

A Culture of Habit: Habitual Dispositions in Late Early Modern English Intellectual Thought

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PhD in History, by:

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*To my Mother,
For teaching me how to be a decent human being.*

&

*To Joe,
A best friend who always gave me the best advice:
“You’re not good enough for a PhD, Martin.”*

You are both never far from my mind. This is for you.

Abstract

This thesis examines the concept of ‘habit’ and notions of ‘habitual dispositions’ in late early modern English thought. It’s primary aim is to highlight the ways in which the process of acquiring habitual dispositions was an integral part of late Early Modern English intellectual life, which was founded upon the need to habituate the individual to internalise moral virtues and to govern their passions and actions so as to cultivate religious sociability, establish epistemological consensus, and maintain civil society. Chapter 1 presents a new reading of the concept of ‘right reason’ through a close examination of the works of Henry More and John Wilkins. Chapter 2 examines the notion of habitual dispositions in Restoration religion, focusing on how a group of loosely connected moderate divines attempted to fashion a religion that was founded on habitually acquired moral beliefs and dispositions. Chapter 3 then shifts the focus to the context of the new experimental philosophy, demonstrating how experimental philosophers such as Robert Boyle and Robert Hooke were preoccupied with cultivating good experimental habitual behaviour and dispositions. The fourth and final chapter, in light of the genealogy of habit that has been mapped out in the first three chapters, presents a new reading of John Locke’s educational programme. The broader aim of this thesis is to historicise the late-Early Modern English conception of habit as well as highlight its importance in English intellectual thought. A proper historicisation of late Early Modern English intellectual approaches to, and uses of habit will help us see that not only was habit viewed favourably, but that it was also a crucial part of intellectual life and could provide a safeguard against a multitude of pressing intellectual, religious, and civil problems that plagued the period.

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Introduction

This thesis examines the role of ‘habit’ and ‘habituation’ in late Early Modern English intellectual life. It takes habit, in its broadest sense, to mean the procedural character of virtuous behaviour and dispositions and interprets it as a process of self-inspection that supposed the individual’s awareness of responsibility for their actions throughout the period that is under review. In other words, a process of continuous endeavour of training oneself into the habit of acting virtuously. By procedural, in this instance, I take to mean the methods by which the individual was to be habituated to internalise moral virtues and to govern their passions and actions. In this sense, this thesis explores how English intellectuals believed that most individuals governed their behaviour primarily through habitually acquired mental dispositions rather than through conscientious internal motivations. My concern primarily is to highlight the ways in which the process of acquiring habitual virtues was an integral part of late Early Modern English intellectual life, which was founded upon the need to habituate people to internalise moral virtues and to govern their passions and actions so as to maintain and cultivate religious sociability, epistemological consensus, and civil society. This thesis thus argues that late Early Modern English intellectuals were preoccupied with the concept of habit and the notion of habituation and that this preoccupation shaped the development of English religion, the new experimental philosophy as well as John Locke’s educational programme.

Historians who have analysed late Early Modern English intellectual life have, for the most part, missed this deep-rooted concern with the cultivation of virtuous habits, habitual assent and habit itself, as well as how such habits crossed disciplinary boundaries and how they occupied a central place among the values that governed the human being’s life as an

individual, as a member of English society, and as a creature in relation to its deity.¹ These have been largely overlooked by scholarship on early modern religion, for example, because of its fixation on doctrine and confessional identity which has meant that the distinction between belief and practice has not been fully examined.² This, of course, is an important dimension to consider not least because the English church, particularly throughout the seventeenth-century, was a 'state church' that was in a perpetual state of doctrinal, ceremonial, and disciplinary chaos, yet insisted on exacting obedience from its members through a continuous stream of ambiguous and contradictory directives regarding acceptable form of worship.

Some historians, however, such as Kevin Sharpe, have argued for the value of an interdisciplinary expansion of the body of materials that historians examine and has recommended a broadly based cultural-historical approach to religion in the early modern period: "The subject of religion in seventeenth-century culture and politics calls out for...an interdisciplinary approach."³ Sharpe has insisted that, in the early modern period, "Religion was not just about doctrine, liturgy or ecclesiastical government; it was a language, an aesthetic, a structure of meaning, an identity, a politics."⁴ Similarly, as Ken Jackson and Arthur F. Marotti have suggested, religion was also "a deeply psychological and emotional experience, a core moral commitment, a personally and socially crucial way of transvaluing human experience and desire, a reality both within and beyond the phenomenal world."⁵ With these observations in mind, this thesis will focus on the very psychology of belief, and

¹ See, for example, Barbara Shapiro, "Early Modern Intellectual Life: Humanism, Religion and Science in Seventeenth Century England," *History of Science*, 29, (1991): pp. 45-71.

² For more insight into this, see Ken Jackson and Arthur F. Marotti, "The Turn to Religion in Early Modern English Studies," *Criticism*, Vol. 46, No. 1, (Winter 2004): pp. 167-190, p. 169.

³ Kevin Sharpe, *Remapping Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 389.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁵ Ken Jackson and Arthur F. Marotti, "The Turn to Religion in Early Modern English Studies," p. 169.

particularly, the relationship of habitual assent and practice to a well-exercised and grounded faith.

It is important to note that the seventeenth-century English concern with the nature and influence of habit has not gone altogether unnoticed. John P. Wright's article on habit in early modern philosophy, for example, makes passing reference to Rene Descartes's and John Locke's use of habit while also acknowledging that there were "no single full-length thematic studies of habit during the Early Modern period, though it was discussed in relation to many other topics."⁶ More in-depth studies have been carried out by Paul K. Akon and Paul Cefalu, who have both observed the recurring theme of the preoccupation with habit in Restoration English theology. Whilst their work should rightly be considered seminal regarding the role of habit during the period, it does not exhaust the subject in its slightest. Akon, for example, focuses predominantly on habit in an eighteenth-century context with only passing references to individuals such as Robert South and John Tillotson, while Cefalu's work is centred on the notion of ethical habituation in a general early modern Protestant context.⁷ Similarly, Joanna Picciotto has recently suggested that in post-Reformation England, "intense pressures on belief produced sophisticated theorizations of habitual assent", but her analysis does not really extend beyond that statement.⁸

Thus, the larger aim of this thesis is to historicise the late-Early Modern English conception of habit as well as highlight its importance in English intellectual thought. A proper historicisation of late Early Modern English approaches to, and uses of habit will help us see that not only was habit viewed favourably, but that it was also a crucial part of

⁶ John P. Wright 'Ideas of Habit and Custom in Early Modern Philosophy,' *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, Vol. 42, No. 1, (January 2011): pp. 18-32, p. 18.

