

## LOCKE'S DISGUISED SPINOZISM [PART 2] \*

WIM KLEVER \* \*

**A**s I remarked already in my 'Slocke' one cannot find in the drafts A and B (1671) an analogy or equivalent of Locke's forceful starting point of *Essay* 4.<sup>1</sup> It first appears in *Essay* 1.2.15 ("In *ideas thus* got, the mind discovers that some agree and others differ, probably as soon as it has any use of memory") and 1.2.16 ("upon the first occasion that shall make him put together those ideas in the mind and observe whether they agree or disagree"). The word '*together*' in this quote may be seen as a resonance of '*simul*' in Spinoza's 2/29s. Spinoza's distinction between external and internal sensation finds its place in Locke's own recapitulation of the antecedent expositions in his chapter 2.11 OF DISCERNING AND OTHER OPERATIONS OF THE MIND, where he starts § 15, like Spinoza did in 2/29s, with a retrospect. "And thus I have given a short and, I think true *history of the first beginnings of human knowledge*, whence the mind has its first objects, and by what steps it makes its progress to the laying in and storing up those ideas out of which is to be framed all the knowledge it is capable of". The distinction mentioned above follows in § 17: "I pretend not to teach, but to inquire; and therefore cannot but confess here again that *external and internal sensation* are the only passages that I can find of knowledge to the understanding. These alone, as far as I can discover, are the windows by which light is let into this *dark room* ... These are my guesses".

I dare assert apodictically that the opening statements of *Essay* 4 were not drawn from his own brain or products from his own invention. They were also not guesses, as may be concluded from the fact that they were further on in the *Essay* more than ten times reaffirmed without any hesitation or doubt. Locke leans heavily on Spinoza's shoulders without confessing it. *Ethica* 2/29s was the clue that opened his eyes widely. In the history of philosophy there is no other precedent apart from Spinoza's text. Yet in his correspondence with Stillingfleet Locke insists on the originality of his definition of knowledge. In the second letter he affirms: "Nobody that I ever met with had in their writings particularly set down wherein the act of knowing precisely consisted".<sup>2</sup> In the third letter he states quite specifically that Descartes did not, as he himself did, "place certainty in the perception of agreement or disagreement of ideas".<sup>3</sup> But as we already remarked in our introduction: in the public polemics with bishop Stillingfleet he had something to win with the denial of any trace of Spinozism in his works. His best defense was to maintain his philosophical virginity.

When did Locke start writing the *Essay*? Formerly Locke scholars said unanimously that it was in 1671, the date of two extant drafts about human intellect. But G. A. J. Rogers, co-editor of those drafts, has recently successfully defended that this must have been when Locke was back again in England after his stay in France, in the years 1680-1681.<sup>4</sup> His argument can be reinforced

---

\* Publication authorized by the author.

\* \* Emeritus Professor Erasmus University Rotterdam.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. P. H. Nidditch and G. A. J. Rogers (eds), *Drafts A and B* (Oxford 1990). R. Aaron writes in his *John Locke* (Oxford 1937): "Now it is a highly interesting point that the opening chapters of Book IV have no counterpart in the drafts of 1671" (p. 87).

<sup>2</sup> *Works* o.c. vol. IX, p. 143.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* p. 362. Also H.A.S. Shankula ("Locke, Descartes, and the Science of Nature", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 41 (1980), p. 459-477) rejects the Cartesian origin of Locke's solution.

<sup>4</sup> See his "Introduction" to G. A. J. Rogers (ed.) *Locke's Philosophy. Content and Context* (Oxford 1994) p.9-12. The basis of his argument is the analysis of Letter 1266 (De Beer, o.c.).

by what Locke wrote to Edward Clarke on 21/31 December 1686 from Amsterdam, when he sent to his friend the “fourth and last book of (his) scattered thoughts concerning the *Understanding*”. He added the following remark to it: “Of what use it may be to any other I cannot tell, but, if I flatter not myself, it has been of great help to [our first enquiry], and the search of knowledge ever since has been in my thoughts, *which is now five or six years. For so long ago is it* since some friends upon an accidental discourse [started me] upon this enquiry, which I am not sorry for.<sup>5</sup> And if it has cost me some pains in thinking, it has rewarded me by the light I imagine I have received from it, as well as by the pleasure of discovering certain truths, which to me at least were new”<sup>6</sup> 1680 as the birth year of the *Essay* fits well to the current view that Locke, after returning from France, first wrote the *Two Treatises of Government*, a thing most urgent on account of the political situation in England, and then proceeded to the epistemological project. Without the *Opera Posthuma* (1677) the start of Locke’s career as a senior philosopher and his inexhaustible energy in the production of so many treatises in a short period are not explainable.<sup>7</sup> The most plausible hypothesis seems to be that Locke began the writing of his treatise in 1682, his last year in London, continued this work in his Dutch years and finished it in December 1686 in Amsterdam. The immeasurable impact, which the *Ethica* had on the progress of Locke’s philosophizing, is comparable to its influence, in particular also 2/29s, on a couple of Dutch followers of Spinoza. So was Johannes Duijkerius in his *Vervolg van ‘t leven van Philopater* (1697) not less than Locke addicted to a radical form of empiricism, in which adequate ideas are thought to rise up automatically from the affections of our body by objects.<sup>8</sup> And Herman Boerhaave, the famous Leiden professor of medicine, wrote in his often reprinted *Institutiones Medicae* (1707), that we are not self responsible for our thoughts and that “you contemplating the identity or diversity of your sensitive ideas, are forced (*cogaris*) to think that they are one when they are one and that they are different when they are different”.<sup>9</sup>

Returning now to the *Essay* we discover that Locke also takes over, in a reversed order of numbering, Spinoza’s most famous and very typical distinction between *three kinds of knowledge*.<sup>10</sup> In the next frame the relevant, but dispersed, text fragments are collected that, again, will convince the reader of Locke’s being the faithful student. Each item on one side has some relation to one or more items on the other side.

*Modi percipiendi*: 1) perception from hear say / perception from vague experience, 2) perception in which the essence is concluded from another thing, 3) when the essence of the thing is perceived directly or as coming forth from its proximate cause / intuitive (*intuitive*) and *doing nothing* (*nullam operationem facientes*) (TIE § 24). The best mode of perceiving ...

*Of the degrees /kinds / sorts of our knowledge* (*Essay* 4.2.2 & 14). 1) Sometimes the mind perceives the *agreement or disagreement of two ideas immediately by themselves, without any intervention of any other*. And this I think we may call *intuitive knowledge*... This kind ... is the clearest and most certain, that human frailty is capable of... is irresistible and, like

<sup>5</sup> My italics.

<sup>6</sup> Letter 886 in De Beer, *Correspondence*, o.c. In his edition of Locke, *Selected Correspondence* (Oxford 2002) Marc Goldie remarks to this passage in a footnote: “Probably an error for ‘fifteen or sixteen’. Locke began the *Essay* in 1671”. It seems rather improbable that the mentioning of five or six years would be an error, since Locke accentuates and reaffirms the mentioned period by saying ‘for so long ago is it...’ and adds moreover that the discovered truths were ‘new’ for him!

<sup>7</sup> That Spinoza’s works are also the source of inspiration for the TTG and the *Epistola de Tolerantia* will be shown later.

<sup>8</sup> Amsterdam 1697.

<sup>9</sup> O.c. § 586. See quote in Wim Klever, *Boerhaave ‘sequax Spinozae’* (Vrijstad 2006), p.72. Boerhaave continues: “Exinde conficio, iudicium non esse actionem voluntatis, ad sensum vel largientis vel renuentis, quae Cartesii est definitio”.

<sup>10</sup> Spinoza inherited this distinction from his master Franciscus van den Enden, who wrote: “First and above all people have to be taught their threefold knowledge (driederley kennissen), namely belief, rational persuasion and clear knowledge”. See his *Free Political Propositions and Considerations of State* (1665). *Introduced, presented, translated and commented on by Wim Klever* (Vrijstad 2007) p. 196.

in order to know correctly the differences, agreements and repugnancies (*oppugnancias*) of things. (§25) But the things I have so far been able to know by this kind of knowledge have been *very few* (**perpauca fuerunt**) (§ 22). *Tria genera cognitionis*: 1) from particular things represented to our intellect mutilated, confused and without order ... / from signs e.g. from the fact that we remember certain things through having read or heard certain words and form certain ideas of them similar to those through which we imagine things. Both of these ways of regarding things I shall call hereafter knowledge of the first kind, *opinion* (*opinio*) or *imagination* (*imaginatio*). 2) from the fact that we have common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things ... And I shall call this *reason* (*ratio*) or knowledge of the second kind.<sup>11</sup> 3) Besides these two kinds of knowledge there is a third ... which we shall call *intuitive knowledge* (*scientia intuitiva*). Now this kind of knowing proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things (*Ethica* 2/40s2). And so I shall *treat* of the nature and force of the emotions, and the power of the mind over them in the same manner as I treated of God and the mind in the previous parts, and I shall regard *human actions* and appetites exactly as if I were dealing with lines, planes, and bodies (*Ethica*, preface to part 3).

bright sunshine, forces itself immediately to be perceived. *It is on this intuition that depends all the certainty and evidence of all our knowledge.* 2) The next degree of knowledge is where the mind perceives the agreement or disagreement of any ideas, but *not immediately*.... That is what we call *reasoning* ... Where the agreement or disagreement is by this means (of intervening ideas) plainly and clearly perceived, it is called *demonstration*... Demonstrative certainty ... is not the privilege of the ideas of number, extension, and figure alone (9)<sup>12</sup> 3) These two, viz. intuition and demonstration, are the degrees of our knowledge; whatever comes short of one of these, with what assurance soever embraced, is but *faith or opinion, but not knowledge*, at least in all general truths.<sup>13</sup> There is, indeed, another perception of the mind, employed *about the particular existence of finite beings without us*, which, going beyond bare probability and yet not reaching perfectly to either of the foregoing degrees of certainty, passes under the name of knowledge ... *Three degrees of knowledge, viz. intuitive, demonstrative and sensitive* (14) But ideas which, by reason of their *obscurity* or otherwise, are *confused* cannot produce any clear or distinct knowledge (15). Some *few* of the primary qualities have a necessary dependence and visible connexion one with another, as figure necessarily supposes extension, receiving or communicating motion by impulse supposes solidity.<sup>14</sup> But though these and perhaps some others of our ideas have, yet there are *so few* of them that have *visible* connexion one with another, that we can by intuition or demonstration discover the co-existence of **very few** of the qualities that are to be found in substances (4.314).

<sup>11</sup> Spinoza gives an example of this knowledge by *ratiocination* from Euclid's *Elementa*, the method of finding the fourth proportional "from a common property of proportionals".

