

Part I

Life and Background

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1

Locke's Life

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When John Locke was born, in 1632, England's universities were dominated by Scholastic Aristotelianism, its authors obliged to submit their books to censors, its people ruled by a monarch who had ceased to call parliaments, and its worshippers punished if they did not conform to the established Church. When he died, in 1704, England had a burgeoning American and oceanic empire, its armies were crushing the Continental superpower France, its regime was a parliamentary monarchy, its universities were coming to terms with Newton's *Principia*, its coffee houses were bestrewn with uncensored print, and Trinitarian Protestants could worship as they chose. During Locke's childhood, the English overthrew and executed one Stuart monarch, and, in his middle age, deposed another. Locke was both a witness and an agent of England's transformations, and his own life, like his country's, turned upon the axis of 1688, the year of the Glorious Revolution. Before then, he was obscure and unpublished, and for some years an exile; afterwards, he was famous and prolific. In his *annus mirabilis*, 1689, he published his cardinal work of epistemology, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, his epitome of the Whig theory of liberty and revolution, *Two Treatises of Government*, and his critique of religious coercion, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*. He was a child of the Reformation and a progenitor of the Enlightenment.

1.1 Early Years, 1632–1652

Locke was born in Wrington and brought up in nearby Pensford, a village six miles south of Bristol. He was not by birth a gentleman, but became one; his inheritance

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was modest, but he died wealthy. His near relations included a clothier, tanner, brewer, and pewterer. His father was an attorney and clerk, serving the magistracy of Somerset and acting as steward of estates to a landed gentleman, Alexander Popham. John Locke senior had a few tenants of his own, whom his son inherited in 1661 and would manage *in absentia*, sternly exacting rents, but charitable to the “honest and industrious” poor (*Corr.*, 3310). The West Country was economically dynamic, home to an export-led woolen textile industry, and Locke would remark in the *Two Treatises* that 10 acres of Devon were as productive as a thousand uncultivated in America (*TT*, 2.37). Commercial agriculture, household artisanship, and, increasingly, transoceanic trade were, for him, paradigms of the fruitfulness yielded when the industrious dutifully applied themselves to God’s world.

Locke remembered his father as severe and his mother as affectionate. His father’s surviving notebook chiefly concerns magistratical duties, such as disciplining tavern keepers, vagrants, and begetters of bastards, but also contains criticisms of Charles I’s bishops. Was not kneeling to receive communion impious, and should not congregations determine their own choice of minister? Locke’s grandfather bequeathed money for a Bible lecture, and he was baptised by a semi-conforming minister who ignored Prayer Book rubrics which troubled his conscience. For such Puritans as these, godliness flowed from Scripture and not from the inventions of priests, and true religion was to be found more in the pulpit than at the altar. When the Civil War came, Locke’s father fought in the Parliamentary army, and Colonel Popham’s troops destroyed the “superstitious” windows, organ, and episcopal throne in Wells Cathedral.

It is, however, misleading to trace a high road from Parliamentary Puritanism to republicanism and religious toleration, still less to “liberalism.” The Parliamentarians sought a “mixed and balanced monarchy” of Crown, lords, and commons, and deplored the regicide and military republic that were the unintended outcomes of civil war. While hostile to episcopacy and “popish” ceremonial, they aimed at a highly disciplined national church, and loathed the anarchy of sects and fanatical “enthusiasm” which emerged from the chaos of war. Popham, Member of Parliament for Bath, was typical of the Parliamentary leadership which spent the 1640s opposing Charles I but the 1650s opposing Oliver Cromwell’s revolutionary Protectorate and moving towards re-embracing the Stuart dynasty. Such men, just as much as loyal Royalists, ensured the restoration of Charles II in 1660, and Charles prudently ensured that they, traitors to his father, held public office and sat in Parliament.

In 1647 Locke entered England’s finest school, Westminster, under the renowned Richard Busby. Fellow pupils included the future poet John Dryden and the “virtuosi” Robert Hooke and Christopher Wren. Like many talented boys of modest background, Locke depended on patronage. Among his earliest letters are carefully crafted compliments to his “Maecenas” and “best patron,” Popham, for whom “the greatest advantage I demand of my studies is an ability to serve you” (*Corr.*, 96). A grammar school meant tuition in Greek and Latin, and the Westminster curriculum was reminiscent of the eclecticism of Reformation humanism which readily embraced the pagan

classics alongside Scripture and the Fathers. When Locke came to write on toleration for a European audience, he wrote in Latin, and the *Epistola de Tolerantia* assumes his readers' classical education, for he cites Cicero, Horace, Ovid, Tacitus, and Virgil. At the close of his life, he recommended not only the New Testament but also Cicero's *De Officiis* (*On Duties*) as the best guides to morality (*Corr.*, 3328).

1.2 Oxford, 1652–1667

Locke entered Christ Church, Oxford, in 1652, where he became a “student”: at first a pupil and latterly what other colleges call a Fellow. The College, purged of its Royalist and then Presbyterian heads, was now governed by John Owen, a religious Independent, nicknamed “Cromwell’s Pope.” England was a republic, and Locke’s tutor, William Cole, was described as a “fanatic” although to Royalists all Puritans were fanatics. The natural course of Locke’s life now pointed toward ordination in the ministry, as the statutes for a Student required, and then either remaining a university tutor or taking a parish or perhaps becoming chaplain in a great household. He held the posts of tutor, praelector in Greek and rhetoric, and censor in moral philosophy (1661–1667). His role was pastoral as well as pedagogic in his oversight of pupils: young men who typically became country gentlemen or entered the legal, medical, clerical, or teaching professions.