⁷ Paul K. Akon, "Robert South, William Low, and Samuel Johnson," *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 6 (1966): 499-528; Paul Cefalu, *Moral Identity in Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁸ Joanna Picciotto, "Implicit Faith and Reformations of Habit," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 3: pp. 513-543.

intellectual life and could provide a safeguard against a multitude of pressing intellectual, religious, and civil problems. In short, the main objective of this thesis is to convey how much interest in habit and habitual dispositions permeated English intellectual culture throughout the late early modern period. Once this has been established, it can offer us a view of English intellectual thought that makes sense of a common theme of notions of habit across different forms of disciplines such as religion, natural philosophy, and Lockean education.

My investigations, especially chapter three, primarily intersect with the innovative work of Sorana Corneanu who has highlighted early modern English experimental philosophers' views about the cure and perfecting of the human mind and how such views were fundamental to their epistemological and methodological projects.⁹ Her work leaves no doubt that 'virtues' of the mind and the notion of 'habit' were important conceptual categories for early modern English natural philosophy. Building upon Corneanu's work, this thesis takes a much broader and in-depth examination of the mid-to late Early Modern English landscape by addressing this theme of habitual virtues in a variety of intellectual contexts. This advance is important because it will enhance our understanding, regarding the nature and configuration of intellectual life in late early modern England. Whereas, Corneanu's work has revealed how there was a culture of clearing the human of perturbation deeply embedded within English natural philosophy, this thesis will demonstrate that this was common across a range of disciplines. In short, habit and the acquisition of habitual dispositions exercised a profound influence over many aspects of intellectual life.

More generally, it has long been recognised that there was a connection between arguments for the toleration of religion and arguments for the prosecution of immorality. It

⁹ See S. Corneanu, *Regimens of the Mind: Boyle, Locke, and the Early Modern Cultura Animi Tradition* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011); *Knowledge, Selves, Virtues: Cross-Disciplinary Studies in Early Modern Literature, Philosophy and Science* (Bucureşti: Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti, 2014).

can hardly be a coincidence, for example, that the great statutory campaign known as the Reformation of Manners was closely associated with the success of the Revolution of 1688-9 and the passage of the so-called ‘Toleration Act.’¹⁰ More broadly, Blair Worden has argued that post-Restoration England experiences a “shift of emphasis from faith to conduct”, a “retreat of theology, and the concomitant shift of Protestantism from a religion of faith towards a religion of works.”¹¹ What has not been fully fleshed-out even in these excellent studies, however, is the actual underpinning operations of this process - of how this preoccupation with ‘behaviour’ rather than ‘belief’ actually operated. This thesis seeks to remedy this gap by examining the concept of habit through various intellectual discourses in England in the late early modern period within the context that Christianity was becoming more about conduct rather than doctrine. This was reflective of a broad movement in the post-Restoration era, forwarded in England and Scotland by Latitudinarians and Moderates, respectively. It emphasised the actions of the good Christian rather than what they may have believed. In so doing, it made morality more fundamental to Christianity while also lessening the importance of traditional grounds of confessional difference.¹² It was precisely in this context that ‘habit’ and ‘habitation’ took on a degree of significance: the minds of Restoration society had to be cultivated and nurtured into the habit of acting virtuously. This was a necessary process to correct the unruly conscience and put the individual on a path to the eventual acquisition of true faith and God’s grace.

But while part of this thesis is about religion and habitual virtues, other parts also concern the significance of habitual virtues across the new experimental philosophy as well

¹⁰ See Dudley Bahlman, *The Moral Revolution of 1688* (New Haven, 1957); Tony Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 110–21; Shelley Burtt, *Virtue Transformed: Political Argument in England 1688–1740* (Cambridge, 1992); Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660–1780* (Cambridge, 2 vols., 1991–2000), I.

¹¹ Blair Worden, ‘The Question of Secularisation’, in Alan Houston and Steve Pincus (eds.), *A Nation Transformed: England after the Restoration* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 38–40.

¹² See, for example, Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace and Sentiment*, esp. Vol I; See also John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England, 1558–1689* (London: Pearson Education, 2000), esp. ch. 5.

as the fashioning process of the ideal Lockean citizen. Much work, for example, has been done on the moderate epistemological methodology of the Early Royal Society. Such studies have interpreted the moderate epistemology of the Early Royal Society as: firstly, a response to the epistemological problem based on the justification of knowledge; secondly, a cultural approach to epistemology, one that emphasises shared values and characteristics and the appropriation of methods from English theology into English natural philosophy; thirdly, a social history of knowledge, for epistemological methods and solutions were informed by social discourses; lastly, a response to the underlying problem of the capacities of human nature informed by Augustinian anthropology.¹³ Yet, despite much excellent scholarly work, historians examining the early Royal Society's epistemological approach have not yet fully explored the importance of a deep-seated concern with how habit formed a crucial part of the experimental life. In effect, how it governed the mind of the impartial enquirer. As a result, this thesis shows how the moderate epistemological methodology of the early Royal Society was shaped by an appreciation of the importance of habituating the mind toward mental self-control. Accordingly, the mitigated scepticism and emphasis on the probability of knowledge advocated by its fellows was informed, in part, by self-fashioning mental exercises that disciplined the intellectual activity of the mind. In this interpretation, as we will see, the experimental philosophy comes across not only as a method which expounded the values of moderation, regimentation, and temperance, but also as an edifying programme which aided the experimenter's mind in their search for knowledge and as a regimen for cultivating habitual virtues.

¹³ The major works are as follows: Henry G. Van Leeuwen, *The Problem of Certainty in English Thought, 1630-1690* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1963); Barbara Shapiro, *Probability and Certainty in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton University Press, 1983); John Henry, 'The Scientific Revolution in England' in Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich (eds.) *The Scientific Revolution in National Context* (Cambridge University Press, 1992); Steven Shapin, *Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago, 1994); Peter Harrison, *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science* (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

The final insight that this thesis makes is how a deeper investigation of ‘habit’ and ‘habituation’ in late Early Modern English thought allows us to more fully understand not only John Locke’s works on education but also his idea of the individual and the foundation of civil society. I argue that by re-examining Locke’s idea of habituation, we find that Locke’s education did aim at freedom and autonomy, but that this freedom and autonomy required a strong will and a cultivated scepticism. I show that the habits which Locke asked parents to instil were aimed not at programming specific behaviour and opinions, but rather at training children to cross their desires to strengthen their wills against the impositions of nature, custom, and fashion, which Locke argued posed a far more serious threat to independent thought than parental discipline. In sum, Locke’s educational programme aimed to cultivate a sceptical mental disposition that permitted individuals to resist these other sources of habit and continually question and revise their own convictions. Lockean education, I argue, is thus more profitably read neither as the introduction of a form of panoptic control over the child that Foucauldian-disciplinarian scholars take it to be, nor as the straightforward programme of civic education which earlier generations of scholars saw in it, but rather as an individualistic training of the mind.¹⁴ This, of course, cannot be fully understood without first mapping out a deep-seated genealogy of habit in the first three chapters.