<sup>12</sup> Locke, of course, implicitly refers to the method of the *Ethica more geometrico demonstrata*, which deals not with numbers. See also *Essay* 4.3.18 ("*Morality* (being) *amongst the sciences capable of demonstration*, wherein I doubt not from self-evident propositions, by necessary consequences as incontestable as those in mathematics, the measures of right and wrong might be made out to anyone that will apply himself with the same indifferency and attention to the one as he does to the other of these sciences") and 3.11.16 ("Upon this ground it is that I am bold to think that *morality* is as *capable of demonstration*, as well as mathematics; since the precise real essence of things moral words stand for may be perfectly known, and so the congruity or incongruity of the things themselves be certainly discovered, in which consists perfect knowledge").

<sup>13</sup> It is interesting that Locke has 'faith or opinion' for Spinoza's 'opinion or imagination'. Spinoza would certainly not object to this qualification, because according to him *all* kinds of perception, also his first kind, make us '*indubie*' (without doubting) affirm or deny. Cf. Locke's '*assurance*' in this context.. In 4.4.1-4 Locke also embraces Spinoza's technical term '*imaginatio*', since he uses it in that chapter four times and forgets his own equivalents.

<sup>14</sup> The examples show that the co-perceived common 'things' need not be atomic primary properties but include also various primary principles. Where Spinoza takes an illustration from Euclid, Locke gives two ethical cases: "where there is no property there is no injustice is a proposition as certain as any demonstration in Euclid", and "no government allows absolute liberty" (*Essay* 4.3.18). Mind that further on in this same paragraph he does not shun the word '*ethics*' !

The last quote on the left side, betraying Spinoza's intention to practice only the method of rational demonstration in his ethics, has brought Locke, who had the *Ethica* lying on the top of his desk, now in its third part. And, yes, again we find without delay two counterparts.

The body cannot determine the mind to think, nor the mind the body to motion, nor to rest, nor to any other state (if there be any other). [...] That which determines the mind to think is a mode of thinking and not ... a body....Again, the motion and rest of a body must arise from another body, which also was determined to motion or rest by another body [...] (*Ethica* 3/2&d)

As the ideas of sensible secondary qualities, which we have in our minds can by us be no way deduced from bodily causes, nor any correspondence or connexion be found between them and those primary qualities which (experience shows us) produce them in us, so, on the other side, the operation of our minds upon our bodies is as inconceivable. How any thought should produce a motion in body is as remote from the nature of our ideas, as how any body should produce any thought in the mind (*Essay* 4.3.28).

Locke excludes with Spinoza any intercausality between hypothetically substantial minds and bodies in man. He had already pleaded, like Spinoza, for the unity of mind and body in his strong anti-cartesian chapter *Essay* 2.1.<sup>15</sup> Also in the context of 4.3 he maintains the unity: "We ['men', not: 'our souls', wk] have the ideas of matter and thinking, but possibly shall never be able to know whether any *mere material* being thinks or no" (4.3.6). In that case thinking would be a power of 'fitly disposed' matter itself. The Cartesian theory about a divinely operated connection between two substances in man is not explicitly rejected here, but considered only a theoretical and even implausible alternative, because Locke does "see no contradiction" in the first, the Spinozistic, alternative. Both, however, claim certainty in *attributing* in exactly the same way the production of motions only to bodies and of thoughts only to thoughts. That 'mere matter' would be responsible for 'mere thoughts' or the reversed, 'mere thoughts' for 'mere matter', is "outside the reach of our knowledge". The conclusion, therefore, is that phenomena like pleasure and pain, "in some bodies *themselves* after a certain manner modified and moved", must be the effect and manifestation of the one and the same thing: "thinking extended matter".<sup>16</sup> It cannot be doubted that Locke's sympathy lies on the side of Spinoza's reformed Cartesianism. They cherished a common explanation of human behavior.

Locke found himself also on Spinoza's line where he underlined the limitations of our natural science, i.e. the *impossibility of knowing perfectly concrete phenomena* of whatever kind. Again, the only method to convince a reader of this shared theory will be to put two ranges of text fragments next to each other.

Experience does not teach us the essences of things (Letter 10, 1663). Hence it follows that the human mind, whenever it perceives a thing in the common order of nature, has no adequate knowledge of itself, nor of its body, *nor of external bodies, but only a confused and mutilated knowledge thereof...* It does not perceive its [own] body save through the ideas of its modifications, *through which alone also it perceives other bodies* (*Ethica* 2/29c). As to knowing the actual manner of this coherence, i.e. the way in which each part of Nature accords with the whole

Whatever therefore be the secret and abstract nature of substance in general, all the ideas we have of particular distinct sorts of substances, are nothing but several combinations of simple ideas, co-existing in such, though unknown, cause of their union as makes the whole subsist of itself (*Essay* 2.3.6). Nor indeed can we rank and sort things ... by their real essences because we know them not ... It is evident the internal constitution, whereon their properties depend, is unknown to us (3.6.9). [...] since we, having but some few superficial ideas

<sup>15</sup> See above.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Ethica* 2/7s: "Sic modus extensionis et idea illius modi una eademque est res, sed duobus modis expressa".

and the manner of its coherence with other parts, I made it clear in my previous letter that this is *beyond my knowledge* (Letter 32). One can never have adequate knowledge (*comprobare*) by chemical or any other experiments, but only by demonstration and by calculating. For it is by reason and calculation that we divide bodies to infinity, and consequently also the forces required to produce them (Letter 6). The general consideration of fate and the concatenation of causes would aid us very little in forming and arranging our ideas *concerning particular things*. Let us add that as to the actual co-ordination and concatenation of things, that is how things are ordained and linked together, we are *completely ignorant* (*plane ignorare*) (TTP 4/4). It would be impossible for human weakness to grasp the series of singular, changeable things, not only because there are innumerable many of them, but also because of the infinite circumstances in one and the same thing, any of which can be the cause of its existence or nonexistence (TIE § 100). If we attend to *the analogy of the whole nature* (CM 2/8/7). From the analogy of the universe (Letter 2).

of things, discovered to us only by the senses from without or by the mind reflecting on what it experiments in itself within, have no knowledge beyond that, much less of the internal constitution and true nature of things, being destitute of faculties to attain it (2.23.32). Therefore I am apt to doubt that, how far soever human industry may advance useful and experimental philosophy in physical things, scientific [philosophy] will still be out of our reach ... We are *not capable of scientific knowledge*, nor shall ever be able to discover general, instructive, unquestionable truths *concerning them* [particular things, wk] (4.3.25). We can go no further than particular experience informs us of matter of fact, and *by analogy to guess* what effects the like bodies are, upon other trials, like to produce. But as to a perfect science of natural bodies ... we are, I think, so far from being capable of any such thing, that I conclude it lost labor to seek after it (4.3.30) “*As thou knowest not what is the Way of the Spirit, nor how the Bones do grow in the Womb of her that is with Child*”, Eccles. Xi.5 on title page of *Essay*.

Experimental science, nonetheless, does have sense. By this we will not really be able to learn precisely the laws according to which nature works, but only approach them by analogy. Both, Spinoza and Locke, were experienced experimenters. Spinoza loved working in hydrostatics, chemistry and optics, Locke practiced chemistry and medicine.<sup>17</sup>

We do have, however, *true mathematical and moral science*, consisting of the greatest common nominators of all our imaginations or confused sensations, our ‘common notions’, in Locke’s preferred terminology their ‘constants’. In them we think the common things i.e. the things on themselves *in general*, not in particular. They are the abstract ideas “of the mind’s own making” (4.4.5), the mind’s own operations or *constructs*. This does not mean that they are not true. They are. Confer *Ethica* 1, axiom 6 (*Idea vera debet cum suo ideato convenire*) with *Essay* 4.4.1 (“So a man observe but the agreement of his own imaginations and talk conformably, it is all truth, all certainty. Such castles in the air will be as strongholds of truths as the demonstrations of Euclid”). The adequate ideas fully agree with their *ideatum* but reflect only a very small part of the infinite aspects and causes of the objects intended. They cover, so to say, their idealized form.

Spinoza’s mathematical ethics is nothing less than a treatise about man’s behavior, which does not exceed the realm of *entia rationis*. It treats the laws of everybody’s behavior, but does not enumerate the infinite causes and circumstances which determine Peter’s or Paul’s particular behavior (and make all men differ from each other), just like Euclid’s geometry did not provide the properties of the really existing and always different circles, which never are and never can be perfect. Locke had well understood the abstract character of the central and indestructible part of our mind, constituted by the agreement of the totality of our confused ideas. And he closely followed Spinoza in his persuasion that mathematics or true science is not confined to the science of numbers and figures.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Wim Klever, “Insignis opticus. Spinoza in de geschiedenis van de optica”, in *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 6 (1990) 47-63 and Idem, “Anti-falsificationism: Spinoza’s theory of experience and experiments”, in Ed Curley & P. F. Moreau (eds.), *Spinoza. Issues and Directions. The Proceedings of the Chicago Spinoza Conference* (Leiden: Brill 1990) 124-136. J. R. Milton, “Locke, Medicine and the Mechanical Philosophy”, in *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 9 (2001) 221-243.

All the discourses of the mathematicians about the squaring of a circle, conic sections or any other parts of mathematics concern not the existence of any of those figures; but the demonstrations, which depend on their ideas, are the same, whether there be any square or circle existent in the world or no. In the same manner, the truth and certainty of moral discourse abstracts from the lives of men and the existence of those virtues in the world whereof they treat (*Essay* 4.4.8). For the ideas that ethics are conversant about being all real essences, and such as I imagine have a discoverable connexion and agreement one with another: so far we can find their habitudes and relations, so far we shall be possessed of certain, real and general truths (*Essay* 4.12.8). Upon this ground I am bold to think that morality is capable of demonstration, as well as mathematics; since the precise real essence of the things moral words stand for may be perfectly known, and so the congruity or incongruity of things themselves be certainly discovered, in which consists perfect knowledge (*Essay* 3.11.16).

His friend Molyneux asked Locke to figure out such a scientific ethics.<sup>18</sup> But Locke saw no reason why he should. More than once he lets us surmise that according to him such a mathematical science of ethics does already exist. “We have reason to thank those who in this latter age have taken another course and have trod out to us, though not an easier way to learned ignorance, yet a surer way to profitable knowledge” (*Essay* 4.12.12).