When Locke wrote to Popham in the year of the Restoration, he remarked that “the whole nation looks on you as a defender of their laws and liberties,” from which we deduce that he accepted England’s road back from republic to monarchy, and from Puritanism to what would later be called Anglicanism. In the anarchy that ensued after Cromwell’s death, he deplored this “great Bedlam England,” the wars of this “giddy nation,” and the “tyrants [who] are the promisers of liberty” (*Corr.*, 82, 91). He had written a poetic encomium for Cromwell in 1654, but in 1660 he did so for Charles II.

In religion, the young Locke was a conformist, accepting first the Cromwellian settlement and then the return of the episcopal Church. He was also a conformist in theory, for his first political or, rather, ecclesiological writings, known as the *Two Tracts on Government* (1660–1662), urge the necessity of obedience to the ruler’s imposition of religious order in all things “indifferent” to salvation. Hence it was that, after his college was purged again in 1660, Locke was issued with a certificate of acceptability by the new Dean, John Fell, later Vice-Chancellor and Bishop of Oxford. Although he would later drastically change his mind concerning toleration and came to reject coercion of “tender consciences,” and although he would express anticlerical distaste for church hierarchies, Locke never showed any inclination to become a religious Dissenter, as many Puritans now became, and he attended Anglican worship for the rest of his life. It was not that he believed that Anglican ceremonial or episcopacy were divinely ordained; on the contrary, precisely because they were man-made he

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felt no reason to scruple society's conventional norms. It also followed that the only ground for coercion of those who rejected the Church was a calculus of their civil danger. What he changed his mind about was the empirical weight of that calculus. He emerged as a "latitudinarian," later assailed for betraying the sanctity of Anglicanism and the necessity of uniformity. Like other latitudinarians, and moderate Puritans, his personal religiosity stressed virtue and "practical piety" rather than the doctrine, ritual, and clerical authority favored by "High Churchmen" or the mystical "enthusiasm" and spiritual introspection of the sectaries. He wrote that godliness lay in the proper "management of [our] temporal affairs" so that we may be in "a condition of doing good and performing those offices required ... in [our] station" (*Corr.*, 426).

The universities inherited from the Middle Ages both a philosophy and a pedagogy. Scholasticism was a substantive philosophical system, having Aristotle's metaphysical, scientific, moral, and political texts at its core, and a system of teaching which prioritized the exposition of classical, scriptural, and patristic sources, and the honing of forensic skills through disputation. According to his early biographers, Locke "never loved the trade of disputing ... [it] being rather invented for wrangling or ostentation than to discover truth" and complained that he "lost a great deal of time ... because the only philosophy then known at Oxford was the peripatetic [Aristotelian], perplexed with obscure terms and stuffed with useless questions" (Goldie and Soulard 2014). He attributed his philosophical awakening to extracurricular reading of Descartes. Yet he certainly learnt the rhetorical arts, formal and informal, that would serve him well in sustaining a vast correspondence, and in his verbal facility: he was a "wit" in its then generic sense. This would equip him for public service and fashionable salons, in a society which valued conversability.

One result of Locke's lecturing at Christ Church was a text now called *Essays on the Law of Nature* (1663–1664), a misleading title, for these are a set of disputations, in which propositions or "questions" are offered, tested, demonstrated, refuted. They lead the student through familiar conundrums concerning the essence of jurisprudence, the typology of laws, and the relationship of natural to divine and human law and the *ius gentium* (law of humankind). While synoptic in intent, the *Essays* indicate two themes that would remain constant: a voluntarist theory of law and an empiricist thesis concerning knowledge of natural law.

During his Christ Church years, Locke became interested in natural philosophy – "science" as we now call it. He met Robert Boyle, absorbed the new mechanical philosophy, participated in anatomical dissections, acquired a knowledge of astronomy, and trained in medicine. He befriended Thomas Sydenham, with whom he shared an interest in respiration, circulation of the blood, and epidemic fevers, and together they composed two tracts, "De arte medica" and "Anatomia." Thereafter he was an occasional practitioner, often styled "Dr Locke," taking a medical degree in 1675. In 1668 he was elected a Fellow of the recently founded Royal Society, of which, however, while a subscriber and occasional contributor to its *Transactions*, he was never an assiduous attender. He remained devoted to Boyle and Sydenham, whom,

alongside Newton and Huygens, in the *Essay Concerning Understanding*, he would laud as “master-builders” in the “commonwealth of learning.” After Boyle’s death he edited for publication the *General History of the Air* (1692), and his own later interests would especially dwell on meteorology, his weather register constituting one of the earliest systematic statistical records. In the meantime, Locke’s medical avocation proved his passport out of clerical ministry, which, by the late 1660s, he decided he wished to avoid.

1.3 Shaftesbury’s “Assistant Pen,” 1667–1675

In 1666 Locke obtained a royal dispensation from the requirement of College statutes that he be ordained. The Crown regularly issued prerogative mandates dispensing from local laws. When Charles II’s successor, James II, used mandates to intrude Roman Catholics, they would be regarded as outrageous acts of arbitrary power. The king’s action on Locke’s behalf may simply have been at the latter’s request, but it is suggestive of the Court seeking recruits for royal service, for that is the path upon which Locke now embarked.

In 1665–1666 he served as secretary to an embassy to Cleves, a German city near the Dutch border, on a mission to ensure the Elector of Brandenburg’s benign neutrality during England’s second commercial war against the Dutch. Under the terms of the Treaty of Westphalia, Cleves was a religiously open city, where Calvinists, Lutherans, and Catholics worshipped freely. This was an eye-opener and Locke discovered that, as a matter of practical feasibility, people of radically different religious commitments could live in peace. Letters home marvelled that “they quietly permit one another to choose their own way to heaven, [without] quarrels or animosities” (*Corr.*, 177).