The arguments sketched out above form the central claims of this current thesis. In its broadest sense, then, it demonstrates how the desire to be governed by habitual virtues was a salient feature of late Early Modern English intellectual life. Hence, as will be shown in the proceeding chapters, in a Protestant religious context, where original sin cast such a long

¹⁴ See, for example, James Axtell, *The Educational Writings of John Locke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968); Peter Gay, *John Locke on Education* (New York, Teacher’s College Bureau of Publications 1964); John Yolton, *John Locke and Education* (New York: Random House, 1971); Alex Neil, “Locke on Habituation, Autonomy, and Education,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 27., No. 2 (1989): pp. 225-245; and compare with, Uday Mehta, *Anxiety of Freedom: Imagination and Individuality in Locke’s Political Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992) and John Baltes, *The Empire of Habit: John Locke, Discipline, and the Origins of Liberalism* (University of Rochester Press, 2016).

shadow upon human morality as well as the human mental faculties, habit was responding to, and addressing, a variety of intellectual problems that plagued English society throughout the period. It was responding to the wider problem of knowing what exactly ‘reason’ was and how one was to use their own ‘reason’ correctly; it was addressing the problem of religion and morality, principally the moral and spiritual state of the people.¹⁵ The Christian life, as we will see, was a life of active endeavour to be habitually virtuous; analogously, in natural philosophy habituation also formed an important part of the experimental life - virtuous habits were intended to govern and order the operations of the mind, extracting the investigator from their private perspective.¹⁶ In essence, they allowed for the safest way to natural truths; and finally, for the purpose of Locke’s educational programme, the inculcation of good habits was a solution to guide conduct and replace the conscience that was seen as both too radical and too submissive.¹⁷

Altogether, then, this thesis attempts to provide a lens through which we can view a particular facet of late Early Modern English intellectual life should one choose to do so. This lens, broadly stated, was a late Early Modern English preoccupation with habit. More specifically, the power of habit to govern conduct and having the right people to implant the disposition to judge well and behave virtuously. Such a preoccupation can be framed, in many ways, as a response to the sectarian violence of the English Civil War as well as the disruption of the Interregnum shortly afterwards.¹⁸ Religion and morality were at the centre of the conflict not just because salvation was at stake, but because one’s beliefs might invite

¹⁵ For an excellent local case study of this, see Mark Goldie and John Spurr, “Politics and the Restoration Parish: Edward Fowler and the Struggle for St. Giles Cripplegate,” *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 109, No. 432 (Jun., 1994): pp. 572-596.

¹⁶ For an excellent analysis on the broader context of the active Christian life see, G. A. J. Rogers, “The Basis of Belief: Philosophy, Science and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England, *History of European Ideas*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1985, pp. 19-39.

¹⁷ For more information on this, see James Tully, *An Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), ch. 6.

¹⁸ For an excellent framing of Restoration intellectual life in the context of the civil war, see Graham Parry, *The Seventeenth Century: The Intellectual and Cultural Context of English Literature, 1603-1700* (Longman: London and New York, 1989), ch. 5.

persecution or demand armed evangelism.¹⁹ In response to this period of bloodshed and disorder, it was necessary to fashion a ‘reasonable’ society which could enact civil practices and self-govern. The goal, therefore, was the formation of a mind that could suspend the execution and satisfaction of desires and one that willed in conformity with the virtue that supported the pleasures of civil society, faith, and natural truths about God’s creation.

This thesis comprises four chapters. Each chapter contains its own engagement with, and review of relevant scholarship and so can be read on its own terms. There is, however, a fairly consistent chronological arrangement of each chapter and I hope that the deeper unity of the thesis may thus become apparent as one makes one’s way through each section. Collectively, the question that they attempt to answer is less one about how late Early Modern English intellectuals attempted to construct and mould society and more about how they thought that society could be fashioned to worship God correctly, pursue its vocations, control its passions, and conduct itself accordingly. In many ways, their common concern is with the formation of the self-regulating subject through discipline, subjects governed by habitual dispositions that enabled the proper use of human reason, aided the religious life and the experimental life, and, as we will see, made Lockean civil society possible.

The first chapter offers a new examination of the concept of ‘right reason’ - a faculty that purportedly allowed mankind to share in the rational nature of the divine mind, and thereby gifting man with the capacity to know God and discern God’s will. By examining the concept in the works of two Restoration divines, Henry More and John Wilkins, it demonstrates how historians have missed the fact that they advanced different conceptions, an innate one and a habitual one, which were underpinned by disparate epistemological (rationalism and empiricism) and theological traditions (intellectualism and voluntarism).

¹⁹ For a great overview of this, see Jonathan Scott, “Radicalism and Restoration: The Shape of the Stuart Experience,” *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 31, Issue 2, (June 1988): pp. 453-467.

The purpose of this chapter is to show how the concept of ‘habit’ fitted into the broader problem of deciding what human reason was as well as how it operated – as a consequence of living in a fallen world. A lengthy consideration is thus given to the role of ‘reason’ as a moral faculty, which, it was thought, had been durably impaired by humanity’s fall from paradise. In an ideal world, Man’s natural right reason could discern the Laws of Nature and function as a reliable moral guide. In a fallen world, however, this guide had to be supplemented. As we will see in the case of John Wilkins, habit formed an important part of this supplementation. As a whole, then, this first chapter is an attempt to show how in the philosophical context of right reason, Natural Law, and innatism was starting to become despiritualised on behalf of a more practical approach to morality, one that emphasised the importance of the development of virtuous habits. Such an approach was far less philosophically minded and much more adjusted to convincing English society of the importance of acting morally.

Building upon Wilkins’s notion of right reason as habit, the second chapter broadens the frame of analysis by examining how a group of ‘moderate divines’ attempted to develop and cultivate a religion founded on habitually acquired moral beliefs and dispositions. In the wake of the English Civil War and Interregnum, with religious tension still running high, they sought a solution that would allay controversies and disputes, and at the heart of this solution lay a deep-seated desire for religious and social stability. They rejected all manner of polemicizing about unprovable fundamentals of revealed religion and their sermons focused instead on a reformation of manners and reasonable and practical means by which congregants could be disciplined into participating in a comprehensive English church. Their solution was an increased emphasis on the power of habit to govern conduct and to combat the perceived moral laxity of English society in service of God’s commands. In their view, it was the only way to ensure society behaved properly and subscribed to the correct behaviour

in relation to God. The ideal Christian in Restoration England, then, as we will see, was to be a disciplined subject - free while constrained, self-reflective while governed by habit. With that in mind, this chapter forms part of an emerging literature that tries to show how notions such as ‘moderation’ and ‘toleration’ could ultimately be coercive.²⁰ It attempts, for example, to supplement Shagan’s argument that ‘moderation was an act of control’ by teasing out another important element that was at the heart of the ideology of control in late early modern England – the power of habit. This chapter also highlights how Church of England clergyman and sympathetic nonconformists could find a common ground when it came to the subject of holy living and virtuous behaviour.