Spinoza stood a model for all that Locke was claiming in his epistemological project. This appears also in his treatment OF MAXIMS (4.7). Spinoza started the five parts of the *Ethica* with mentioning the axioms to which he reduced several propositions. This geometrical method was in use by many scientists of the new age: his colleague Christian Huygens (in *Horologium oscillatorium*, 1673), his friend Nicolaas Steno (*Descriptio geometrica musculorum*, 1665), Isaac Newton (*Principia mathematica philosophiae naturalis*, 1687). Locke was impressed and wanted to comment upon. “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 anybody (that I know) ever went about to show the reason and foundation of their clearness or cogency” (4.7.1). It will no longer be a surprise that Locke reduces their evidence to our immediate perception of agreement between our sensations. The agreeing items might be put on the forefront of the scientific discourse, but one must realize, he continues, that they are not temporally primary notions. “That they are not the truths first known to the mind, is evident to experience, as we have shown in another place, Book II, ch. I” (4.7.9). Calling them “the foundations of all our other knowledge” (4.7.10) is more than misleading, because they are themselves the product of our experience. Since also Spinoza is a radical empiricist as concerns the origin of the axioms, the reader of his text may be grateful for Locke’s clarification.

We discussed already in the beginning of this article, in connection with Spinoza’s Letter 32, Locke’s impressive upshot of our universal knowledge in 4.6. The head of this chapter was telling: OF UNIVERSAL PROPOSITIONS. In 4.7 Locke not only stipulates the aposteriori character of axioms or maxims, but also their difference from other ‘contrivances of the mind’ that are nothing less than confused general notions. For this type of imaginations Spinoza and Locke take both our customary idea of the species *man* as example.

For, as we have said, the mind cannot imagine a fixed number of particulars at the same time. But it must be noted that these notions are not formed by all in the same manner, but vary with each according to the thing by which the body was most often affected, and which the mind imagines or remembers most easily. For example, those who have most often admired for their stature, by the name of man will understand an animal of <i>erect</i>	A child having framed the idea of <i>man</i> , it is probable that his idea is just like that picture which the painter makes of the visible appearances joined together, whereof white or flesh-color in England being one, the child can demonstrate to you that a Negro is not a man ... Another that has gone further in framing and collecting the idea he calls <i>man</i> , and to the outward shape adds <i>laughter</i> and <i>rational discourse</i> , may demonstrate that infants and
---	---

<sup>18</sup> *Correspondence*, ed. De Beer, no. 1513).

<p><i>stature</i>; and those who are wont to regard men in another way will form another common image of men, namely a <i>laughing animal</i>, a <i>featherless biped animal</i>, a <i>reasoning animal</i>, and so each one will form concerning the other things <i>universal images</i> of things according to the dispositions of his body. Wherefore it is not surprising that so many controversies should have arisen among philosophers who wished to explain natural things merely by images of things (<i>Ethica</i> 2/40s1).</p>	<p>changelings are no men ... Perhaps another makes up the complex idea which he calls <i>man</i>, only out of the ideas of body in general and the powers of <i>language</i> and <i>reason</i> and leaves out the <i>shape</i> wholly (4-7.16-17) It could not possibly be that the abstract idea to which the name <i>man</i> is given should be different in several men, if it were of nature's making, and to one it should be <i>animal rationale</i>, and to another <i>animal implume bipes latis unguibus</i>... I think there is scarce anyone will allow his <i>upright figure</i> ... to be the essential difference of <i>species man</i>; and yet how far men determine of the sorts of animals, rather by their shape than descent, is very visible... (3.6.26).</p>
---	---

Our so-called universal ideas are mostly nothing but ideas of particulars for universal use, for *comparing* things which each other and calling them accordingly perfect or imperfect.

<p>But afterwards, when men began to form universal ideas and to think out <i>standards</i> (<i>exemplaria</i>) of houses, buildings, towers, etc. and to prefer certain standards to others, it came about that every one <i>called</i> (<i>vocaret</i>) that perfect which he saw to agree with the universal idea which he had formed of that sort of thing, and on the contrary, imperfect what he saw less <i>agree with</i> the exemplar that he had conceived, although in the opinion of the artificer it might be perfect (<i>Ethica</i> 4, preface).</p>	<p>The mind makes the particular ideas received from particular objects to become general ... this is called abstraction, whereby ideas taken from particular beings become general representatives of all of the same kind; and their names, general names, applicable to whatever exists <i>conformable</i> to such abstract ideas. Such precise, naked appearances in the mind, without considering how, whence, or with what others they came there, the understanding lays up as the <i>standards</i> to rank real existences into sorts, as they agree with these patterns, and to <i>denominate</i> them accordingly (<i>Essay</i> 2.11.9).</p>
--	--

Does *our idea of God* belong to the realm of confused belief and fancy or is it part of our scientific knowledge? Locke cannot and will not avoid the question, about which Spinoza's proposition 47 at the end of *Ethica* 2 was so conspicuous: "human mind has an adequate knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God". His demonstration was simple: because we perceive our own existence and know that the idea of whatever particular body involves necessarily the idea of God's eternal and infinite existence (2/46), a proposition that on its turn was based on 1/15 ("Whatever is, is in God and nothing can exist or be perceived without God") and 1/axiom 4 ("The knowledge of an effect depends on the knowledge of the cause and involves it"). Well, Locke takes the same steps in his proving "our knowledge of the existence of a God" (*Essay* 4.4.10).<sup>19</sup> The argument is based on the clear perception of our own being (§ 2), the intuitive certainty that a finite thing (like we) cannot be produced by nothing (the causality principle, § 3) and a second axiom, namely that effects cannot have what causes miss (§ 5). Together with our ideas of matter and thinking these principles lead us humans to the certainty of an eternal, most powerful, and most knowing being, in fact thinking and moving matter (4/10/6 & 10). The argument is a kind of formalization of what we already could read under the 'universal propositions' of *Essay* 4/6, in which passage was also assumed that we and all other things are the modifications of the universe. The term 'universe' for thinking and moving matter, by which everything finite is produced, is used in chapter 10, albeit concealed in a quote from Cicero (§ 6). Locke does not want to make use here

<sup>19</sup> It is plausible, as William Carroll intimated already, that Locke writes 'a' God in order to let his reader surmise that 'his' god differs from the 'personal' God of the believer. It must, moreover, be remarked that he does not, equally like Spinoza, argue for the existence of a God, but demonstrates that we already know that!

of Spinoza's technical term '*substantia*' and qualify the things accordingly as their bare modifications "because this is a very harsh doctrine" (2/13/18) he could better not officially admit.<sup>20</sup> That things are nevertheless according to Locke in fact (modal) 'parts' of God conceived as the Universe is implicitly asserted by what is said in 4/10/10: "So that if we will suppose nothing first or eternal, matter can never begin to be; if we suppose bare matter without motion eternal, *motion* can never begin to be; if we suppose only matter and motion first or eternal, thought can never begin to be. For it is impossible to conceive that matter either with or without motion could have originally, in and from itself, sense, perception, and knowledge; as is evident from hence, that then sense, perception, and knowledge must be a property eternally inseparable from matter and every particle of it".<sup>21</sup> It cannot be, then, a surprise to read in the later chapter 12 about 'our *eternal state*' (§ 11)<sup>22</sup>. The affinity with Spinoza's reasoning is again unmistakable: "*Sentimus experimurque nos aeternos esse*" (*Ethica* 5/23s). Locke's conclusion of the infinite from the finite and conceiving the latter in the first is, moreover, a copy of Spinoza's procedure as summarized at the end of his *Letter* 12 to his learned friend Lodewijk Meyer: "The force of the argument lies not in the impossibility of an actual infinite or an infinite series of causes, but in our assumption that things, which by their own nature do not necessarily exist, are determined to exist by a thing which necessarily exists by its own nature".<sup>23</sup> This assumption is not optional. "We more certainly know that there is a God than that there is anything else without us" (*Essay* 4.10.6). Denying God's existence is not a possibility of our rational equipment. Of course there are a lot of people who confess atheism or at least their ignorance, but that is only a 'misnaming': "they don't apply names correctly to things" (*Ethica* 2/47s).

Against the brightness and clarity of our knowledge of God's existence our 'knowledge' of external things is weak and turns pale. In so far our regular observations, together with what we remember from hearsay, are not obstructed by contrary perceptions, historical information or fairy tales (TIE § 19-20) and we experience things constantly after the same manner in the ordinary course of nature (*Essay* 4.16.6), we are *assured* of what we perceive or hear and actually have no doubts. We trust that the things exist like they appear or are told (preached) to us. But theoretically we have here only *probability*. This is no problem for our daily life, as Locke states in the same words and with the same example as Spinoza.

It is true that in this world we often act from conjecture, but it is not true that philosophical thinking proceeds from conjecture. In the common round of life we have to follow what is probable, but in speculative thought we have to follow what is true. A man *would perish of hunger and thirst if he refused to eat and drink until he had obtained perfect proof (demonstrationem) that food and drink would be good for him ...* However, leaving aside and granting the fact that in default of demonstrations (*demonstrationum defectu*) we must be content with the probable (*verisimilitudo*),

*Probability* is nothing but the appearance of such an agreement (between sensations) (4.51.1). *Probability is likeliness to be true*, the very notation of the word signifying such a proposition for which there be arguments or proofs to make it pass or be received for true. The entertainment the mind gives this sort of propositions is called *belief, assent, or opinion* (4.15.3). *He that will not eat till he has demonstration that it will nourish him ... will have little else to do but sit still and perish* (4.14.1). He that, in the ordinary affairs of life, would admit of nothing but direct plain demonstration would be

<sup>20</sup> However, in a clandestine letter (see above) he did not hesitate to conceive God as "rem vel *substantiam* cogitantem ... infinitam".

<sup>21</sup> Between the lines of this argument Locke implicitly asserts motion as the essence of (eternal) matter, which is precisely Spinoza's position against Descartes. See my "Moles in motu. Principles of Spinoza's Physics", in *Studia Spinozana* 4 (1990) 165-194.

<sup>22</sup> My italics. The expression 'eternal state' occurs also in 2.21.44.

<sup>23</sup> The text of the *Opera Posthuma* and all following editions is corrupt. It shows a 'non' before the word 'determinari', which must be wrong according to the Leibniz' transcript of the letter, kept in the Niedersächsischen Landesbibliothek at Hannover. See Wim Klever, "Actual infinity. A note on the Crescas-passus in Spinoza's letter to Lodewijk Meyer" in *Studia Spinozana* 10 (1994) p. 11-121.



<p>I say that verisimilitude must be such that, although open to doubt, it cannot be contradicted; for that which can be contradicted is similar, not to truth, but to falsehood (Letter 56).</p>	<p>sure of nothing in this world but of <i>perishing</i> quickly. The wholesomeness of his <i>meat or drink</i> would not give him reason to venture on it, and I would fain know what it is he could do upon such grounds as were capable of no doubt, no objection” (4.11.10).</p>
---	--

In his chapter OF THE DEGREES OF ASSENT (4.16), in which he tackles the tricky problem of the relation between faith and reason, Locke does not retract an inch from this epistemological position.