Upon his return, Locke met Anthony Ashley Cooper, Lord Ashley, later first Earl of Shaftesbury, an encounter that changed his life. Each beguiled the other, and Locke remained loyal to Shaftesbury until the earl’s death in exile in Holland in 1683. Shaftesbury was Chancellor of the Exchequer, one of the king’s leading ministers, and in joining Shaftesbury’s household in London in 1667, Locke confirmed his entry into royal as well as a nobleman’s personal service. Moreover, the earl believed “he owed his life to my care” for, in the following year, he advised upon a dangerous operation to relieve a life-threatening abdominal abscess (*Corr.*, 797).

Intellectuals commonly took posts in aristocratic households – Hobbes did so with the Earls of Devonshire – and Locke undertook the characteristic tasks of a scholar-factotum: purchasing books, drafting memoranda, operating as “intelligencer,” maintaining contact with parliamentary supporters, distributing charitable donations, and negotiating matches in the elaborate marriage market. He went to Belvoir Castle in Leicestershire to arrange a marriage between the earl’s son and the Earl of Rutland’s daughter, and supervised the education of the marriage’s progeny,

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the future philosopher, the third earl. Much as Shaftesbury admired Locke's intellectual and rhetorical powers, and permitted an equality of friendship, the relationship subsisted across substantial status boundaries. Locke was no more than a senior "domestic" (member of the *domus*) among a staff of 40; he dined at the steward's table and walked beside his lordship's coach. Contemporaries, if they bothered to notice him, said he was "of Shaftesbury's family" or (inaccurately) that he was the earl's "secretary."

It was in this role that Locke encountered the elderly Hobbes. John Aubrey, a mutual friend, sent regards to the "old gent" and recommended Hobbes's unpublished *Dialogue of the Common Laws*, which "if your lord saw it he would like it" (*Corr.*, 268). Aubrey's letter also says that Hobbes's text "speaks highly for the king's prerogative" and assumes that this would commend it. During the period 1667–1673 Shaftesbury supported many of Charles II's policies which later entered the charge sheet of royal absolutism. The earl favored religious toleration, but since Parliament was dominated by Anglican churchmen who imposed the Act of Uniformity (1662), he supported the king's edict of toleration, the Declaration of Indulgence (1672). The earl also supported the Third Dutch War (1672–1674), a conflict between two nations for oceanic commercial advantage, but both of them Protestant and under the shadow of the expansionism of Louis XIV of France. Later, Charles and his brother James would be condemned for catastrophic collusion in the rise of France. What Shaftesbury – and Locke – apparently had not reckoned upon was the depth of Charles's secret commitment to Catholicism and Louis, nor the revelation of the conversion of James, the heir to the throne, to Catholicism. In 1673 Shaftesbury turned against Charles, lost office, and began a career of embattled opposition.

During his period in Shaftesbury's entourage, Locke became involved in England's growing commitment to America, a connection which had a profound impact on his thinking. Shaftesbury was one of the Lords Proprietors of Carolina, and Locke served as their secretary (1671–1675), in which capacity he helped draft – the degree of authorial agency is unclear – the *Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina* (1669). Under a distant monarchical suzerainty, this blueprint envisages an aristocratic republic, stratified by landholding, but with extensive citizen governance; not a utopian novelty but an idealized version of England's "mixed and balanced polity." Locke was appointed a "landgrave" of Carolina. His connections with America multiplied. He served as secretary to the king's Council for Trade and Plantations (1673–1674), handling official correspondence across the Atlantic. In his private capacity, he invested in the Royal Africa Company, which supplied slaves, and in the Bahamas Company.

The years at Exeter House in the Strand allowed Locke sufficient leisure to draft works of his own. An "Essay on Toleration" (1667) adopted a radical distinction between the purposes of churches and civil commonwealths, and rejected their mutual trespass. Quite simply, "the magistrate hath nothing to do with the good of men's souls," a position he would embody in the *Letter Concerning Toleration* (*PE*, 144).

The essay also included “reason of state” arguments for the prudential wisdom of toleration: the economy would be served by leaving dissenting entrepreneurs alone and welcoming refugees of many faiths. He also drafted “some of the Consequences that are Like to Follow upon Lessening of Interest to Four per Cent” (1668), which argued that the determination of rates should be left to the market. Like the “Essay,” it remained unpublished but was later reworked, this time in *Some Considerations of the Consequences of the Lowering of Interest* (1691), a tract of more expansive economic and fiscal reflection than its title suggests.

Most importantly, Locke embarked on his most ambitious intellectual project, which would, after nearly two decades, be published as the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. The earliest draft is dated 1671. His Epistle to the Reader would report that the work began in conversations among “five or six friends, meeting in my chamber and discoursing on a subject very remote from this.” The “remote” subject is disclosed by one of those friends, James Tyrrell: “the discourse began about the principles of morality and revealed religion” (British Library, C.122.f.14). Philosophers in modern times tended to seal Locke’s *Essay* within the confines of analytic philosophy and have been slow to recognize its embedment within contemporary controversies about moral philosophy and religious certainty. It is true that Locke himself sought to abstract his account from topics “very remote” although early critics, in the 1690s, rapidly reminded him of the duty of a philosopher to address both natural law and Christian theology.