Having examined how the concepts of ‘habit’ and ‘habituation’ addressed the problems associated with right reason and religion, the third chapter switches the focus to see how they were deployed in the epistemological context of the new experimental philosophy that was practised by the early Royal Society. It shows how the rhetoric and stylistic norms advertised by the Society and its members were actually shaped in part out of a concern for ‘habit.’ Its focus is on those practitioners of the new natural philosophy who argued that the new experimental approach constituted a special kind of mental training which inculcated the mind with good habits of examination, observation, and personal piety. Its primary purpose is to highlight the ways in which the new philosophy was presented as a practice that could contribute to the moral and religious formation of the natural philosopher, and the transformation of the mind through habituation.²¹ In the context of other changes in developments of religious epistemology, it should become clear that the development of the

²⁰ See Ethan Shagan, “Beyond Good and Evil: Thinking with Moderates in Early Modern England,” *Journal of British Studies* 49 (July 2010): pp. 488-513; *The Rule of Moderation: Violence, Religion and the Politics of Restraint in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). For toleration as coercive see Richard Ashcraft, “Latitudinarianism and Toleration: Historical Myth versus Political History,” in R. Kroll, R. Ashcraft and P. Zagorin (eds.), *Philosophy, Science, and Religion in England, 1640-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

²¹ See S. Corneanu, *Regimens of the Mind*; See also Dana Jabloneanu, *The Art of Experimental Natural History: Francis Bacon in Context* (Zeta Books: Bucharest, 2015).

polite, gentlemanly, non-contentious modes of discourse of the virtuosi was at least in part based upon their preoccupation with the epistemological implications of the new philosophy as a regimen of self-discipline rather than by their social position or aspiration. Furthermore, in my analysis of Robert Boyle, I show how religion could provide the natural philosopher with appropriate epistemological behaviour that allows us to consider a different way of understanding the complex relationship between English religion and natural philosophy during this period.

Then, in light of this genealogy of habit that has been teased-out in the preceding chapters, the fourth and final chapter offers an important re-reading of Locke's work on education. Through a close examination of Locke's *Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) as well as his *Conduct of the Understanding* (1706), it shows how the Lockean subject was to be formed and normed by gradual habituation before taking their place in civil society. Contrary to the recent Foucauldian-disciplinary readings of Locke which have interpreted the ideal Lockean subject as being shaped by distinctively modern techniques of power before rational choice was available, it argues that Locke's education can best be read as an individualistic training of the mind, a safeguard against all the other sources of habituation to which the child would inevitably be subjected. In this reading, the pedagogy that emerges from Locke's educational writings is one that inclined the human mind toward a kind of habitual scepticism that bestowed modesty, flexibility and civility. The conclusion provides a summary as well as suggests possible future directions for research by briefly touching on the work of Max Weber, Michel Foucault, and Norbert Elias.

One final thing remains to be explicitly stated – the extent to which this thesis tells us something about contemporary Restoration English culture. Scholars such as Jonathan Scott, John Morrill, Jonathan Clark, for example, have stressed the element of continuity in seventeenth-century British history, with Clark arguing that “the pattern of an ancien regime

State...remained vital until at least 1828-32.”²² However, a number of scholars such as Alan Houston and Steve Pincus have argued that late seventeenth-century England underwent a substantial transformation: English life and thought in the decades after 1660 were transformed in ways that render untenable the notion of an *ancien regime* that lasted into the early nineteenth century. This thesis attempts to unpack an important shift in Restoration English culture that was predicated on an increased preoccupation with habitual assent as well as habitually acquired patterns of behaviour which elevated a person’s moral esteem. Thus, just as Barbara Shapiro has advised us to think in terms of a ‘culture of fact’ and the role of ‘fact’ in English intellectual and cultural development during the late early modern period: that the concept of fact permeated a range of disciplines and genres and that legal modes of judging testimony played a large but unduly neglected role in the development of practices for establishing the truth in early modern England and how “the language of the law, and the analogy to legal processes and criteria of truth...was constantly in the mouths of the [Restoration] virtuosi.”²³ This thesis is intended to suggest that we must also think in terms of a ‘culture of habit’ and the role that ‘habit and ‘habitation’ played in late Early Modern English intellectual thought; that habit – in the form of habitually acquired dispositions – made its way into the broader intellectual culture of late early modern England. Chapter 3, for example, much like Shapiro’s suggestion that the concept of fact was an important part of the truth criterion in the new experimental philosophy, will demonstrate how inculcated habitual dispositions were also an important part of establishing the truths of nature for the Early Royal Society.

²² Jonathan Clark, *English Society, 1688-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 6-7. See also Jonathan Scott, *Algernon Sidney and the Restoration Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); *England’s Troubles: Seventeenth-Century English Political Instability in European Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); John Morrill (ed.), *Revolution and Restoration: England in the 1650s* (London: Collins and Brown, 1992).

²³ See Barbara Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact: England, 1550-1720* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), p. 141.

Thinking in this way allows us to further examine, and understand several important intellectual changes during the period that Houston and Pincus have taken to be a ‘transformation.’ In the first instance, using the case study of right reason, we can see more broadly the changing intellectual process of reason that took place during the period. Wilkin’s interpretation of right reason as an habitually-acquired disposition, for example, not only foreshadowed Locke’s assault on innate ideas in his *Essay*, but also demonstrates the changing nature of reason – away from being a process that was grounded in some kind of transcendental supra-human power that was owing to God, to something that had to be instilled in the individual. Again, as we will see in chapter four, the changing nature of reason also paralleled much of what we find in Locke’s educational programme – that the individual’s own reason had to be guided correctly. It had to be implanted not by God at inception, but rather by early training in childhood, or in Wilkins’s case, through the didactic sermons of Restoration clergy.

It also allows us to more fully understand how English religion became a practical Christianity wherein moral reformation took the place of doctrinal conflict. A religion, essentially, of habitual-virtue, sociability, and happiness which, in many ways, represented the Arminian rejection of the Calvinist insistence on the depravity of human nature and God’s arbitrary use of grace.²⁴ And also how it began to locate ethical power within human nature, independently of grace. In this way, the argument presented in this thesis supports the process so well described by Isabel Rivers whereby grace became almost synonymous with virtue.²⁵ The stress was on religion as civilising, not saving; ethics began to outweigh soteriology.