So that faith is a settled and sure principle of assent and assurance, and leaves no manner of room for doubt or hesitation. Only we must be sure *that* it be divine revelation and that we understand it right: else we shall expose ourselves to all the extravagancy of enthusiasm and the error of wrong principles, if we have faith and assurance in what is not divine revelation. And therefore in those cases, our assent can be rationally no higher than the evidence of its being a revelation (*Essay* 4.16.14).

But isn't divine revelation, correctly interpreted, in conflict with reason? Faith certainly does not reach the highest degree of probability, based on “the general consent of all men in all ages” and “the regular proceedings of causes and effects in the ordinary course of nature” (4.16.6). Religious faith is, accordingly, not comparable with the belief (yes!) that ‘fire warms man’ and ‘iron sinks in water’, things which are absolutely put ‘past doubt’ by ‘constant experience’.<sup>24</sup> Faith also seems to be weaker than our hypotheses based on experiments and reasoning by analogy, like e.g. the explanation of the inflammation of bodies rubbed one upon another by the violent agitation of their imperceptible minute parts (4.16.12).<sup>25</sup> Revelation contains ‘matters of fact’, which are, in spite of converging testimonies, not in accordance with the concepts of our reason nor with the ordinary course of nature. They are delivered to us by hearsay, by language, as integrated in an edifying and moralizing story of salvation. So is “the resurrection of the dead above reason” (4.17.23) and does it “exceed the limits of our natural knowledge” (TTP 1/5). Both philosophers make a distinction between two provinces of faith and reason and assert that they have nothing to do with each other. When confronted with each other in the consciousness of the same (intellectually emancipated) person faith does give way to reason.

<p>Who is able to adhere mentally to something against a protesting reason (<i>quis mente aliquid amplecti potest reclamante ratione</i>)? (TTP 15/10).</p>	<p>Nothing, I think, can ... shake or overrule plain knowledge ... <i>Faith can never convince us of anything that contradicts our knowledge</i> (<i>Essay</i> 4.18.5).</p>
---	---

Revelation, moreover, can never transmit new or otherwise unknown truths to humans, let alone supra-natural knowledge, because the *meaning of words* depends on what we have learned in our linguistic education. Orthodox Revelation is impossible.

<p><i>Words gain their meaning solely from their usage (ex solo usu)</i> (TTP 12/11) from the common way of speaking (TTP 7/15). One might rightly ask how God can make himself known to man, and whether this happens, or could happen, through words.... We answer: not in any case by words. For then man would have had to know already the meaning of those words before they were spoken to him. For</p>	<p>Words having naturally no signification [...] <i>Common use regulates the meaning of words</i> (<i>Essay</i> 3.9. 5 &amp; 8). I say, that no man inspired by God can by any revelation communicate to others any new simple ideas which they had not before from sensation or reflection [...] because words, by their immediate operation on us, cause no other ideas but of their natural sounds; and it is by the custom</p>
--	--

<sup>24</sup> Cf . Spinoza's examples of the first kind of knowledge, attested by random experience: ‘that oil is capable of feeding fire and that water is capable of putting it out’ (TIE § 20).

<sup>25</sup> This example was also given by Spinoza in his Letter 6.

<p>example, if God had said to the Israelites '<i>I am Jehova your God</i>' ... they knew that that voice, thunder and lightning were not god, though the voice said that it was God (KV 2/24/9-10).<sup>26</sup> It seems scarcely reasonable to affirm that a created thing, depending on God in the same manner as other created things, would be able to express or explain the nature of God either verbally or really by means of its individual organism, by declaring in the first person '<i>I am the Lord your God</i>' (TTP 1/15).</p>	<p>of using them for signs that they excite and revive in our minds latent ideas, but yet only such ideas as were there before (<i>Essay</i> 4.18.3). Nor is it to be wondered, that the will of God, when closed in words, should be liable to that doubt and uncertainty which unavoidably attends that sort of conveyance[...] revealed truths, which are conveyed to us by books and languages, are liable to the common and natural obscurities and difficulties incident to words (<i>Essay</i> 3.9.23).</p>
---	--

Above we signaled already, on occasion of their identical example (*apple*), that Locke shares Spinoza's theory of language. He mainly concentrates on this subject in *Essay* 3. We might add here their parallel statements on the always personally diversified meaning of words.

<p>As to what he [Tschirnhaus] goes on to say, 'if one of two men affirms something of a thing and the other denies it' etc., this is true if he means that the two men, while using the same words, nevertheless have different things in mind. I once sent some examples of this to our friend J. R. (Letter 58 to Schuller).</p>	<p>Men, though they propose to themselves the very same subject to consider, yet frame very different ideas about it, and so the name they use for it unavoidably comes to have, in several men, very different significations (<i>Essay</i> 3.9.13).</p>
---	---

After our discussion of the fascinating contents of *Essay* 4, the book that Locke was still writing on the 10<sup>th</sup> July 1688,<sup>27</sup> we have now to return to the main chapter of *Essay* 2, the (in later editions much extended and rewritten) chapter 21 OF POWER. One might consider this chapter as a commentary on *Ethica* 4: DE AFFECTUUM VIRIBUS (ON THE POWERS OF THE REACTIONS). The chapter is preceded by a minor one, called OF MODES OF PLEASURE AND PAIN, which has to be interpreted as a summary of *Ethica* 3: DE ORIGINE ET NATURA AFFECTUUM . This part is the unmistakable source.

<p>The human body can be affected in many ways whereby its power of acting (<i>agendi potentia</i>) is increased or diminished, and again in others, which neither increase nor diminish its power of action (<i>Ethica</i> 3, postulate 1) Whatever <i>increases or diminishes, helps or hinders the power of action of our body</i>, the idea thereof increases or diminishes, helps or hinders the power of thinking of our mind (3/11) These passions ... explain the reactions of <i>pleasure</i> (sensation of our transition to greater perfection) and <i>pain</i> (sensation of our transition to lesser perfection) (scholium).</p>	<p>Things are good or evil only in reference to <i>pleasure or pain</i>. That we call good which is apt to cause or <i>increase pleasure or diminish pain in us, or else to procure or preserve</i> us the possession of any other good or absence of any evil. And on the contrary, we name that evil which is apt to produce or increase any pain, or diminish any pleasure in us, or else to procure us any evil or deprive us of any good (<i>Essay</i> 2.20.2).</p>
---	--

Locke's terminology and distinctions are too close to Spinoza's to be possibly independent from them. Our acting power is enhanced or diminished (and consequently felt as pleasant or painful) by various immediate or mediate affections. This power is a kind of vectorial energy, which may become unsettled or brought to unbalance, a change that it tries to promote or to overcome. Its

<sup>26</sup> Translation by E. Curley, *Collected Works*, o.c.

<sup>27</sup> See *Essay* 4.11.11.

being affected is automatically transformed into an appetite or endeavor to either conserve the positive or remove the negative influences. Spinoza indicates this passive-active motion of our mind-body-complex with the technical term *affectus* and summarizes these variable states in his definition of concupiscence as “man’s essence in so far it is from its being produced by a certain affection conceived as determined to do something”.<sup>28</sup> Locke prefers a different terminology. He chooses the word *uneasiness* and this is certainly not a bad choice, because the effect of affections is always a desire to repair a kind of *disease* or to acquire something in order to feel good again. His introduction of this term in 2.20 preludes on the dominant role it will play in chapter 21. “The uneasiness a man finds in himself upon the absence of anything whose present enjoyment carries the idea of delight with it is that we call desire, which is greater or less, as that uneasiness is more or less vehement. Where, by the by, it may perhaps be of some use to remark that *the chief, if not only spur to human industry and action is uneasiness*” (2/20/6). Locke now proceeds to circumscribe ten passions in a narrow junction to Spinoza’s much more extended list. I give only two examples.

<p>Love is nothing else than pleasure accompanied by the idea of an external cause (<i>laetitia concomitante idea causae aeternae</i>). Hate is pain accompanied by the idea of an external cause (<i>tristitia concomitante idea causae aeternae</i>) (<i>Ethica</i> 2/13s).</p>	<p>Anyone reflection upon the thought he has of the delight which any present or absent thing is apt to produce in him has the idea we call <i>love</i>... The thought of the pain which anything present or absent is apt to produce in us is what we call <i>hatred</i> (<i>Essay</i> 2.20.4 &amp; 5).</p>
---	--

It requires some attention to discover the identity of the respective definitions. Spinoza is more compact than Locke, who on his turn includes objects of love and hate which are imagined to be in the future and constitute other “modifications or tempers of the mind” 2.20.3), namely *hope* and *fear*. Locke concludes his survey of single and mixed passions with the statements that “we *love, desire, rejoice, and hope* only in respect of pleasure; (and) we *hate, fear, and grieve* only in respect of pain ultimately (2.20.14) and that “they are *many more than those* I have here named”. Spinoza remarks at the end of part 3, that he has only treated the most important *affectus*, “not all that can exist” and in his list of 48 *affectus* he states that there are many more, “which have no name”.

The title OF POWER for a chapter on human liberty to act and to choose (2/21) may at first sight seem rather strange for the modern reader who is accustomed to a totally different terminology. But on further reflection he will be willing to confess that there is something in it, which yet could please him. He does imagine himself to be a substance, which has itself in its own hands, a person who is indeed a power of autonomous acting. And renouncing this idea is mostly no option for him.

One may guess that Locke came upon the idea of this title on reading the subject of *Ethica* 4 (*impotentia humana*; see first two words of the preface), the title of *Ethica* 5 (DE POTENTIA INTELLECTUS) and the key term in *Ethica* 3/11 & 12 (*agendi potentia*) that just now, perhaps the day before, had inspired him for the composition of chapter 2/20. And indeed, if the substantive nomen ‘will’ stays for anything at all, it is for a kind of power to do something or to change something in the environment. He borrows the term *power* from Spinoza but we must give him the great credit that he provides us with a fine and rather original analysis of the concept indicated by the term. (Between brackets: in this chapter 2/21 he generally shows an admirable analytical skill and a capacity for precise definitions of concepts). What is seldom, if ever, remarked concerning power, is that one must sharp distinguish between active power and passive power. Active power is power to cause a change; passive power is power to receive a change (2.21.1-2). God is, as the tradition says, *actus purus*, as Locke says: “above all passive power”. We seem to experience active powers in our environment. “Fire has a power to melt gold i.e. to destroy the consistency of its insensible

<sup>28</sup> See ‘first definition’ at the end of *Ethica* 3.

parts, and consequently its hardness, and make it fluid”(§ 1). But is this not a too ‘hasty thought’ about the power of fire? Is the burning and destroying power of fire truly active? “If we will consider it attentively, bodies, by our senses, do not afford us so clear and distinct an idea of active power, as we have from reflection on the operations of our minds” (2.21.4). Here I will certainly not pass without quoting again one of the many ravishing passages in this chapter:

A body at rest affords us no idea of any active power to move; and when it is set in motion itself, that motion is rather a passion than an action in it. For, when the ball obeys the stroke of a billiard-stick, it is not any action of the ball, but bare passion; also when by impulse it sets another ball in motion that lay in its way, it only communicates the motion it had received from another, and loses in itself so much as the other received; which gives us but a very obscure idea of an active power of moving in body, whilst we observe it only to transfer, but not produce, any motion. For it is but a very obscure idea of power which reaches not the production of the action but the continuation of the passion. For so is motion in a body impelled by another (2/21/4).

