evident,* have been supposed innate, without that any Body (that I know) ever went about to shew the reason and foundation of their clearness or cogency. It may however be worth while, to enquire into the reason of their evidence, and see whether it be peculiar to them alone, and also examine how far they influence and govern our other Knowledge. (*Essay,* IV.vii.1)

A more uninformative explanation of the clearness or cogency of self-evident truths could not be produced than the one Locke gives:

> *Knowledge,* as has been shewn, consists in the perception of the agreement or disagreement of *Ideas:* Now where that agreement or disagreement is perceived immediately by it self, without the intervention or help of any other, there our *Knowledge is self-evident.*

If it was Locke's view that self-evident truths are truths which could not be denied without self-contradiction, you would think that he would have produced this as the ground of their evidence. (To read him as implicitly doing so by reading analyticity into the "agreement" of ideas, it hardly needs to be said, is question-begging).

In an earlier passage (IV.ii.1), the nature of intuitive knowledge is described by comparison with the perception of light. The mind when it has intuitive knowledge "perceives the Truth, as the Eye doth light, only by being directed toward it". There are no implications in this passage as to the logical character of what is intuitively known.

The attempt to infer whether Locke held that self-evident truths are analytically true by examining his examples of self-evidence, is unprofitable. Propositions can be found which Locke obviously regarded as self-evident which might well be seen as synthetic — "no one Subject can have . . . two Colours, at the same time" (IV.iii.15) is an example — but the question is whether Locke saw them as deniable without self-contradiction. What is noticeable is a tendency he has to turn the synthetic into the analytic: the propositions that such-and-such an idea is in the mind and that such-and-such an idea is itself, are run together (IV.vii.4); the principle that every beginning of existence must have a cause comes out as the "intuitive Certainty" that "bare *nothing can no more produce any real Being, than it can be equal to two right Angles*" (IV.x.3). In view of this tendency, Locke's not adducing analyticity as the ground of self-evidence is open to an opposite interpretation to what would seem in itself the obvious one: it is conceivable that Locke took the analyticity of the self-evident so much for granted that he did not see it as a characteristic calling for mention when he explained the ground of self-evidence.

When he referred to "a sort of Propositions" which "because they are *self-evident,* have been supposed innate", Locke had in mind the principles of Identity and Contradiction. That the polemic against innate knowledge should have fastened on these principles when dealing with "speculative" principles is a good indication that it had nothing to do with the range of *a priori* truth. There remains the question whether Locke's treatment of self-evidence in connection with innate "practical" principles bears implicitly on this range.

Locke's disallowing of self-evidence to any moral rule needs to be looked at:

> . . . I think, *there cannot any one moral Rule be propos'd, whereof a Man may not justly demand a Reason:* which would be perfectly ridiculous and absurd, if they were innate, or so much as self-evident; which every innate Principle must needs be . . . (I.iii.4)

It would be absurd, Locke remarks, for anyone understanding the terms of the proposition that the same thing cannot both be and not be, to ask why he should assent to it: this proposition "carries its own Light and Evidence with it".

> But should that most unshaken Rule of Morality, and Foundation of all social Virtue, *That one should do as he would be done unto,* be propos'd to one, who never heard it before, but yet is of capacity to understand its meaning; Might he not without any absurdity ask a Reason why? And were not he that propos'd it, bound to make out the Truth and Reasonableness of it to him? (I.iii.4)

Locke is easily read at first in a modern way when he maintains that a reason may justly be demanded for any moral rule that is proposed. We are accustomed to

hearing it said that anyone maintaining that something or other ought or ought not to be done, is logically committed to explaining why this is so. But Locke seems to have something quite different in mind. A reason has already been given for the rule that we ought to do as we would be done by, in its being described as the "Foundation of all social Virtue". A reason for the *content* of the rule. What Locke has in mind is a reason for one's being *bound* by the rule. (The modern equivalent is a question of the Why-ought-I-to-be-moral? kind). That this is how Locke should be understood, is supported by what he goes on to say in the following section, with its heading *"Instance in keeping Compacts"*. A Christian, a Hobbesian, and "one of the old *Heathen* Philosophers", he says, would each give a different reason why a man ought to keep his word. The reasons are all broadly of a motivational kind.

This disallowing by Locke of self-evidence to any moral rule, then, does not contradict anything that a proponent of an objectivist Moral Sense, such as Burnet, would assert. Nothing can be inferred from it bearing on the range of *a priori* truth. Overall, whatever views Locke might have held relevant to the range of *a priori* truth, there are no indications that this issue was implicit in the polemic against innate knowledge, and some indication to the contrary.