²⁴ For an excellent overview of eighteenth century developments, see Ashley Walsh, “Civil Religion in Britain, 1707 – c. 1800.” PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2018).

²⁵ See Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace and Sentiment*, pp. 74-5, 76-6.

Thus, as Blair Worden has argued, religion was not declining during this period, but rather changing its character.²⁶

Furthermore, we can also observe a subtle parallel development in works of the Early Royal Society which allows us to not only rethink how we understand English experimental natural philosophy, but also reorient it within a broader tradition that focused not just on epistemological and methodological pursuits but on the way natural philosophy was thought to contribute to one's intellectual and spiritual health as well as its crucial ethical and theological dimensions. This potential new understanding also supports recent scholarship by Sorana Corneanu whose work has demonstrated that there was an anthropological-therapeutic core to the English experimental philosophers' approach to the problem of knowledge as well as Peter Harrison's who has recently suggested that experimental philosophy "served the goal of moral and religious formation."²⁷

Lastly, if we accept the prevalence of a deep-seated 'culture of habit' in late Early Modern English intellectual thought, then we can also, as I argue in chapter four, re-assess not only John Locke's educational curriculum, but also more fully understand his idea of the individual. I show that the Lockean individual (and indeed liberal) was deeply disciplined and thoroughly normalized, and as a result, governed just as much by habitual virtues as by rational reflection or autonomous calculation. This thesis therefore contributes to recent Locke scholarship that has called for a reassessment of liberalism by demonstrating how Lockean liberalism should no longer be seen to revolve exclusively around the atomistic, rights-bearing subject of social-contract theory but also be perceived to develop a nuanced

²⁶ See Blair Worden, 'The Question of Secularisation.'

²⁷ See Sorana Corneanu, *Regimens of the Mind*; Peter Harrison, "Sentiments of Devotion and Experimental Philosophy in Seventeenth-Century England," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 44, no. 1 (2014): pp. 113-33, p. 116.

account of a socially embedded subject, the product of early training in the family.²⁸ The remainder of this introductory chapter provides an overview of the relevant intellectual and religious contexts.

The Intellectual and Religious Context

This section offers a succinct summary of the intellectual and religious changes that underpinned the late-Early Modern English context in order to show how the tensions in a Christian account of habit form the basis of its application that this thesis examines. As such, it beats a particular path, mapping territory and key thinkers along the way, but inevitably leaving a great deal unexplored. It begins with a discussion of Aristotelian ethics and ends with Richard Hooker's views on moral habituation. Its primary aim is to demonstrate that by tracing habit from Aquinas to Calvin and then to Hooker, we find a particular type of habit dealing with the problems of depravity emerging which is the same kind of struggle and mix of components we then see being applied by English intellectuals in the period under study. This brief tracing exercise will show that they drew upon a notion of habit that was essentially a hybrid of Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy mixed with the depravity associated with Calvinist theology as well as building upon Hooker's practical moral theory and notion of habitual sanctification.

The social and intellectual elite of early modern England often advocated Aristotle's definition, most fully developed in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, of ethical virtues as habits that preserved a mean between excess and deficiency in actions and emotions. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as in the medieval period, Aristotle's work remained the

²⁸ See, for example, Timothy Stanton, "John Locke and the Fable of Liberalism," *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 61, 3 (2018): pp. 597-622, p. 600, 621

core of the university curriculum. Accompanied by various medieval and early modern commentaries, the *Nicomachean Ethics* was the major text in ethics.²⁹

Aristotle's discussion of the connection between virtue and habits is therefore a good starting point because his conception of habit as an active and ontologically significant principle was still employed in the writings of seventeenth-century English theologians, not least in the writings of those which concern this thesis. Aristotle's term for habit was *hexis*, derived from the verb "to have." Whilst the meaning of the term allowed for a wide-ranging use of the term, Aristotle gave the term a set of specific and philosophical meanings.³⁰ In the first instance, *hexis* was an active tendency to behaviour of a specific kind. Aristotle wrote, "Habit means a disposition according to which that which is disposed is well or ill disposed."³¹ Habit as *hexis* then was not merely custom but a propensity toward a certain kind of behaviour. Second, habit was also "a kind of existent thing."³² Aristotle, it seems, believed that habits had an abiding reality apart from the actual behaviour that is their manifestation. Habits, for Aristotle, were therefore more permanent than disposition and were a "second nature."³³

"Habit" as *hexis*, as W.F.R. Hardie has pointed out, could also be translated as a "state of character," a phrase which reveals that, for Aristotle, habits did not violate the integrity of the rational capacities of a person but rather function as their "character" or the overall direction of the self – that is, so to speak, the natural powers of the self.³⁴ Habit, in Aristotelian

²⁹ See, for example, William T. Costello, S.J., *The Scholastic Curriculum at Early Seventeenth-Century Cambridge* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), 64–69; Harris Francis Fletcher, *The Intellectual Development of John Milton*, 2 vols. (Urbana, Ill., 1961), 1:157–165; and Mordechai Feingold, "The Humanities," in *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol 4, *Seventeenth-Century Oxford*, ed. Nicholas Tyacke (Oxford, 1997), 313, 321–326.

³⁰ For a more in-depth discussion of habit in Aristotle's ethics, see Burnyeat (2002); Sherman (1989: pp. 157–99); Garver (1989); I Barracchi (2008: pp. 66–73, 90–1, 112–22).

³¹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. Hippocrates G. Apostle (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), p. 94.

³² W.F.R. Hardie, *Aristotle's Ethical Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968) p. 108.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

philosophy, was primarily a principle of operation and not a principle of being – as a result, Aristotle dealt with habit mainly as the intellectual and moral virtues; the developed states of the capacities to know and to act. Lastly, habit, for Aristotle, was primarily an acquired propensity toward a determinate kind of behaviour. In other words, habit referred to a tendency that had received a specific direction and facility through the repetition of a certain type of action.

Thomas Aquinas accepted all the salient aspects of Aristotle's concept of habit, but he also gave a greater systematisation and introduced some further developments which reflected his efforts to synthesise Christian theology and pagan – especially Aristotelian – philosophy.³⁵ On the question of habit, this meant reconciling a classical tradition in which habit was foundational and constitutive for the good life, with a Christian tradition that had largely a negative view of the role of habit. The most influential thinker within this tradition was Augustine, who had criticised the classical account of virtue as habit for two reasons. First, Augustine thought that virtues acquired by the person's own efforts would always lead to pride in this accomplishment, and thus would be inherently sinful even though they appeared, superficially, to be virtuous. His own view was that genuine virtue was dependent on divine grace, since all virtues are forms of God's love for humanity, given as a divine gift. In *The City of God Against the Pagans*, Augustine argued that classical philosophers such as Cicero displayed a "wondrous vanity" in seeking "to achieve blessedness by their own efforts."³⁶ Second, from a psychological perspective, Augustine regarded habit as a bondage of the will, a force by which old desires still persisted even after the radical changes brought

³⁵ For an extended scholarly account of the concept of habit in the thought of Aquinas, see B. Kent, "Habits and Virtues (Ia IIae, qq. 49-70) in S. J. Pope, *The Ethics of Aquinas* (Georgetown University Press: Washington, D.C., 2002).