This is Locke’s ‘reproduction’ of Spinoza’s radically mechanistic denial of unconditioned inertia as defended by Galileo, Descartes and Newton, the rehearsal in his own words of the famous third lemma after *Ethica* 2/13: “A body in motion or at rest must have been determined (*determinari debuit*) to motion or rest by some other body, which, likewise, was determined for motion or rest by some other body, and this by a third, and so on to infinity”.<sup>29</sup> This is, according to Spinoza, not less true for the mind: “There is in no mind an absolute or free will, but the mind is determined for willing this or that by a cause which is determined in its turn by another cause, and this one again by another, and so on to infinity” (*Ethica* 2/48).

Normally we ascribe to ourselves a will, i.e. a faculty of choice, alongside other faculties. We presented and discussed earlier in this paper Locke’s critique on “this way of speaking of faculties”, as if there were ‘distinct agents’ in us, and flanked this fragment to Spinoza’s Letter 2. Locke goes at length in ridiculing this habit by deriding the possible consequences of accepting an autonomous elective faculty: a digestive faculty, an expulsive faculty, a motive faculty, an intellectual faculty (2.21.20). And where there is no will, Locke told us explicitly, there cannot be spoken of freedom of the will. The question whether the will is free, is an inappropriate question that cannot be answered positively. But there are, of course, acts of willing, we actually strive after things. Concerning these acts, however, Locke’s thought is as well deeply rooted in Spinoza’s physics. Those acts are ideas of the always conditioned motions of our body. This situation is comparable with the situation of the thrown stone, which, could he think, would think that he freely wanted to go and actually went to a certain point on the earth.<sup>30</sup> In spite of his critique of faculties, Locke, like Spinoza, does not forbid himself to use the word ‘will’ “a word proper enough, if it be used, as all words should be, so as not to breed any confusion in men’s thoughts, by being supposed (as I suspect it has been) to stand for some real beings in the soul, that performed those actions of understanding and volition” (2.21.6).

How, then, is it with the freedom of man’s actual behavior, a property which is commonly conceived of as a human privilege? As regards this question, which bothers philosophers of all ages, Locke operates very prudently in order not to deter nor affront his readership. He introduces his paradoxical position carefully in a couple of definition like sentences, which are packed in the form of conditionals and graduals. ‘*So far as man has power to think or not to think, to move or not to move ... so far a man is free. Wherever any performance or forbearance are not equally in a man’s*

<sup>29</sup> Behind the example of billiard balls one may imagine the demonstration which Christiaan Huygens gave for the Royal Society in London : DE MOTU CORPORUM EX PERCUSSIONE. Its first proposition sounds: “Si corpori quiescenti aliud aequale corpus occurrat, post contactum hoc quidem quiescet, quiescenti vero acquiratur eadem, quae fuit in impellente, celeritas”. See Christiani Hugenii, *Opera reliqua* (Amsterdam: Jansonius 1717) 75-81. Huygens’ experiment in London must have been performed in September or October 1665. See Wim Klever, “Spinoza en Huygens”, o.c. p. 20. We can hardly have doubts about the attendance there of Locke, who was so much interested in this kind of things.

<sup>30</sup> See the example in Spinoza’s Letter 58 to Tschirnhaus.

power ... *there he is not free*" (2.21.8). These are nothing but analytic sentences by means of which Locke does not reveal his soul. Further on, in 2.21.21, one finds more in the same style: "Whether a *man* be free', 'so far as', 'if I can', 'as far as this power reaches', 'so far is man free', 'so far as anyone can ... so far can he do what he will". Such language has no factual content and does not make us wiser concerning the question whether man *is* free. The comparison in 21.9 with the tennis ball, "which is not by any one taken to be a free agent (because) all its both motion and rest come under our idea of necessary" is provocative, because Locke seems to give it as an illustration of our own behavior: "So a man striking himself or his friend by a convulsive motion of his arm, which is not in his power by volition or the direction of his mind to stop or forbear, nobody thinks he has in this liberty". The innocuous conditionals immunize the writer; Spinoza uses the same method with his rather frequent couples *quatenus – eatenus* and *quo – eo*.<sup>31</sup>

But is convulsion or being forced to certain actions not exceptional in human behavior? Locke inclines to the proposition that man's freedom in choosing and acting is not only non-existent but also impossible. The unity of mind and body excludes their interdependence, let alone the divergence of their respective intention and direction. "The power of thinking operates not on the power of choosing, nor the power of choosing on the power of thinking" (2.21.18). 'Choosing' in this sentence must indicate the motion of the body as it becomes clear from the context in which, again, faculties like will and intelligence are rejected. That Locke turns out to be an out and out Spinozistic determinist appears above all in the paragraphs, in which he sees man's *uneasinesses* coerce his so-called freely chosen behavior, not electronically as the boy who steers with a joy stick his plaything, but by inciting through neurons his muscles.

[immediately after the general definition of *affectus* at the end of *Ethica* 3, *Ethica* 4 opens with] Human lack of power (*humanam impotentiam*) in moderating and checking the reactions (*affectus*) I call slavery For a man *submissive to his reactions (affectibus obnoxious)* does not have power over himself (*sui iuris non est*), but is in the hands of fortune to such an extent that he is often constrained (*coactus*), *although he may see what is better for him*, to follow what is worse (*preface*). It is apparent from these propositions that we are driven about by external causes in many manners, and that we, like waves of the sea driven by contrary winds, waver, unaware of the issue and our fate (359s). The force with which man persists in existing is limited and far surpassed by the power of external causes (4/3). Reactions (*affectus*) can neither be hindered nor removed save by a contrary reaction and one stronger than the reaction, which is to be checked (4/7). We demonstrated [in the *Ethica*] that men are necessarily obnoxious to passions (TP 1/5).

The motive for continuing in the same state or action is only the present satisfaction in it; *the motive to change is always some uneasiness*: nothing setting us upon the change of state, or upon any new action but some *uneasiness*. This is the great motive that works on the mind to put it upon action, which for shortness' sake we will call *determining of the will*, which I shall more at large explain (2.21.29). (*Uneasiness being*) the chief spur, if not only spur to human industry and action (2.20.6). All pain of the body, of what sort soever, and disquiet of the mind, is *uneasiness*, and *with this is always joined desire ... and is scarce distinguishable from it* (2.21.30). To return, then, to the inquiry, 'What is it that determines the will in regard to our actions?' And that, upon second thoughts, I am apt to imagine is *not*, as is generally supposed *the greater good in view*, but some (and for the most part the *most pressing*) *uneasiness* a man is at present under. This is which successively *determines* the will, and *sets us upon those actions we perform* (2.21.31).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *Ethica* 4/20, 4/23, 4/30, 4/31, 4/32, 4/33, 4/35, 4/35d, 4/62, 5/6, 5/7, 5/11, 5/13, 5/20, 5/24, 5/26 etc. The convulsion passage reminds us, moreover, of 4/20s: « No one, therefore, unless he is overcome by external causes and those contrary to his nature ... commits suicide... Someone may kill himself by compulsion of some other who twists back his right hand, in which he holds by chance his sword, and forces him to direct the sword against his own heart; or like Seneca ...»

The *affectus / uneasinesses* (passions, reactions, desires) determine man's actions. This is common theory of Spinoza and Locke. One of the consequences is that we do not actually follow the principles and precepts of our reason and that the influence of ideals, norms and values on our behavior is close to zero. Both thinkers refer in this connection to Ovid's verse: *video meliora proboque deteriora sequor*.

Experience more than sufficiently teaches that there is nothing less under man's control than their tongues, or less in their power than the control of their appetites... We are by no means free. But in truth, if they did not experience that we do many things for which we are sorry afterwards, and that very often when we are harassed by contrary emotions we 'wee the better, yet follow the worse', there would be nothing to prevent them from believing that we do all things freely (*Ethica* 3/2s). A true knowledge of good and bad cannot restrain a reaction (4/14). Thus I think I have shown the reason why men are guided rather by opinion than by true reason, and why a true knowledge of good and bad often excites disturbances of the mind, and often yields to all manner of lusts. Whence is arisen the saying of the poet: 'the better course I see and approve, the worse I follow' (4/17s).

A little burning felt pushes us more powerfully than greater pleasure in prospect draw or allure. It seems so established and settled a maxim, by the general consent of all mankind, that good, the greater good determines the will, that I do not at all wonder that when I first published my thoughts on this subject I took it for granted ... But yet, upon a stricter inquiry, I am forced to conclude that good, *the greater good*, though apprehended and acknowledged to be so, *does not determine the will, until* our desire, raised proportionably to it, makes us uneasy in the want of it (*Essay* 2.21.35). And thus (man) is from time to time, in the state of that unhappy complainer, *video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*; which sentence allowed for true and made good by constant experience may this, and possibly no other way be easily made intelligible (2.21.36).<sup>32</sup>

The 'topping' or 'most pressing' uneasiness (2.21.40) in the field of counterbalancing forces supersedes the others and determines, as the winner, our behavior, but this needs not *per se* to be an uneasiness or desire for lust, honor, riches etc. In the last quote from § 35 Locke opens a perspective on the situation that another good makes us so 'uneasy in the want of it' that its force is proportionally stronger than the down-to-earth uneasinesses and as a kind of superpower, then, takes over their determining our 'will'. In a chapter, which bears the same title as Spinoza's earliest work *De Intellectus Emendatione*, namely *On the Improvement of our Knowledge* (4.12) Locke showed clearly its influence, especially of the introduction. Spinoza relates therein his search after the *summum bonum*, which he finds in the knowledge of his naturalness, in "loving the eternal and infinite thing, which feeds the soul alone with joy and is exempt from sadness" (TIE § 10). More than an echo from this is to find in Locke's text.