There is further indication to the contrary in Draft A of the *Essay*, composed in 1671. As compared with Draft A, there is a recession from empiricism in the *Essay* itself. In the Draft the "certainty" of geometrical knowledge, where it is not derived from "the signification of words", is given an empirical foundation:

> by constant observation of our senses espetialy our eys we come to finde that such and such quantitys have such and such proportions compard with other v.g. that the three angles of a triangle are equall to two right ones . . . which being tried in several tryangles and by noe body found in any one triangle otherwise, passes into an universal acknowledgd truth . . .[78]

In the *Essay* itself (IV.viii.8), the certainty of the proposition that the external angle of a triangle is greater than either of the opposite internal angles — not a "verbal" certainty, an "instructive" one — results from the fact that this proposition is a "necessary consequence" of the idea of a triangle.

A vague general empiricism without parallel in the *Essay* itself is affirmed in §38 (p.60) of the Draft:

> The understanding receives all its ultimate proofs as well as original Ideas wholy from [experience] . . . recuring still to the same fountain when ever it would rationaly and effectualy examine the truth of any report opinion or problem.

But there is also an emphatic, if limited, curtailing of the empiricism of the Draft, and it occurs in connection with the brief treatment of the question of innate knowledge. It comes in comment upon a consideration (of a kind not found in the *Essay* itself) in favour of innate principles. There are innate principles, it is contended, because there are "principles of whose truth we are certain though our senses could never come to any observation about them"; we know, for example, that all numbers are either odd or even, yet "neither our senses nor thoughts have been conversant about all numbers" (§43, p.67). He had never said, Locke comments that "the truth of all propositions was to be made out to us by our senses for this was to leave noe roome for reason at all", which by tracing out the implications of ideas, may come to the knowledge of propositions not ascertainable by the senses; what he had "laid downe" as coming ultimately

from the senses or from reflection upon the operations of our minds, was the totality of our ideas. Conformably with this, the only empiricism given expression, and that peripherally, in the polemic against innate knowledge in the *Essay* itself is a conceptual empiricism. (In the *Essay,* self-evidence ascertains the truths for which innateness had been supposed necessary. In the Draft, the truth that all numbers are either odd or even is *deduced* from the ideas of unity and number.)

It remains to be said what the doctrine of innate knowledge was. The doctrine of innate knowledge (the primitive, undifferentiated doctrine) was *a way of speaking.* One of the interpretations of this doctrine (as we shall continue to call it in deference to traditional usage), the explicit-formula interpretation, first makes its appearance in disclaimers by writers asserting the existence of innate knowledge. As nearly as can be, this interpretation takes the metaphorical language of the undifferentiated doctrine literally. For Locke, the explicit-formula interpretation *is* the doctrine of innate knowledge — at least nothing else can properly lay claim to that title.

The importance of Locke's polemic could not lie in its demolition of the doctrine, so interpreted. What, then, is its importance? The importance of Locke's polemic is that it put an end, not by its arguments but by its influence (and not single-handedly, of course) to what was in its historical occurrence — however useful innatist language can be enabled to be — amongst the most disablingly obscurantist ways of speaking in the history of thought.[79] As long as the doctrine had a hold, thought about the issue of *a priori* knowledge was bound to be greatly inhibited. If your talk is of inscriptions on the soul, you will not be likely to ask whether there are different kinds of *a priori* knowledge and how the different kinds might be supposed possible. It was after the doctrine of innate knowledge was over and done with that Kant addressed himself to determining "the possibility, principles, and extent of human knowledge *a priori*". Besides its incapacitating effect, the doctrine encouraged the production of positive befuddlement. Identifying innate practical principles with a conscience able to determine right and wrong autonomously, Burnet, as Locke says, calls a power, principles. More begins his disclaimer "When I say *actuall Knowledge,* I doe not mean . . .", and goes on to show that he does not mean that there is actually *knowledge* innate in the soul. Leibniz was willing to use the word "innate" of all the demonstrable propositions of mathematics. Locke denied innate and allowed self-evident truth. And deceived by appearances, as many of his opponents in the matter must also have been, he pounded on and on at a way of speaking with arguments appropriate, for the most part, only to a doctrine.

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[67] *John Locke and the Way of Ideas* (Oxford, 1956), Ch. II.

[68] *An Antidote against Atheisme* (1653), Bk. I, Ch. V, p.13; Yolton, p.40. More felt the need to explain his calling a "faculty" actual knowledge: "and this Faculty I venture to call *actuall Knowledge,* in such a sense as the sleeping Musician's skill might be called *actuall Skill* when he thought nothing of it" (p.14).