³⁶ Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. R.W. Dyson (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), p. 919

about through conversion and repentance – processes which, for Augustine, required the aid of divine grace themselves.³⁷

According to Augustine, then, habit represented not the form of the good life, but, on the contrary, an obstacle to the kind of virtue to which Christians aspired. Augustine, in sum, envisaged a psychological battle between ‘two wills,’ two forces of desire – one of the flesh and the other of the spirit.³⁸ Aquinas retained Augustine’s insistence that, for every Christian, the good was dependent on divine grace, and he followed Augustine in assigning the central role to the God-given virtue of charity. However, Aquinas also retained the classical concept of habit, albeit in a slightly modified form. In the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas’s discussion of virtue was prefaced by a discussion of habit.³⁹ Here, in defining habit, Aquinas made a very strong link between habit and will: “a disposition (*habitus*) is *something which a man can exercise in action at will*.”⁴⁰ There is, of course, continuity here with Aristotle’s definition of virtue as a habit of choosing in the right way, but whereas Aristotle made reference to choice in order to invoke a certain kind or class of habits, Aquinas qualified the concept of habit as such with reference to the will. This made habit a specifically human category.

Having insisted that habit – and consequently, virtue – was essentially related to the human will, Aquinas then went on to emphasise that the kind of virtue to which Christians ought to aspire was dependent on a habit that was bestowed by God. This was known as an ‘infused habit,’ as opposed to the acquired virtue’ of which the pagan philosophers wrote. In defining virtue, Aquinas appealed not to Aristotle’s *Ethics*, but to Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*, then the standard textbook of Christian theology: “Virtue is a good quality of the mind, by

³⁷ See, for example, Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. H. Chadwick (London: Penguin, 1961), p. 164.

³⁸ See Bonnie Kent, “Augustine’s Ethics,” in E. Stump and Kretzmann (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

³⁹ See ‘The Treatise on Habit’ in Aquinas, *Summe theologiae*.

⁴⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, vol. 22 (1964), pp. 16-17.

which we live rightly, of which no one makes bad use, which God works in us without us.”⁴¹

But having cited with approval this Augustinian formulation, Aquinas indicated that it would be more appropriate to replace ‘quality’ with ‘habit’.⁴²

In sum, Aquinas amplified Aristotle’s conception of habit by designating the sanctifying grace as an entitative habit, that is, a habit that functioned on the level of being. The important point here is that habit served an important religio-theological function that had the potential to direct humankind to their final spiritual end. In other words, whilst Augustine invoked the concept of habit to attribute sinfulness to human freedom, Aquinas invoked it to secure the link between virtue and freedom. In attempting to understand Christian virtue in terms of habit, Aquinas was reconciling two ideas that were in tension: the preservation of human freedom, on the one hand, and the denial of human self-sufficiency, on the other. By attributing habit to grace and, in so doing, radically transforming the pagan notion of habit as a ‘second nature’ acquired through an individual’s own actions and efforts – Aquinas maintained a delicate balance between these two aspects of Christian doctrine. In retaining something of the classical conception of ‘second nature’, then, Aquinas strove to secure some continuity between the natural and supernatural orders – between nature and grace. This was an important feature of his theology and his use of the concept of habit was foundational here - as Simon Oliver has elaborated:

If God were simply to move humanity to the beatific vision, this would constitute a violent motion because humanity would be destined for an end for which its nature was not prepared...In addition to God moving humanity to its appropriate end, grace is also given as what Aquinas calls an ‘habitual gift’, namely a form or nature by which humanity can move and be moved to the supernatural end appointed by God. Just as God provides for creatures not only by moving them to their appropriate

⁴¹ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, vol. 23 (1969), p. 11.

⁴² See G Emery and M. Levering (eds.), *Aristotle in Aquinas’s Theology* (Oxford: OUP, 2015), p. 107.

ends, but also in bestowing forms and powers by which they make that motion their own, so too God provides his grace by which humanity may make its motion to beatitude its own.⁴³

Aquinas thus stayed close to Aristotle in emphasising the importance of making man truly virtuous. Robert Boyle's *Aretology* (1645-7) usefully encapsulated this process in the equestrian imagery that was characteristic of the Renaissance language of governance:

we cannot deny, but by the Influence of the Vertus of the Will, the Sensitiue Appetite may...acquire good Inclinations and laudable Habitues: and so may be called Vertuus by Participation: as in the Art of Riding...the Habitude of Horsmanship is...principally in the Rider; but yet may be som sort said to be in the Hors, in Respect of his being Drest.⁴⁴

Again, as with Aristotle, this habituation could only be achieved in practice through reiteration, as the cumulative effect of repeated instances of right willing, right sense appetition, and right feeling. Habituation was thus, for Aquinas, an effective way of defeating sin, making it a fruitful source of hope and success in his account of Christian spiritual life. As we will see, especially in chapters one and two, aspects of this Aristotelian-Thomist tradition were to find favour in England from the 1660s onwards.⁴⁵

The Protestant Reformation transformed the Roman Catholic doctrine of salvation through *good works* into the radicalised Protestant doctrine of salvation through faith expressed in *good work*. Reformation theology, beginning with Luther's anti-perfectionism challenged such theories of habituation. For Luther, although divine grace was certainly given and received, it did not thereby become a person's own in the same way as for Aquinas. In rejecting the scholastic theologians' adoption of the Aristotelian concept of habit, Luther

⁴³ See Simon Oliver, "The Sweet Delight of Virtue and Grace in Aquinas's Ethics," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7, no. 1 (2005): 52–71, p. 63.

⁴⁴ Boyle, 1991, p.12.