Whatever can be a means to his attaining it is called a true good; but the *highest good (summum bonum)* is to arrive – together with other individuals if possible – at the enjoyment of such a nature ... the enjoyment of the union that the mind has with the whole of nature. This, then, is the end I aim at: to acquire such a nature, and to strive that many acquire it with me.... To do this it is necessary, first, to understand as much of nature as suffices for acquiring such a nature; next, to form a society of the kind that is desirable, so that as many as possible may attain it as easily and surely

Our faculties are not fitted to penetrate into the internal fabric and real essences of bodies, but yet plainly discover to us the being of a God and the knowledge of ourselves ... our duty and great concernment ... For it is rational to conclude that our proper employment lies in those inquiries, and in that sort of knowledge which is most suited to our natural capacities and carries in it our greatest interest, i.e. the condition of our *eternal* state. Hence I think I may conclude that *morality* is the proper science and business of mankind in general (who are

<sup>32</sup> 'Upon second thoughts', 'upon a stricter inquiry'. These confessions seem to indicate a kind of conversion of Locke to another view, deviating from the customary interpretation of man's behavior. His conversion was towards Spinoza's physics of man.

<p>as possible. Third, attention must be paid to <i>Moral Philosophy</i> and to Instruction concerning the education of children... fourthly, the whole <i>Medicine</i> must be worked out... Fifthly, <i>Mechanics</i> is in no way to be despised (TIE § 13).</p>	<p>both concerned and fitted to search out their <i>summum bonum</i>) as <i>several arts</i>, conversant about several parts of nature, are the lot and private talent of particular men for the common use of human life and their own particular subsistence in the world (<i>Essay</i> 4.12.11)</p>
---	--

Knowing ‘the condition of our eternal state’ might also be Locke’s reflection on *Ethica* 5, the part culminating in Spinoza’s statement that “we feel and experience that we are eternal” (5/23s), which gives us the greatest possible joy and happiness. Spinoza’s description of the mind’s turning from perishable goods to the highest and really compelling good and of his rising, ‘by assiduous meditation’ (*assidua meditatione*), towards a higher level of consciousness, is magisterially and very impressively reformulated in the following fragment.

The ordinary necessities of our lives fill a great part of them with the uneasiness of hunger, thirst, heat, cold, weariness, with labour, and sleepiness in their constant returns, etc. To which, if, besides accidental harms, we add the fantastical uneasiness (as itch after honour, power, or riches, etc) which acquired habits, by fashion, example, and education, have settled in us, and a thousand other irregular desires which custom has made natural to us, we shall find that a very little part of our life is so vacant from these uneasinesses as to leave us free to the attraction of remoter absent good. We are seldom at ease and free enough from the solicitation of our natural or adopted desires, but a constant succession of uneasinesses, out of that stock which natural wants or acquired habits have heaped up, *take the will in their turns*; and no sooner is one action dispatched, which by such a determination of the will we are set upon, but another uneasiness is ready to set us on work [...] till *due and repeated contemplation* has brought it nearer to our mind, given some *relish* of it, and raised in us some desire: which then, beginning to make a part of our present uneasiness, stands upon fair terms with the rest to be satisfied, and so, according to its greatness and pressure, *comes in its turn to determine the will*. And thus, by a due consideration, and examining any good proposed, *it is in our power*, to raise our desires in a due proportion to the value of that good, whereby in its turn and place it may come to work upon the will and be pursued (*Essay* 2.21.45-46).<sup>33</sup>

Spinoza was looking for and finally found a solid good (*fixum bonum*) that gave him greatest happiness (*summa felicitas*). Locke writes that “the highest perfection of intellectual nature lies in a careful and constant pursuit of true and *solid* happiness” (2.21.51). Both came to realize and relish the power of the intellect. There is *genealogical* affinity between the title of *Essay* 2.21 ‘OF POWER’ and the title of *Ethica* 5 ‘DE POTENTIA INTELLECTUS’.

As promised above we shall now discuss the relation of *filiation between the political theories of our philosophers*. But is such a claim not an impious assault on the holy statue of glorious originality that tradition has erected as a symbol of its respect for the magisterial second *Treatise of Government*? The author of this piece has no choice. The evidence of borrowed material forces him.

*Consensus* is the key term in Spinoza’s theory about origin and developments of any body politic. His consent theory was elaborated in three political treatises, the *Ethica*, the TTP and the TP. Here is the source of Locke’s explosive political insight, just as *Ethica* 2 was the spring from which he drank the clear water of his dazzling ‘way of ideas’. Apart from Spinoza’s master Van den Enden there was no philosophical forerunner of any importance, who had given the consent of the people such a formative and decisive role.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Just before this unsurpassable paraphrase of Spinoza’s naturalistic passage TIE 1-13 Locke seems to have consideration with his eventually still dogmatic readers and, therefore, speaks in double language once about “our state of eternal durable joys *after this life*”, but refers on the other hand without giving a time index to “that eternal state” that people ‘neglect’ in behalf “of that pittance of honour, riches, or pleasure which they pursue” (2.21.44).

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Franciscus van den Enden, *Free Political Propositions and Considerations of State* (1665) o.c. I annotated in this work the places, which lie behind Spinoza’s identical statements.

As obedience consists in acting at the bidding of external authority, it has no place in a state where the government is vested in the whole people (*penes omnes*) and where laws are made by common consent (*ex communi consensu*) (TTP 5/25). Men must necessarily (have) come to an agreement (*conspirare debuisse*) to live together as securely and well as possible, if they are to enjoy *as one body (collective)* the rights which naturally belong to them as individuals and their life should be no more conditioned by the force and desire of individuals but by the power and the will of the whole body (*ex omnium potentia et voluntate determinaretur*) (TTP 16/13). [...] when men either *tacitly* or expressly (*tacite vel expresse*) handed over to the sovereign power all their power of self-defense (TTP 16/26) But only in a civil state, where it is decreed by *common consent (communi consensu)* what is good or bad and each one is bound to obey the state... In a natural state no one is master of anything by *common consent* nor can there be anything in nature which can be said to belong to this man and not to that, but all things belong to all men ... but only in a civil state where it is decided by *common consent what belongs to this man or that (Ethica 4/37s2)*. Speaking generally, he holds dominion, to whom are entrusted by *common consent (ex communi consensu)* the affairs of state, such as the laying down, interpretation, and abrogation of laws, the fortification of cities, deciding on war and peace, etc. (TP2/17).

[Twice the expression:] '*common consent*' TTG 1/ § 88)The liberty of man in society is to be under no other legislative power but that established by *consent* (TTG 2/§22).For, when any number of men have, *by the consent of every individual* made a community, they have thereby made that community one body, *with power to act as one body*, which is only by the will and determination of the majority (§ 96)The great and chief end, therefore, of men uniting into commonwealths, and putting themselves under government, is the preservation of their property; to which in the state of nature there are many things wanting. Firstly, there wants an established, settled, known law, received and allowed *by common consent to be the standard of right and wrong*, and the common measure to decide all controversies between them (§ 124). For in government the laws regulate it; they having, by consent, found out and agreed in a way how a man may, rightfully and without injury, *possess ...*(§50).[...] by *tacit consent* [...] (§94).For in government the laws regulate it; they having, by *consent*, found out and agreed in a way *how man may*, rightfully and without injury *possess ...*" (§50).

It is perhaps the typically Spinozistic enforcing of *consent* by the adjective *common* that is most revealing for Locke's narrow association to the TTP and the *Opera Posthuma*, which latter work he only possessed for a year or two when he started work on the TTG in 1679.<sup>35</sup>

The decisive role of *consent* for constituting political power and authority means that the multitude is prevalent in everything. The majority rule is its logical consequence like also the right of the strongest.

As the right of the commonwealth is determined by the common power of the *multitude (ius civitatis communi multitudinis potentia definitur)*, it is certain that the power and right of the commonwealth are so far diminished, as it gives occasion for many to conspire together (TP 3/9). A king may indeed abdicate, but cannot hand the dominion over to another, unless with the permission of the multitude (*nisi connivente multitudine*) or its stronger part ...The king's sword or right is in reality the will of *the multitude itself, or its stronger part (validioris partis)* (TP 7/25). Right is defined by power (Ethica 4/37s1) This

Political power, then, I take to be the right ... of employing the *force of the community* (TTG §3). The ruling power ... *the joint power of the multitude* (§137) [...] with his own *consent*, which is the consent of the *majority*" (2.§140). The legislative power ... being but a delegated power from the people, they who have it cannot pass it over to others. The *people alone can appoint* the form of the commonwealth (2.§141). [...] *whither the greater force carries it*, which is the consent of the *majority* (§96). And, by this reason, he that is strongest will have a right to whatever he pleases to seize on (§184). For there are no examples so frequent in history both sacred and profane, as those of men

<sup>35</sup> Cf. P. Laslett, *Two Treatises of Government*, o.c. p. 35.



<p>right, which is defined as the power of the multitude (<i>ius quod potentia multitudinis definitur</i>) is generally called dominion (TP 2/17). For instance, fishes are naturally conditioned for swimming, and the greater to swallow the less (TTP 16/2).</p>	<p>withdrawing themselves and their obedience from the jurisdiction they were born under ... and setting up new governments in other places ... till the <i>stronger and more fortunate</i> swallowed the weaker (§115).</p>
---	--

This brings us to the subversive, because anti-moralistic, position the two unique philosophers shared, namely the theory that the state of nature does not really cease as soon as states are founded. Both thinkers explicitly assert the *not ending of natural right in civil society*, which implies an always-threatening conflict between the participants (government and citizens) of a political community and in the relation between states.