1.4 France, 1675–1679

The early phase of Shaftesbury’s campaign of opposition culminated in *A Letter from a Person of Quality to his Friend in the Country* (1675), a manifesto for a movement which soon acquired the name “Whig.” It spoke for the “Country” against the Court. Charles II, unlike his father, ruled with Parliament, but he avoided regular elections and sought to pack it with pliant courtiers. The “Cavalier Parliament” sat for 18 years, 1661–1679, without a general election, and acquired the further nickname of the “Pensioner Parliament.” The Country Party launched attacks on “placemen,” which implied the desirability of separating the legislative and executive branches of government, and assaulted “standing armies,” which denoted a preference for citizen militias. Increasingly, the king’s supine subordination to France and his brother’s “popery” became running sores in the body politic. The third earl would later record that his grandfather made use of Locke’s “assistant pen” in his political campaigns, but was not specific. Locke may have had a hand in composing the *Letter*. The tract pronounced that there was a scheme afoot to make the government “absolute and arbitrary,” emphasized the aristocracy’s role as the “balance” between monarchy and democracy, and denounced the clergy for preaching up monarchy and episcopacy as *jure divino* – by divine right. It closed with a protest that

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now “priest and prince [must] be worshipped together as divine in the same temple” (*PE*, 362–5).

Shortly after condemnation of the *Letter* in Parliament, Locke left for France, where he remained until 1679. His ostensible reason was ill health. He was already suffering from the asthma and bronchitis that afflicted him for the rest of his life. During his French sojourn he lived chiefly at Montpellier, but spent considerable time in Paris. He visited the Countess of Northumberland and tutored the son of a wealthy East India merchant. He befriended a circle of French physicians, naturalists, astronomers, and chronologers. He sketched a memorandum on the cultivation of vines and silk, perhaps a piece of industrial espionage on Shaftesbury’s behalf, with an eye to America. He improved his French by translating – and subtly modifying – three of the *Essais de morale* of the Jansenist Pierre Nicole, presenting the result to the Countess of Shaftesbury (1676). Through Nicole, whose rigorist Augustinian Catholicism was palatable to Protestants, he reflected on moral psychology and the relationship of virtue and the passions. Locke began to keep a journal, which mingled itineraries, philosophical reflections, scientific curiosities, notes on reading, and commentaries on the mores, institutions, and policies of France, not least the violent repression of the Huguenots.

1.5 Whig Politics, 1679–1683

When Locke returned, England was in the grip of a crisis which threatened renewed civil war but which was resolved, temporarily, by Charles’ triumph over the Whigs. In 1678 the “popish plot” was revealed, a spurious conspiracy but credited by a panicked Protestant population, whipped up by litanies of Catholic perfidy. Catholics were, for the last time, executed for their religion. Riding the wave of anti-Catholic fever, Shaftesbury launched a campaign to prevent the Catholic heir from inheriting the throne. The king, forced to abandon the Cavalier Parliament, called three general elections, all won by the Whigs, who promoted an Exclusion Bill but were defeated by a king who held the constitutional trump cards – the power to prorogue and dismiss parliaments and a loyal majority (especially of bishops) in the House of Lords – and by a substantial body of the nation, now called Tories, who, although Protestant, feared that Whiggism spelt rebellion, “king-killing,” and religious sectarianism. After the king dismissed the Oxford Parliament in 1681, he called no more parliaments, and his brother succeeded to the throne in 1685. Whigs and Dissenters were savagely punished for sedition or illegal worship. Shaftesbury was sent to the Tower and, although exonerated of treason by a Whig jury, fled the country once the Crown seized the power to select juries. When he died, Locke accompanied his body to the family estate in Dorset.

Since his return to England, Locke had not been so close to the earl as hitherto, spending lengthy periods back in Oxford. Evidence for his personal involvement

in the Whig movement is fragmentary, but nonetheless unambiguous. He signed London's "monster petition" which demanded that the king permit an elected parliament to meet; arranged facilities for the earl's entourage at the Oxford Parliament; wrote a paper for the earl on the Crown's powers over the appointment of juries; and attempted to negotiate the earl's release if he accepted exile in Carolina. He was in contact with such men as Stephen Colledge, an activist executed at Oxford, and he possessed a copy of documents purporting to prove, as Whigs believed, that the Earl of Essex, found dead under detention in the Tower, had been murdered by royal agents. Locke himself was sufficiently suspect that he was spied upon by informers seeking incriminating evidence, even in dinner conversation at Christ Church. By the summer of 1683, he concluded that he too must escape, and he sailed for Holland, where he spent the next five and a half years. The following year he was, *in absentia*, expelled from his Studentship by command of the king. The English ambassador in The Netherlands, who placed Locke on a list of exiles the Dutch were asked to arrest, remarked that Colledge Fellowships were "never intended for the maintenance and support of such as seek to overthrow the government and to bring the king's sacred person into contempt ... as if he were the worst of tyrants" (British Library, Add. MS 41810, fos. 187–8).

Locke preferred the pen to the barricade. Early in 1680 he purchased a copy of Sir Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha*, a posthumous but newly published work launched by Tories to support absolute monarchy. Like his friend Tyrrell, who wrote and anonymously published *Patriarcha non Monarcha* (1681), and his colleague Algernon Sidney, executed in 1683 for his *Discourses Concerning Government* (published in 1698), Locke set out to oppose Toryism by writing, in secret, a treatise on the foundations of legitimate polities. Fortunately for him, the Court did not know of the *Two Treatises*, although informers suspected he had written such tracts as *No Protestant Plot* (1681). By the time Locke published his book, the resistance against tyranny which he advocated had occurred and the House of Stuart had been overthrown once more, this time through Dutch military intervention.

Locke always regarded civil and ecclesiastical governance as two equally consequential aspects of public life, and both in need of intellectual reconstruction. Accordingly, as well as the *Two Treatises*, he wrote, in 1681 in collaboration with Tyrrell, an untitled work later called a "Defence of Nonconformity," a refutation of Edward Stillingfleet's vindication of the state's imposition of religious uniformity. Except for a few short extracts, it has never been published and is the most important of Locke's writings yet to be made available. Locke would shortly distil his thoughts on toleration in the *Epistola* – "Englished" as *A Letter Concerning Toleration*. Accordingly, at the end of his life, an admirer praised his twin achievements: he had not only "baffled the boldest champion of [civil] slavery" but had also "exposed the sophistry of a ... scheme of [religious] persecution" (*Corr.*, 3394).