⁴⁵ For more information on this Aristotelian-Thomist tradition, see Christopher Tilmouth, *Passion's Triumph over Reason: A History of the Moral Imagination from Spenser to Rochester* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 30.

expressed both psychological and ontological concern, and, as a result, he proposed a new way of thinking about the processes involved in the Christian life.⁴⁶

Luther detected a problem in the interpretation of grace as a habit. Although a divinely infused habit was not acquired by a person's own efforts, there was still a gap between the habit and the exercise, between the capacity and its realisation – and this gap opened up the possibility to a notion of merit: a person, therefore, only became righteous insofar as they actualised their habit through good works.⁴⁷ In this way, for Luther, the scholastic doctrine of grace permitted a connection between works and justification that would lead to a similar problem that Augustine had identified several centuries earlier: the danger of pride infecting virtue, and thereby corrupting the Christian life at its very core. Whereas Aquinas explained the exercise of a divinely infused habit by an appeal to a natural desire for the good which, when reinforced by grace, facilitated the Christian life, Luther put forward a much stronger dichotomy between grace and nature, whereby even the desire for God did not come from oneself: "Those who seek God, do good freely and gladly, purely for the sake of God alone...But this is the work not of our nature but of grace."⁴⁸ Our righteousness, according to Luther, "comes completely from the outside" and was "foreign" to our nature: "God does not redeem us through our own, but through external, righteousness and wisdom; not through one that comes from us and grows in us, but through one that comes to us from the outside."⁴⁹

At the core of Luther's thought, then, was the idea that, once the process of justification had been completely separated from works and merit, the love that flowed from God through human beings remained pure: a person was free to love without this becoming ensnared in a self-interested striving for reward, nor becoming tainted by pride. The gift of

⁴⁶ See Bernhard Loshe, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development* (Minneapolis, 1999), pp. 59-60.

⁴⁷ Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction to his Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), pp. 70-1.

⁴⁸ Luther, 1972, p. 136.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 136

grace was most purely a gift when it was detached from any notion of merit. This was no easy gift to receive because, for Luther, the “whole life” of faith was “nothing else but prayer, seeking and begging...always seeking and striving to be made righteous...never standing still, never possessing.”⁵⁰

Eschewing the orthodox tradition of quotidian virtue that was monkish and ascetic, Luther and especially Calvin demanded direct and forceful engagement in the world through sweat, labour, and industry.⁵¹ It was not that martyrdom or sainthood were devalued per se, but that the democratic and egalitarian impulse of the Reformation constructed a new relation of the mundane to the sacred, extending the reach of discipline from the monastery and its adherence to the Rule of Benedict to daily life and obedience to Reform.⁵² The Reformation translated the practices of monastic obedience and discipline into vocation and demanded that individuals answered the call of God, not in the abstract or through monkish piety, but rather in direct and universal obedience to labour. As John Dunn has observed: “In social terms, the dominant characteristic of the calling was its egalitarianism...Men were equal as Christians. However unequal they might be as members of societies.”⁵³ Everyone, not just the ecclesiast, therefore, were called to labour for God as “the manifest purpose for man.”⁵⁴ Thus, the Reformation magnified the significance of everydayness, diffusing discipline by demanding that each attend to themselves as a site and source of power. Christopher Hill traced the effect of the sanctification of daily life through the elevation of vocation and labour: “No action can be casual or perfunctory: the most trivial detail of our daily life should be performed for the

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 251-2.

⁵¹ Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints* (New York: Atheneum, 1976), p. 28. See also Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 239-40.

⁵² The Rule of Benedict disciplined the lives of monks by ordering time, space, and activity, providing a hierarchical power structure, and encouraging self-discipline through habits and practices suffusing daily life.

⁵³ John Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke: An Historical Account of the Argument of the “Two Treatises of Government”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 225-26.

⁵⁴ Jeremy Waldron, *God, Locke, and Equality: Christian Foundations in Locke’s Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 187.

glory of God, should be illuminated by a conscious cooperation with God's purposes."⁵⁵ In other words, God commanded each individual, in each moment, to glorify him. Work became prayer, labour became sanctified, the mundane was exalted, and the physical was spiritualised.

This theological tradition of discipline reached its apogee in John Calvin's Geneva, the Protestant disciplinary state brought to fullest fruition. As is well known, the driving refrain of Calvin's *Institutes*, reflected too in the work of the English Calvinists who shaped theological sensibility in late Elizabethan England, was that there was nothing but depravity within the body and soul of regenerate man.⁵⁶ Calvin was convinced of the corruption of humanity, its wilful error, and its capacity for destruction, and thus he courted a public system of discipline that instantiated rigid self-control.⁵⁷ Recognising that efficient, dispersed, individuated discipline depended on the willingness and ability of each individual to 'watch' themselves, Calvin envisioned a system of social and political surveillance. For him, each sheep in his flock had to be engaged in this project of social normalisation; that is, each believer had to be refigured as a labourer: a disciplined, obedient subject expressing their faith in action and their obedience in toil. Subjected to a rigid programme of habituation, the proper habits of work as faith would become second nature, "natural," "normal."⁵⁸

For Calvin, one had to labour because God commanded it. Adam's disobedience had sentenced humanity to reap only what one sowed. As his congregants understood, God had

⁵⁵ Christopher Hill, *Change and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 86.

⁵⁶ There is an extensive literature on English Calvinism. See, for example, R.T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c. 1590-1640* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); Peter Lake, "Calvinism and the English Church 1570-1635," *Past & Present*, No. 114 (Feb., 1987): pp. 32-76; Marcus K. Harnes, "Calvin and the English Episcopate, 1580-1610," *Anglican and Episcopal History*, Vol. 81, No. 1 (March 2012): pp. 22-46.

⁵⁷ See Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints*, p. 28. See also, Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-revolutionary England* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), pp. 228-29.

⁵⁸ Interestingly, John Locke echoed Calvin in his discussion of habit formation in his *Thoughts Concerning Education* and *On the Conduct of the Understanding*.

chastised Adam as he cast him out of Eden: “Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it; All the days of your life...By the sweat of your face...You will eat bread.”⁵⁹ According to Calvin, the individual had to labour dutifully because they had faith, because they believed themselves to be unworthy, and because they felt assured of their obedience to God only when drenched in sweat and reeling from exhaustion. To labour in obedience to God, was to repudiate Adam’s wilfulness, and thus they would exchange their present responsibility for his past transgression. Taxing labour exemplified godliness for the elect – in a word, “Puritans discovered in work the primary and elemental form of social discipline, the key to order, and the foundation of the future of morality...But work was something more than this obvious and inadequate form of domestic discipline; it was also the self-affirming activity of the godly.”⁶⁰

Critically, the Reformation also called on Christians to be their brother’s keepers.⁶¹ Indeed, a common refrain of late Early Modern England is that individuals were called to husband the earth and their fellow men. “Stewards therefore we are,” declares the author of *A Present Remedy for the Poor*, “and not Proprietors of our Enjoyments; and the intent of our liberal Maker is, that we should convey what we have received from his bountiful Hand, to such Objects of Charity as we meet with in our mortal Race.”⁶² Though the poor were mostly rejected as full members of the Calvinist church, they were members enough to be subject to its discipline.⁶³ To ensure the imposition of discipline to the wayward, Calvin instituted a system of observation and control intended to weld conscience to coercion where possible, and compel with punishment where necessary.⁶⁴ Dutiful or not, labour was the command of God, and the Reformed sought to extend it even – especially – to those who shirked. Early

⁵⁹ Genesis 3:17, 19.