[69] Third Remarks, pp.7-8; Yolton, p.55.

[70] *Locke and the Compass of the Human Understanding* (Cambridge, 1970), p.173.

[71] No elucidatory account is given by Yolton in *Locke and the Compass of the Human Understanding* of what he takes the naïve form of the Theory to have held.

[72] Matthew Hale, *The Primitive Origination of Mankind* (1677), I.i.pp.2-3; Yolton, pp.33-34.

[73] *Immortality of the Human Soul*, p.94.

[74] Cudworth connects the reality of the distinction of good and evil with innate knowledge in a passage without any such lapse into inscriptionist imagery. Part of what he says is that "the soul is not a mere rasa tabula, a naked and passive thing, which has no innate furniture or activity of its own, nor anything at all in it but what was impressed upon it from without; for if it were so, then there could not possibly be any such thing as moral good and evil". (*Eternal and Immutable Morality*, IV,vi.4 — the work was published in 1731, after Cudworth's death.) There is no trace in Burnet of any of Cudworth's distinctive views on innate knowledge.

[75] In *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695), published anonymously but widely known to have Locke for its author, Locke had maintained that what we are "required to believe in order to obtain eternal life" is that "Jesus is the Messiah" (*Works*, Vol. VII, p.17; *cf.* pp.51, 102-3). In controversy with John Edwards, who accused him of Socinianism, Locke denied that he had "contended for one single article, so as to exclude all the rest" (*Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity; Works*, Vol. VII, pp.174-5). He was able to say truly that he had "mentioned more than one article". The other "articles" he had mentioned (*Works*, Vol. VII, pp.16-17, 157) were, in fact, no more than presuppositional to, or amplificatory of, this single one. The extraordinary literalness of Locke's handling of New Testament texts is to be remarked upon.

[76] *Nouveaux Essais* (I.i.11). Taking up the question of innate ideas and truths in the first letter in which he comments on Catherine Trotter's *Defence*, Leibniz begins by saying that the dispute is often verbal. He criticizes Locke for not having plumbed the origin of necessary truths, truths which *"ne dependent pas des sens, ou experiences, ou faits"*. They depend, he says — his words limiting their kind perhaps because of the topics of the *Defence*, and giving those of the kind mentioned an origin which Locke, who allows us experience of ourselves, would not dispute — *"de la consideration de la nature de nostre ame, laquelle est un estre, une substance, ayant de l'unité, de l'identité, de l'action, de la passion, de la durée etc."* (*Phil. Schriften*, Vol. III, p.307).

[77] For a history of this opinion — "the Standard View" — and argument against it, see Sybil Wolfram, "On the Mistake of Identifying Locke's Trifling-Instructive Distinction with the Analytic-Synthetic Distinction", *Locke Newsletter*, No.9, 1978.

[78] *An Early Draft of Locke's Essay*, . . . (ed.) Aaron and Gibb, §11, pp.21-2. At the end of the section, Locke reaffirms his assertion that geometrical propositions are based upon and vulnerable to sense experience and then raises a doubt about whether this is so.

[79] How this way of speaking came about has not yet been sufficiently investigated. Different accounts — to a very considerable extent — are needed for its occurrence on the Continent and in England. The religious and moral concerns of English Innatist writing have been emphasized by Sterling Lamprecht ("Innate Ideas in the Cambridge Platonists", *Philosophical Review*, November, 1926) and by Yolton (*John Locke and the Way of Ideas*). But why did the old metaphor of the Law of God inscribed upon the heart assume in England, about the middle of the seventeenth century, the appearance of a doctrine and sustain this hypertrophied existence into the next century?

Without putting the question, Lamprecht supplies some of the materials that an answer would work on. The Cambridge Platonists, he points out, belonged to the party in the Church of England which opposed to both High-Church Anglicanism and Puritanism the more universal elements in divinity, what it saw as authorized by reason. Lamprecht puts constant emphasis on the exaltation of reason by the Cambridge Platonists; for them it was "a divine revelation". It was, therefore, one adds, far more than a faculty of ratiocination; it was something whose deliverances could easily be thought of as innate. An incidental remark of Lamprecht's (p.571) fits in here: "The appeal to origins was typical of this age in all fields of human interest. A government was a just government which abided by original contracts; a religion was true which held to the original simple truths antecedent to the corruptions of priests; an idea was true which was part of the native endowment of the mind".