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1.6 Exile, 1683–1689

In Holland, Locke was peripatetic, residing in Amsterdam, Leiden, Utrecht, and Rotterdam. For a while he lived under an assumed name, for the Crown was not above abducting its enemies on the streets and shipping them to England for punishment. Among his hosts was a Quaker merchant of Rotterdam, Benjamin Furly, whose remarkable library made him the resort of scholars. Among his manuscripts was a copy of the notorious “Treatise of the Three Imposters” (Moses, Christ, and Mahomet). Locke does not refer to it, but it, and the variety of Furly’s visitors, point toward two divergent strands of the early Enlightenment: a moderate, latitudinarian, Christian element, to which Locke belonged, and a radical, deistical, and “freethinking” element. By the mid-1690s Locke had need of distinguishing himself from guilt by association with the latter, particularly in relation to another of Furly’s guests, John Toland.

Locke mingled in two scholarly communities: the Huguenot Protestants fleeing France in their thousands, and the Remonstrants, the Arminian wing of the Dutch Reformed Church. He befriended the Genevan Jean Le Clerc, philosopher, journalist, and theologian, whose *Bibliothèque universelle* provided epitomes of Europe-wide publications and was an exemplar of the new genre of literary journals serving the “Republic of Letters.” Le Clerc persuaded Locke to write reviews, probably including of Newton’s *Principia*, and to publish a summary, or “Extrait,” of his now complete *Human Understanding*. Le Clerc became the leading protagonist of Locke’s philosophy in the Francophone world and, after his death, would publish his *Eloge* (1705), quickly translated as *The Life and Character of Mr John Locke* (1706), the foundation of all future biographies. Among the Remonstrants, Locke forged a permanent friendship with Philipp van Limborch, professor of theology at Amsterdam and author of *Theologia Christiana* (1686). Locke began to take a deeper interest in theology, and his stances owed much to a constellation of connected religious movements, the Cambridge Platonists, latitudinarians, and Remonstrants, whose soteriological emphasis on “moralism” was in constant danger of being accused of undermining Christ’s divinity, by substituting human virtue for the atonement on the Cross. It is true that European theology was in general retreat from Calvinist predestinarianism, but theologians distributed themselves at different points along the long arc that extended from Arminianism towards “socinianism” and deism.

Locke had firmly returned to the study. In 1683 he began a series of letters for his Somerset friend Edward Clarke on the subject of the education of the sons of gentlemen, which disdained academic curricula in favor of the formation of character and preparation for the fulfilment of the duties of a citizen. The collected letters became *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), destined to have more eighteenth-century editions than any other of his books. During the winter of 1685–1686, in the wake of Louis XIV’s Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, he wrote the *Epistola*, which Limborch published anonymously at Gouda in 1689, and which William

Popple translated into English in the same year. Dutch commentators assumed it was the work of a Huguenot and English commentators the work of a Dissenter. And, thirdly, by 1686 Locke had at last substantially completed the *Essay*. He distributed an *Abregé* (1688), a separately printed version of the “Extrait,” for private circulation among friendly commentators, such as Boyle, Lady Damaris Masham, and the dedicatee of the *Essay*, the Earl of Pembroke.

And yet, by the close of 1688, at the age of 56, Locke had in print nothing more than a handful of university poems, some verses in praise of Sydenham, a letter in the *Philosophical Transactions*, the *Abregé*, a few book reviews, and a short guide to scholarly “commonplacing.” As to politics, when under fire from the English government in 1684 he had pleaded to Pembroke that “I am not the author, not only of any libel, but not of any pamphlet or treatise whatsoever in print” (*Corr.*, 797). The statement equivocates, and carries the saving clause *in print*, as well as implicitly renouncing any work for which he had been merely an “assistant pen” for others. But whatever Locke had so far *written*, he still had no serious presence in the world of print. Had he died in exile, he would have been remembered as a minor and self-effacing “virtuoso” who had become factotum to a mercurial and fallen titan of English party politics.

1.7 The Revolution, 1689–1690

For most of his short reign, James II ruled without Parliament. He used prerogative power to promote Roman Catholics and affronted the institutions of civil society in his urgent ambition to promote his religion. He planned a biddable parliament and set about manipulating future elections. The later Stuart state was deeply entrenched: fiscally and militarily powerful, there was no chance of removing it by domestic resistance, as the disaster of the Monmouth Rebellion of 1685 proved. Locke was early committed to Dutch military intervention as the only viable means of revolution. In 1688 England was successfully invaded by an international army led by Prince William of Orange, James’ son-in-law, and *stadholder* of a republic that was at once an economic powerhouse, a place of astonishing religious and intellectual freedom, and a nation at risk of annihilation. William wished to engineer a revolution in English foreign policy that would terminate her neutrality and, as King William III, he spent his reign leading a European coalition against France. England abetted the Dutch invasion by insurrections which destroyed James’ capacity and will to govern. He fled to France.

Locke found himself in a paradoxical ideological position early in 1689, as a new settlement was worked out by a Convention. On the one hand, according to his *Two Treatises*, England was at liberty, with the dissolution of government, to mould any new polity it thought fit; yet, on the other, he had no quarrel with the “ancient constitution,” so that the task of revolutionaries was restorative. Moreover,

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geopolitical necessity – France and now rebellious Ireland – sanctioned a speedy resolution. Republicans and utopians were swept aside, and the crown was speedily transferred from James to William and his consort Mary, albeit with a Declaration (later Bill) of Rights attached. The Revolution nonetheless had momentous consequences for the constitution. Elections and parliaments became entrenched and regular, a committee of public accounts scrutinized expenditure, the tenure of judges became secure, treason trials were regulated, and censorship of the press abolished. An Act of Toleration ended projects to force the English to be of one religion and, while it excluded Catholics, peaceable “papists” were now largely left in peace. Locke told Limborch that the Act was “not perhaps so wide in scope as might be wished for ... Still, it is something to have progressed so far.” His reservation was not about Catholics, but probably about the continuing exclusion of Dissenters from public office (*Corr.*, 1147).