<p>If we weigh the matter aright, the <i>natural right of every man does not cease in the civil state</i>. For man, alike in the natural and in the civil state, acts according to the laws of his own nature, and consults his own interest (TP 3/3). With regard to political theory, the difference between Hobbes and myself, which is the subject of your inquiry, consists in this, that I always preserve the natural right in its entirety, and I hold that the <i>sovereign power in a State has right over a subject only in proportion to the excess of its power over that of a subject</i>. This is always the case in a state of nature (<i>Letter 50</i>). It comes to be considered, that things belong less to the commonwealth's right in the degree they cause more indignation among the people (TP 3/9). If the fear of the <i>majority of citizens</i> changes in indignation, the state is ipso facto dissolved (TP 4/6). Two commonwealths are naturally enemies (TP 3/13). An enemy is one who lives apart from the state, and does not recognize its sovereignty (<i>imperium</i>) either as a subject or as an ally (TTP 16/47).<sup>36</sup></p>	<p>The obligations of the <i>law of Nature cease not in society</i> (TTG §135). The people generally ill-treated and contrary to [positive, wk] right will be ready upon any occasion to ease themselves of a burden that sits heavy upon them (§224). [Given a miserable situation, rebellion will follow:] for the society can never ... lose the native and original right it has to preserve itself (§220). There remains still <i>in the people a supreme power to remove or alter the legislative</i>, when they find the legislative act contrary to the trust reposed in them. For all power given with trust for the attaining an end being limited by that end, whenever that end is manifestly neglected or opposed, <i>the trust</i> must necessarily be <i>forfeited</i>, and the power devolve into the hands of those that gave it (TTG §149). [The people will] <i>resume</i> [its power] (§152). They make one body, which is, as every member of it before was, still in the state of Nature with the rest of mankind ... The whole community is one body <i>in the state of nature in respect of all other states or persons out of its community</i> (§145).</p>
--	--

*Rebellion* is the quite normal resumption of political power and authority by the people in the cases where it is enslaved or put to death by the acting governor. This is a state of war in the civil state, i.e. civil war. Whether rebellion is righteous, depends on whether it succeeds, but the method is violence against violence.

<p>The state, then, to maintain its independence (<i>ut sui iuris sit</i>), is bound to preserve the causes of <i>fear and reverence</i>, otherwise it ceases to be a state. For the person or persons that hold dominion, can no more combine with the keeping up of majesty the running with harlots drunk or naked about the streets, or the performances of a stage-player, or the open violation or contempt of laws passed by themselves, than they can combine existence with</p>	<p>The true remedy of force without authority is to oppose force to it (§155). But if either these illegal acts have extended to the majority of the people, or if the mischief and oppression has light only on some few, but in such cases as the precedent and consequences seem to threaten all, and they are persuaded in their consciences that their laws, and with them, their estates, liberties, and lives are in danger, and perhaps their religion too, <i>how will they</i></p>
--	--

<sup>36</sup> For shortness sake I abstain from a discussion about the relation between Spinoza and Hobbes, which, of course, is also relevant for the relation between Locke and Hobbes. See for this: *Hobbes e Spinoza, scienza e politica. Atti del Convegno Internazionale Urbino, 14-17 ottobre 1988, a cura di D. Bostrenghi, introduzione di Emilia Giancotti* (Napels 1992) and Alexandre Matheron, *Anthropologie et politique au XVIIe siècle. Etudes sur Spinoza* (Paris 1986).

non-existence. But to proceed to slay and rob subjects, ravish maidens, and the like, turns *fear into indignation and the civil state into a state of enmity* (TP 4/4). For as we have shown (4/5-6) a king can be deprived of the power of ruling, ... by the law of war, in other words the *subjects may resist his violence only with violence (ipsius vim visolummodo repellere subditis licet)* (TP 7/30). Things belong in so far less to the right of the state as more people are undignified by it. For it is certain, that by the guidance of nature men conspire together, either through common fear, or with the desire to avenge some common hurt (TP 3/9). If the fear of the majority changes in indignation, the state is eo ipso dissolve (TP 4/6).

*be hindered from resisting illegal force used against them I cannot tell* (§209). (They will) *resist to force with force* (and cancel) all former relation of *reverence, respect and superiority* (§235). For *when the people are made miserable and find themselves exposed to the ill usage of arbitrary power ...; the people generally ill treated, and contrary to right, will be ready upon any occasion to ease themselves of a burden* that sits heavy upon them. They will wish and seek for the opportunity, which in the change, weakness and accidents of human affairs, seldom delays long to offer itself. He must have lived but a little while in the world, who has not seen examples of this in his time. [...] Such revolutions happen not upon every little mismanagement in public affairs (§224-225).

Spinoza's historic example was the peaceful and corrective revolution in the kingdom of Aragon against Don Pedro (1384); Locke, of course, when writing this in 1679-1680, hopes that a similar revolution will take place in his home country and subvert the oppressive regime of Charles II, for whom he and his master Shaftesbury were so afraid. His regime was in their view arbitrary and not aimed at the interest of the people.

The well being of the people is the highest law (Master Van den Enden, on title page of *Free Political Propositions*, 1665). But in a republic or empire, in which *salus totius populi*, not of the emperor, *summa lex est...* (in which the well being of the people ... is the highest law) (TTP 16/33) It is a stupidity to entrust ones own welfare to another party, that is independent and has for its highest law the welfare of its own state (TP 3/14). 'for no one of his own will yields up dominion to another', as Sallust has it in his first speech to Caesar (TP 5/5). [Promises to one's disadvantage need not to be kept:] Suppose that a *robber* forces me to promise that I will give him my goods at his will and pleasure. It is plain ... that if I can free myself from this robber by stratagem ...I have the natural right to do so (TTP 16/17).

*Salus populi suprema lex* is certainly so just and fundamental a rule that he who sincerely follows it cannot dangerously err (TTG §158). For since a rational creature cannot be supposed, when free, to put himself into subjection to another for his own harm ... *prerogative can be nothing but the people's permitting their rulers to do several things ... for the public good ...* (§164). The aggressor, who puts himself into the state of war with another, and unjustly invades another man's right, can ... never come to have a right over the conquered... Men are not bound by promises which unlawful force extorts from them. Should a *robber* break into my house, and with a dagger at my throat, make me seal deeds to convey my estate to him, would this give him any title? (§176).<sup>37</sup>

In all variants of political organization (parliament in a monarchy, council in an aristocracy, assemblies in a democracy) a *proportional* presence or representation of the subjects c.q. citizens is a thing of highest importance in order not to forfeit their common well-being, their reverence for the authority, their consent. In his political architecture Spinoza, therefore, does his utmost to conceive and institutionally guarantee the right proportion, which must satisfy everybody. One place is especially relevant, because Locke used its argument as a principle for the proportional representation of the cities in the provincial or national council. A 'true proportion' and 'a fair and equal representation' (§158 and TP 7/4) are essential for the coherence of the political society and

<sup>37</sup> The classical proverb '*Salus populi suprema lex*' is also quoted by Hobbes, but he applies it in a totally different sense and context. See *De Cive* 13/2. The subjects have to trust that the monarch will care for them and keeps to his promise to do so.

its becoming “united into one body” (§87), which has one mind (*una veluti mente ducitur*, TP 2/21), “for the essence and union of the society (consists) in having one will” (§212).

[Things have to be organized in an empire in this way:] that every city has so much more right as against the dominion than the others as it exceeds others in power. <i>For he who seeks equality between unequals, seeks an absurdity</i> (TP 9/4).	It often comes to pass that in governments where part of the legislative consists of representatives chosen by the people, that in tract of time this representation becomes very <i>unequal</i> and disproportionate to the reasons it was at first established upon. To what great <i>absurdities ...</i> ” (TTG §157).
---	---

In the introduction to his well known critical edition of the TTG (Cambridge 1960, reprint 1999) Peter Laslett writes to have no idea where the conspicuous novelty of this work comes from. “The book itself comes as a *revelation*” (34). “The book took shape *suddenly* for an author with such slow habits” (35).<sup>38</sup> Nothing in Locke’s earlier activities with and in behalf of Shaftesbury indicates a preparation to this explosion of radical political thought. In the past half century the literature did not set one step further. Nobody surmised that Spinoza was the catalyst. The only possible explanation is that the Locke scholars did not know Spinoza’s political works.

Finally there remains one work left to discuss, Locke’s *Epistola de Tolerantia*, anonymously published in 1689 at Gouda. On account of the many theological and political passages of the TTP that evidently inspired Locke, we may safely conclude that this treatise was more than enthusiastically savored by him and that it functioned, as it were, as a conceptual frame that conditioned his thinking about religious matters. It is perhaps not superfluous to emphasize here that the TTP was not primarily intended to defend the *libertas philosophandi*. Spinoza’s main objectives were, as he told us in Letter 30, to denounce and refute the prejudices of theologians, i.e. to develop a true and scientific theology about the meaning of Scripture, and, secondly, to apologize himself that he was not an atheist, proclaiming that he piously served his fatherland according to the moral lesson of Scripture, namely practicing justice and charity together with other citizens.<sup>39</sup> But this exercise was, of course, at once an excellent demonstration of the harmlessness of philosophy, which theme was, then, separately treated in chapter 20. But we need not forget that this item was only the *third* objective.

The occasion, which prompted Locke to write the letter, was probably the cruel and barbarous repression of the Huguenots in France in 1685, who, thereupon, took in great numbers refuge in Holland.<sup>40</sup> The letter is a masterpiece of composition and clarity, this in sharp contrast to the *Essay*, which conveys many ‘hasty and undigested thoughts’ and is written ‘in a discontinued way’, often resumed ‘after long intervals of neglect’.<sup>41</sup> No wonder that it showed many inconsistencies between the ‘scattered thoughts’, as is remarked by nearly all scholars.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Also Richard Ashcraft, who wrote a classical and very erudite study on *Revolutionary Politics & Locke’s Two Treatises of Government* (Princeton UP 1986), sees the novelty of Locke’s ‘radical manifesto’. He explains its origin in the context of a radical political movement, but does *not even once* mention the real philosophical predecessor: Spinoza.

<sup>39</sup> In this respect the title of the first Dutch translation of the TTP (1693) was very significant: ‘*De rechtsinnige theologant of godgeleerde staatkunde*’ (the orthodox theologian or divine politics). And according to Willem van Blyenbergh, who had an interview with Spinoza, he would have confessed that he developed ‘a political theology’. See Wim Klever, “Spinoza interviewed by Willem van Blyenbergh”, in *Studia Spinozana* 4 (1988) 317-321.

<sup>40</sup> See Maurice Cranston, “John Locke and the case for toleration” in John Locke, *A letter concerning toleration in focus*. Ed. by John Horton and Susan Mendus (London 1991) 78-98. The letter is according to Cranston written in 1685. “Locke wrote his *Epistola de Tolerantia* immediately after the *revocation* [of the Edict de Nantes, wk] and clearly has these events in mind” (p. 82). The letter was written in Latin. I quote from this translation, indicating between brackets the page numbers. And this time the source fragments of Spinoza’s text are mentioned in footnotes.

<sup>41</sup> See *Essay. Epistle to the Reader*. The passage may also be read as an indication of Locke’s feeling that he has not updated and correctly integrated all the old and superseded papers or drafts he had incorporated in the final *Essay*. See R. A. Aaron, *John Locke*, o.c., note 1 “How the *Essay* was written” (50-55).

<sup>42</sup> Like John Yolton in his introduction to the Everyman edition of the *Essay*, p. XV-XVII and Richard I. Aaron, *John Locke* o.c. passim. See also Rosalie Colie, “The social language of John Locke”, *Journal of British Studies* 3 (1965) p. 29: “For the lack of consistency Locke has always had his critics”.