Locke belonged to William’s entourage and he sailed in the convoy which carried Princess Mary to England. He was now a client of Viscount Mordaunt, an officer in the invasion army, soon made Earl of Monmouth and First Lord of the Treasury, to whom he wrote celebrating the triumph of “our great deliverer” (*Corr.*, 1116). Within days of the Revolution Locke was offered an ambassadorship, probably to Brandenburg, which he declined; he accepted the post of commissioner for excise appeals, a non-onerous office in the state’s fiscal machinery. That, a few months later, he was rumoured to be appointed Secretary for War is a measure of his perceived position.

Doctrinaire Whigs, among whom Locke may be numbered, in fact had an ambivalent relationship with William during 1689–1690. The king, like Charles II in 1660, prudently wished to appease his enemies, the Tory reluctant revolutionaries, driven into William’s arms by loathing of popery and James’ sudden flight. To Whig dismay, the king took into office men who had been agents of pre-Revolution repression and who were apt to think of William as no more than a king *de facto*. When Whigs launched a campaign to purge Tories who were guilty of persecuting the Whig “martyrs,” William insisted on an amnesty. Locke’s own modest martyrdom, his exile and expulsion from Christ Church, placed him in the litany of “sufferers” and he briefly sought restoration of his Studentship at Christ Church.

The clearest manifestation of Locke’s militancy was his vehement critique of *de facto* principles and demand for a purge of Tories in a memorandum on allegiance written in 1690. His shock at Tory recidivism and revival, as to personnel and doctrine, had already, in the autumn of 1689, prompted him to hurry into print the *Two Treatises*, to do ideological work he believed should by now be superfluous. The first author publicly to mention this anonymous work, the Whig lawyer William Atwood, recommended reading “every morning some pages” as a salutary exercise in mental hygiene, to clear away the rubbish of Tory doctrine, for it was “an effective catholicon against nonsense and absurdities” (Goldie 1999, 1:39).

1.8 Publication, 1689–1699

Whatever the exigencies of politics, Locke sought scholarly seclusion. In 1691 he settled at the manor house of Oates in Essex, 20 miles north of London, his final home. He had with him his library of 4000 books and pamphlets, his servant, an amanuensis, his horse Sorel and, from 1697, a Huguenot exile, Pierre Coste, who translated his works into French. Oates was the home of Sir Francis and Lady Masham. Sir Francis was Whig MP for Essex, but not a man of consequence. By contrast, Damaris Masham was a woman of considerable intellectual power, who published two works of philosophical theology and engaged in correspondence with Leibniz. Her memoir of Locke was a principal source for Le Clerc's *Eloge*. Sir Francis was regularly in London on parliamentary business, and the household was dominated by Locke and Lady Masham, and it was they whom such guests as Newton thanked for their hospitality. Together they hosted the future third Earl of Shaftesbury, the cabbalist physician Francis van Helmont, their publisher Awnsham Churchill, and the portraitist Sir Godfrey Kneller, who painted them both. Locke would leave the greater part of his fortune to Masham's only son, Francis. Masham and Locke had met in about 1681, when she was 23, and Locke had been struck by her robust defence of the Cambridge Platonists, among whom she had been educated, as the daughter of Ralph Cudworth, Master of Christ's College, Cambridge, author of *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678). Locke described her as "much occupied with study and reflection on theological and philosophical matters," about which she could discourse more abstrusely than "most educated men" (*Corr.*, 1375). The nature of their relationship is hard to fathom and is perhaps best captured in the contemporary notion of "seraphic love."

Locke's literary output during the 1690s was prodigious and he rapidly became a successful and renowned author. The *Essay* appeared in folio, its second edition of 1694 carrying its author's portrait, and successive lifetime editions containing additional material. The *Two Treatises* and *Letter Concerning Toleration* came out also in 1689. His economic tract on the *Lowering of Interest* dates from 1691, followed by several monetary tracts in 1695–1696 concerning the "Great Recoinage." *Thoughts Concerning Education* was issued in 1693, and *The Reasonableness of Christianity* followed in 1695. Much as Locke claimed to eschew polemic, he published, between 1690 and 1699, seven books that were vindications of earlier works: two of *Toleration* (against Jonas Proast, a High Church Oxford clergyman), three of the *Essay* (against Stillingfleet, now Bishop of Worcester), and two of the *Reasonableness* (against John Edwards, a Cambridge clergyman), amounting to 1275 pages in the nineteenth-century edition of his collected *Works*. By the time he died, 37 editions of his works had been published, 27 in English, six in French, two in Latin, and two in Dutch. Dissemination occurred in controlled and uncontrolled ways. Locke was cognisant of Popple's translation of *Tolerantia*, of John Wynne's *Abridgement of the Essay* for university use (1696), of Coste's French (1700) and Ezekiel Burridge's Latin (1701) translations of the *Essay*. Some of those who published in his defense were

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associates, such as the latitudinarian clergyman Samuel Bold, while other vindications came unexpectedly, such as Catherine Cockburn's *Defence of Mr Locke's Essay* (1702). His work was mediated for European audiences through Le Clerc's trilogy, *Logica, Ontologia, and Pneumatologia* (1692–1697). His *Two Treatises* was plagiarized and interwoven with other Whig texts in *Political Aphorisms* (1690), which, as *The Judgment of Whole Kingdoms*, became an eighteenth-century bestseller. It was quoted in public speeches, such as the Earl of Stamford's oration to the Leicestershire magistracy (1691), and was, embarrassingly for its author and for the government, cited in William Molyneux's *Case of Ireland* (1698) in defense of Ireland's rights against England's empire, the earliest instance of its deployment in a colonial context (Goldie 1999, vol. 1). His theological treatise, the *Reasonableness*, was extrapolated in ways no less embarrassing in John Toland's *Christianity not Mysterious* (1696).

We do, however, need carefully to calibrate our sense of Locke's canon, for most of his publications were anonymous. In his lifetime, he was chiefly famous for the *Essay* and *Education*. His authorship of other works was only rumored. As for his political views, it is striking that, in praising Locke's "excellent ... political maxims," an author of 1696 was apparently unaware of the *Two Treatises* and was referring to his tracts on monetary policy. However, we can probably be confident of the extent of rumor given that an Oxford undergraduate told his father in 1695 that the *Two Treatises* "by Mr Locke ... makes a great noise" (Goldie 1999, 6:61; Cumbria Record Office, WD/Ry/HMC, no. 4769). When Masham wrote her memoir, she remarked that Locke's two greatest contributions to the public good concerned toleration and the recoinage, although he had not put his name to the toleration tracts.

If it is hard to recapture a reader's sense around 1700 of what Locke had authored, it is equally difficult to reckon the balance between applause and opprobrium. Coteries of admirers grew around him, and yet he was also the target of savage attacks. The *Essay* suffered two phases of denunciation, suspect at first for failing to uphold natural law because of its critique of innate ideas and, after mid-decade, for its failure to provide adequate scaffolding for Trinitarian Christianity. In the course of 1696–1697, William Sherlock denounced the *Essay* "from the pulpit ... charg[ing] it] ... with little less than atheism"; Tory Oxford relished hearing the *Two Treatises* condemned for "king-killing" doctrine, in a sermon on "Charles King and Martyr" day; a critic of government monetary policy protested that Locke had "done more mischief by his ... folly" than 10,000 copies of the *Essay* could compensate for; and the Middlesex Grand Jury burnt the *Reasonableness* alongside Toland's book (*Corr.*, 2202; Anon 1696, 6).

A newly fashionable word of that decade was "priestcraft," destined to be a cynosure of Enlightenment anticlericalism. It is a term which Locke used just once, in the *Reasonableness*, but admirers like the Quaker Furly readily used the term, and Popple noted that modern youth were "disgusted" with "clerical fard [sham]." Elizabeth Berkeley counseled Locke to be "more cautious" because too many people were "proud of every shadow of authority to believe as little as they can," while Popple

lamented the misuse of Locke, remarking that “irreligion is a sad sanctuary from the mischiefs of superstition ... is there no medium?” There is an anxious edge to Locke’s interest in the trial and execution in Scotland of Thomas Aikenhead in 1697, the last instance of capital punishment for blasphemy in Britain. His informant warned that Scottish law made “the denying ... any of the persons of the Trinity ... punishable with death” (*Corr.*, 2002, 2109, 2207).

1.9 Court Whig and the Board of Trade, 1695–1700

Locke re-entered the political arena in the mid-1690s. He advised on the “Great Recoinage” of 1696, which involved calling in clipped coin, shaved or wholly withdrawn from circulation by fraudsters who melted it for bullion. Locke insisted that the new coinage should retain its precious metal content rather than have a nominal face value. His view prevailed and it is generally held to have been misguided. The recoinage was ineptly handled and the Mint was slow to produce coins and would not fully honor demonetized coins, resulting in considerable national hardship. Not everybody shared Masham’s estimate of Locke’s contribution to the public good.

Locke was involved in the abolition of press censorship in 1695. His memoranda did not offer sonorous Miltonic appeals for liberty of expression, although they certainly expressed hostility to clerical interference and to the printing monopolies of the Stationers’ Company. In this matter, as in others, he worked through a small group of like-minded colleagues who sat in Parliament, nicknamed the College, most prominent of whom was Edward Clarke.

From 1696 until his resignation through ill health in 1700, Locke was one of the state’s most senior civil servants, a commissioner on the newly formed Board of Trade and Plantations. When in London during the summer months, he assiduously attended meetings, and scores of the Board’s documents are co-signed by him. The Board’s remit was the governance of the American colonies, commercial policy, and reform of the Poor Law. While the mainland colonies mattered greatly, at this period the West Indies, and especially Barbados, were the economic miracles of the empire, wealthy on tobacco and sugar. The Board’s orders, often peremptory and involving the sacking of unco-operative officials, exhibit several preoccupations. The exigencies of the Nine Years War raised anxieties about military and naval preparedness against French incursions. A concern for intellectual control, shaped by the emerging discipline of “political arithmetic,” prompted enquiries seeking demographic, economic, and fiscal data. The need to enhance tax yields and to cure epidemics of tax evasion drove a series of initiatives: the enforcement of the Navigation Acts, which required international trade to be carried in English ships; the creation of Admiralty courts with jurisdiction over transmarine trade; the use of the Navy to patrol trade routes; and the suppression of piracy. A further strand was the evangelization of Native Americans, which the Board regarded as a legitimate aim of public

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policy – Locke’s “separation” of church and state is not all it seems. On the domestic front, Locke drafted for the Board a paper on reform of the Poor Law, which balanced charity towards the deserving indigent against harsh compulsion of the able-bodied to labor in workhouses; and promoted legislation to protect the English woolen textile industry, which was the provocation for his friend Molyneux’s *Case of Ireland*.