I shall not summarize here the whole letter, but restrain myself to the foundation of its discourse, which is the same as in Spinoza's chapter TTP 18. Questions of faith fall not under the jurisdiction of the state. "For no man can, if he would, conform his faith to the dictate of another" (18). In behalf of the care of their soul people often organize themselves into a church. Locke gives a fine definition of a church: "A church then I take to be a voluntary society of men, joining themselves together of their own accord, in order to the public worshipping of God, in such a manner as they judge acceptable to him, and effectual to the salvation of their souls" (20). This is their free choice to which a state normally does not object in so far as such an institutional subset of the population does not call up its members to rebellion and not tries to enforce other people against their will and against the laws to join them because their religion would be the right one. "No private person has any right in any manner to prejudice another person in his civil enjoyments, because he is of another church or religion". Such a person or group of persons acts not only uncharitable, but steps across the border between private and public by arrogantly appropriating a right, which only belongs to the public realm.<sup>43</sup> Only the magistrate is "armed with the force and strength of all his subjects, in order to the punishment of those that violate any other man's rights" (17).

The government operates 'by the consent of the people'. People have never been so blind as to abandon the care of their mental peace and salvation to a magistrate. That is why the magistrate has no right, given it could so effectively, to intervene in doctrinal questions of faith and private practices.<sup>44</sup> Only "the public good is the role and measure of all law-making" (23). For the rest is the magistrate's duty nothing but 'the business of toleration' (28) "leaving in the meanwhile to every man the care of his own eternal happiness". The limit of the government's toleration in religious matters is there where sedition is preached. "No opinions contrary to human society, or to those moral rules which are necessary to the preservation of civil society, are to be tolerated by the magistrate" (45). Locke cannot mean here opinions, which remain in one's breast, but only those, which are uttered in inflammatory and rebellious words. Nor does he intend moral rules, which have only validity in churches, but, indeed, those moral rules, which are prescribed by the law.<sup>45</sup> Locke puts a second limit to toleration: "Those are not at all to be tolerated who deny the being of God. Promises, covenants, and oaths, which are the bonds of human society, can have no hold upon an atheist. The taking away of God, though but even in thought, dissolves all" (47). Many enlightened philosophers judge this to be unacceptable in a modern society. Is the denial of God's existence not a question of one's interior life, one's soul? Is Locke not inconsistent with this second condition for having a right on tolerance? I think that the second phrase of the quote gives the solution of the problem. In Locke's view atheism is equivalent with anarchism, with rejection of all political authority, and of all social conventions.<sup>46</sup> Locke finally excludes Roman Catholics from the

<sup>43</sup> Cf. TTP 18/22: "We may now clearly see from what I have said: I. How hurtful to religion and the state is the concession to ministers of religion of any power of issuing decrees or transacting the business of government".

<sup>44</sup> Cf. TTP 18/23: "II. How dangerous it is to refer to divine right matters merely speculative and subject or liable to dispute. The most tyrannical governments are those which make crimes of opinions, for everyone has an inalienable right over his thoughts, nay, such a state of things leads to the rule of popular passion".

<sup>45</sup> The laws in vigor are moral rules. Cf. TTP 18/27: "III. We see how necessary it is, both in the interests of the state and in the interests of religion, to confer on the sovereign power the right of deciding what is good or bad (*quod fas nefasque sit*)". The Roman figures (I – II – III) indicate that these were Spinoza's conclusions of the whole 'theological-political treatise', drawn in chapter 18: "From the republic of the Hebrews and their history certain political doctrines are deduced". All these 'political doctrines' were incorporated in Locke's discourse.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Locke's concept of practical or moral atheism with what is implied in Spinoza's indignation on the accusation by Lambert van Velthuysen of his being an atheist. "If he had known what manner of life I pursue, he would not have been so readily convinced that I teach atheism. For atheists are usually inordinately fond of honours and riches, which I have always despised, as is known to all who are acquainted with me" (Letter 43). Illuminating (in the sense of justifying Locke's argument) is also the comparison of the passage in question with Spinoza's sharp reprove of the author of the pamphlet *Homo politicus*: "The highest good of the man who wrote it is wealth and honours. To this he shapes his doctrine, and shows the way to attain them, and that is, by inwardly rejecting all religion and outwardly assuming such as will best serve his advancement, and furthermore by keeping [**TO BE CONTINUED**]"

sphere of tolerance, because they pretend to be loyal to a foreign authority. And this is – Locke is right – incompatible with national loyalty.

In his *Letter Concerning Tolerance* Locke keeps unconditionally to the absolute authority and competence of government in questions of external or public worship: to control whether it remains inside the borders of the law and to punish or repress in case of transgression. For the rest tolerance is recommended to its utmost limits. The author of this article does not succeed in discovering even a minimal difference between Locke's and Spinoza's ideas about toleration by the state.<sup>47</sup>

Enough evidence is now presented in behalf of the thesis of Locke's thorough Spinozism in the fields of theology, physics, epistemology, ethics and politics. But why did Locke disguise and eventually deny his roots? There were good reasons for this attitude of secrecy and anxiousness.<sup>48</sup> Spinoza's works were forbidden by the Provincial States of Holland and the synods of the Reformed Church. Spinozism was considered to be a great danger for society, in Holland as well as in England and other European countries.<sup>49</sup> The heavy turmoil around this works and the many hot and violent disputes about it (the Bredenburg disputes, the Koerbagh trial, the Meyer polemics, the persecution of Duijkerius and Van Leenhof and the denouncement of many other sympathizers) are extensively described by Jonathan Israel in his *Radical Enlightenment* and need not to be retold here. Locke knew about all that. He had very frequent personal and theological contacts with the remonstrant professor in Amsterdam, Philippus van Limborch, who was no Spinozist but could not refrain his mind from permanently worrying about his theories. His correspondence with Dr. Lambertus van Velthuysen at Utrecht (1671), Dr. Christian Hartsoeker at Rotterdam (1678) and Jean Leclerc at Geneva (1682) show that he was, as an effect of the impact of Spinoza's doctrine on his mind, in a kind of theological crisis or schizophrenia.<sup>50</sup> Spinoza's work caused an enormous unrest, not to say horror, in public opinion as well as in the republic of letters. Is it a wonder that Locke hid his political manuscripts under a false name (***De morbo Gallico***) in 1682 and published his works anonymously in 1690?<sup>51</sup> After all, Spinoza's posthumous works were also spread surreptitiously under fake *impressa* and false titles of pseudo authors, among which also various *medically* sounding titles like *Operaa Chirurgica omnia, Totius Medicinae idea nova* and *Opera Omnia, novas potissimum super morborum causis, symptomatic & curandi rationes meditations & disputationes continentia*.<sup>52</sup>

---

**[CONTINUATION OF NOTE 46]** faith with no one except in so far as it conduces to his advantage. For the rest, his highest praise is reserved for dissembling, breaking promises he has made, lying, perjuring, and many other such things. People, who proclaim this, are dangerous for the state. Through them "commonwealths must necessarily perish, and have perished" (*Letter 44*. Translation Shirley, *Spinoza's Letters*, o.c. p. 244). Also in a writing of Locke's Spinozistic contemporary Frederik van Leenhof (*De prediker*, 1700) 'atheism' has evidently a political connotation, meaning defiance of society's laws and well-being. Nothing could be more atheistic, he contends, than that 'men koningen boven de wetten stelt' (one places kings above the law). See J. Israel, *Enlightenment contested* (Oxford 2006) p. 237. Cf., finally, my statement (above in the text) about the second objective of the TTP.

<sup>47</sup> This in contrast to Jonathan Israel in *Radical Enlightenment* o.c. p. 265-270. The subject is so important, especially also in view of our contemporary situation where many of our compatriots are Moslems, which prefer obedience to the 'sharia' above following the national law, that a special project of research, consisting in a detailed comparison of Locke's and Spinoza's thesis, would not be superfluous. Spinoza's and Locke's publications about the subject are, after all, exceptional in the history of mankind and have a broad foundation in sound reasoning.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Cranston, "John Locke and the case for toleration", o.c. p. 85: Locke was "an unusually secretive man".

<sup>49</sup> In England the famous and influential Henricus More, professor in Cambridge, had published in 1677 his *Confutatio Spinozae*, which was intentionally more a physical attack than an intellectual refutation. In fact he asked for purifying the Augiasstable of the infected public space by another Hercules, i.e. a political elimination. Locke had processed the Spinozistic political theory in his manuscripts on government, which explains his 'extraordinary furtiveness' (Laslett, p. 66) when the Rye House Plot, the trial of Sidney and the burning of forbidden books in Oxford made him realize in 1683, that his life was in danger.

<sup>50</sup> The correspondence is published by K. O. Meeinsma, *Spinoza en zijn kring. Over Hollandse Vrijgeesten* (Utrecht, reprint 1980).

<sup>51</sup> Laslett's plea (see the introduction to his edition of TTG pp 62-66) for the identification of the 'volume' *De Morbo Gallico* as the TTG-ms is, in my view, incorrigible and absolutely convincing.

<sup>52</sup> See the complete bibliographical survey in J. Kingma & A. K. Offenbergh, *Bibliography of Spinoza's Works yup to 1800* (Amsterdam University Library 1977).

The medical title was a logical choice for people who were infected by the Spinoza virus without wanting to be cured. In his protracted discussion with Leibniz (1698-1706) the Leiden professor in mathematical physics, Burchard De Volder, with whom Locke had been in contact, called his Spinozistic disease '*morbus meus*'!<sup>53</sup> It is not impossible that he used this qualification also in his conversation with Locke a decade earlier.

A conclusion needs not to be drawn to this already much to long discourse about the relation between Spinoza and Locke. The textual evidence speaks for itself. In his review of Peter Anstey (ed.), *The Philosophy of John Locke. New Perspectives* (London 2003)<sup>54</sup> a disappointed Michael Ayers remarks: "Rhetoric apart, the overall impression is that the contributors are assiduously and informatively *filling out a picture drawn*, and pursuing issues raised, during several decades before the one that immediately preceded publication. Much evidence, some familiar, some new or previously unexplored is sorted, explained and weighed, but the outcome consists for the most part in minor corrections and changes of emphasis rather than any *seismic shift in the interpretation of Locke's philosophy*". Whether my contribution to the Locke scholarship is perhaps such a 'seismic shift' has to be judged by the unprejudiced student. Prejudices have played a too great role in the past centuries.




---

<sup>53</sup> See Wim Klever, *Mannen rond Spinoza* o.c. p. 205-229.

<sup>54</sup> *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 14 (2006) 173-176.