Locke’s political identity in these years aligned him with the “Junto” Whigs, one of whose number, Lord Chancellor Somers, was a close associate. Broadly, Locke was engaged in the great transformation of the English polity known as the rise of the “fiscal-military state.” Warfare on an unprecedented scale, with its logistical and infrastructural demands, drove fiscal innovation and governmental expansion. Deficit financing became institutionalized through the creation of the Bank of England. The “courtiers” of a narrowly monarchical polity gave way to the “commissioners” of a Weberian bureaucratic state. As an increasingly influential figure, Locke was frequently petitioned to help supplicants obtain salaried offices, such as Lady Eyre’s request that he find her son a place in the Treasury, Customs, or Admiralty (*Corr.*, 3081). In 1698 Locke added a passage to the third edition of the *Two Treatises* applauding the “wise and godlike prince” who directs the resources and manpower of the Commonwealth, this being “the great art of government” (*TT*, 2.42).

Critics of the new regime complained less of overbearing monarchy and more of an overweening executive which controlled king and Parliament. They protested afresh against “placemen” and “standing armies,” lauded “Country” landed virtue in contrast to the evils of the moneyed City and Court, and pointed to the betrayal of “old” Whiggism by “new” Whigs. A hostile tract, *The Taunton Dean Letter* (1701), attacked the corrupt practices of revenue commissioners, military contractors, and electoral manipulators. Its title points to Locke’s closest political colleague, Clarke, MP for Taunton. A broadsheet published shortly after his death accused the philosopher himself of lining his pockets in the money markets and through his access to the machinery of state. He and his “skilful friends” epitomized “the new man with money” (Goldie 1999, 6:163–7).

1.10 Last Years, 1700–1704

After 1700 Locke rarely left Oates. During his final years a phalanx of friends protected him from the pressures of fame and notoriety. They bought books, summarized them, penned rejoinders. He himself continued with new writing. For Samuel Bold he prepared “some Thoughts concerning Reading and Study for a Gentleman” (1703). For children he published a Latin-English version of Aesop’s *Fables* (1703), and wrote a primer, “The Elements of Natural Philosophy.” For adults seeking a more informal outline of some of the methods of the *Essay*, he drafted “The Conduct of the Understanding” (1697), originally intended as an additional chapter. A young scholar, Anthony Collins, who would coin the term “freethinker,” commenced a

correspondence with him, probably knowingly intended for future publication. These letters, alongside Locke's earlier philosophical correspondence with Molyneux, replete with gracious celebrations of friendship and conversation, scholarship and the pursuit of truth, hatred of dogma and love of sensibility, offered models of the newly fashionable ethic of "politeness."

Locke's last substantial scholarly project was a commentary on the Epistles of St Paul (published 1705–1707). Biblical exegesis lay at the heart of Christian theology and was a far from superannuated genre; if modern scholars do not read Locke on St Paul, eighteenth-century readers did. He prefaced his book with an essay on hermeneutics: an ancient text is to be understood in its historical setting and with regard to the author's mindset, and violence is done to the text – and to people – when Scripture is read naively, as a set of "atoms" or decontextualized verses deployed as an ammunition of "proofs."

Locke's reading of 1 Corinthians 11:2–16 particularly caught attention. It is an ambiguous interpretation of Paul's injunction to women to remain silent in church, and contains a defense of female "prophesying" within a general endorsement of the Apostle's strictures. On the one hand, Quaker defenders of female preaching used Locke's authority in defense of their practice. On the other, the feminist Mary Astell was furious at Locke's acceptance of the "natural" inferiority of women. Her preface to *Reflections on Marriage* (1706) rebuked Locke and includes the remark for which she is famous: "If all men are born free, how is that all women are born slaves?" (Goldie 1999, 2:107–26, 6:129–42).

Locke died at Oates in October 1704, Masham reading to him from the Psalms. He is buried at High Laver parish church, where an inscription enjoins that we should "learn from his writings, which will tell you whatever there is to be said about him more faithfully than the dubious eulogies of an epitaph." Sitting in the garden at Oates, he suggested another epitaph in recollecting a passage from Horace: "When the milder sun brings you a larger audience, you will tell them about me: that I was a freedman's son, and amid slender means spread wings too wide for my nest, thus adding to my merits what you take from my birth; that I found favour, both in war and peace, with the foremost in the state; of small stature, grey before my time, fond of the sun, quick in temper, yet so as to be easily appeased" (Goldie and Soulard 2014). Locke left over £12,000 – more than £1 million in modern terms – derived chiefly from aristocratic largesse, state service, and judicious investment in the world's first stock market. The trustees of his will were Collins, his publisher Churchill, and his cousin Peter King, a future Lord Chancellor, whose marriage and entry into Parliament Locke had recently overseen. His great library was to be divided between King and Damaris Masham's son, many books ultimately finding their way, along with Locke's archive, to the Bodleian Library.

Locke's ambivalent philosophical reputation at the time of his death is captured by two incidents involving Oxford University. Whilst some heads of colleges wished

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to ban “the new philosophy which was too much read, and in particular your book,” the *Essay*, others condemned such a move as likely to incur ridicule, as if the university “went about to forbid the reading of all philosophy save that of Aristotle” (*Corr.*, 3511). Meanwhile, the university librarian sought copies of all Locke’s works, the true extent of which Locke had finally conceded in a codicil to his will.

Much of Locke’s *nachlass* would be published within a few years of his death, in the *Posthumous Works* (1706), *Some Familiar Letters* (1708), and *A Collection of Several Pieces* (1720), although it was only after the arrival of his archive in Oxford in the 1940s that scholars gained access to most of his early writings. The first edition of his *Works* appeared in three volumes in 1714, and reached 10 volumes by the 10th edition in 1801. The Clarendon Edition of his *Works* has been under way since 1975.

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