⁶⁰ Dunn, *Political Thought of John Locke*, p. 221, 225.

⁶¹ See for example, Peter Chamberlen, *The Poor Man’s Advocate; or, England’s Samaritan* (London, 1649).

⁶² M. D., *Present Remedy for the Poor*, p. 4.

⁶³ See Christopher Hill, “Puritans and the Poor,” *Past & Present*, No. 2 (1952): pp. 32-50.

⁶⁴ See Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints*, pp. 42-47.

Modern English society in general, then, had to be shaped in to their dispositions, educated and habituated in to their proper role as labourers in God's divine plan. One had to come to understand their labour as their obligation to their creator. Discipline had to be ensured for each individual, each labour, and each instant as an expression of God's will and man's obedience. The individual had to be forced to be free against the inclinations of the flesh, forced if necessary to accept God's will for themselves and against their own desire to usurp their role as the director of their own lives.⁶⁵ Such discipline had to be diffused, thorough, and absolute.

The Protestant emphasis on the ordinary, its diffusion of discipline from monastic isolation to society at large, allowed an increase in the efficiency of the economy of power. Decentralising ecclesiastical authority by emphasising the individual's relationship to God, it demanded ordinary Christians to attend to their salvation rather than to be attended to exclusively by the intercession of the clergy.⁶⁶ To the extent that this attention was synonymous with disciplinary intervention, to the degree that each individual assumed a disciplinary role previously reserved for the clerical hierarchy, the efficiency and diffusion of this Christian disciplinary regime was truly novel. In practice, however, it may not have captured each and all in a system of power in which the subject subjected themselves, but it attempted to nonetheless. For rather than isolated, localised, interrupted, and irregularly present loci of authority, the Reformation pursued uniform, uninterrupted, continuous discipline by multiplying the sites of disciplinary power and internalising its imposition. It placed the concept of God at the centre of a panoptic complex of correction and social control by instilling the habits of goodliness and virtue. Rather than discipline through vertical

⁶⁵ For a broad overview, see Milan Zafirovski, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Authoritarianism: Puritanism, Democracy, and Society* (New York: Springer, 2007). See also, Carmen Luke, *Pedagogy, Printing and Protestantism: The Discourse on Childhood* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), esp. chapters 4-6.

⁶⁶ For an excellent overview, see Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

imposition, discipline was applied horizontally, normalising the always abnormal, ineluctably sinful subject. This was, to use Foucauldian terminology, a movement from theatrical punishment to modern discipline, from pain to correction, a step in the direction of the soul as prison for the body. Through this diffusion of disciplinary practice, each became their brother's keeper, and each internalised the habits of devotion to God's will and service. In other words, every individual was expected to acquire the habits of right living as well as discipline one another in order to enforce right behaviour. Thus, while martyrs and saints remained the holiest of the holy, and pronouncements still rang from the pulpit, ordinary labours assumed a new place in the work of glorifying God and disciplining idleness. With such pride of place came responsibility, and the activity of ordinary labourers took on new significance in the play of faith, work, and salvation. Personal conscience, therefore, trumped priestly edict. Humble work obviated the need for pomp and pageantry. But the price, however, for the average person was to feel the weight of salvation as a palpable burden. Faith demanded that every moment, every labour, every person be disciplined and habituated so as to glorify God.

The point to highlight here is that Luther and particularly Calvin rejected the Thomistic view of habitual grace. Whereas Aquinas argued that grace perfected nature which meant that nature was understood in fundamental continuity with grace, the Protestant version of this axiom, based on the conviction that the fall had not merely damaged but destroyed original nature, was that God's grace *overcame* sinful human nature. Since Aquinas believed that nature was perfected by grace, he taught a distinction between operating and cooperating grace. Cooperating grace was a gift of God infused by God into the soul (the doctrine of

justification) which became habitual grace (the doctrine of sanctification), which was the principle of meritorious work.⁶⁷

Calvin explicitly rejected Aquinas's optimistic view of a comfortable cooperation between God's gracious gift and the necessary human response to it since "It has not yet been demonstrated whether man has been wholly deprived of all power to do good, or still has some power, though meagre and weak; a power, indeed, that can do nothing of itself, but with the help of grace also does its part." Calvin rejected the conclusion that "doing our part" meant that "we cooperate with the assisting grace of God, because it is our right either to render it effectual by spurning the first grace, or to confirm it by obediently following it."⁶⁸ Whereas Aquinas understood God's grace infused in humankind as becoming a habitual grace, Calvin rejected the concepts of both infused grace and habitual grace. He likewise rejected the category of merit, congruent and condign, as opposed to a proper understanding of grace alone. Human beings came before God in the grace revealed in Jesus Christ and with no merit of their own. Grace was entirely God's gift and did not depend on human cooperation. Since Protestants believed that grace overcame nature instead of perfecting it, they generally understand God's grace to *replace* rather than merely *restore* fallen nature. However, the distinction between sin damaging or destroying our original nature was not absolute. Calvin insisted that something of reason and will remained undestroyed in humankind.⁶⁹ From this affirmation, one could infer a natural human capacity to think and to choose, which God's grace having created and preserved employed without infusing, or – more precisely – reinfusing.

⁶⁷ For more information, see Bernard Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas* (London, 1971); Joseph P. Wawrykow, *God's Grace and Human Action: 'Merit' in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995); Jeremy D. Wilkins, "Grace and Growth: Aquinas Longeran, and the Problematic of Habitual Grace," *Theological Studies* 72 No. 4 (December 2011): pp. 723 – 749.

⁶⁸ John Calvin *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia, 1960), II .2.6

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, II. 2.12.

After the interlude of Catholic Restoration under Queen Mary and during the reign of Elizabeth I, Reformed theology was the prevailing outlook of the Church of England. It is generally conceded that this Calvinist hegemony persisted until challenged by King Charles I and Archbishop of Canterbury William Laud, whose programme for the Church of England sought to supplant Calvinism with a more conservative Protestantism that had much in common with Lutheranism, especially in its focus on the sacraments and downplaying of such tenets of Calvinism as unconditional predestination.⁷⁰ By analogy with the Dutch movement, this was called ‘Arminianism’ by Calvinist opponents.

Another important development to consider, therefore, is the work of Dutch Reformed theologian Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), whose teachings formed the basis of Arminianism. Arminius’ definition of faith was similar to that of his contemporaries.⁷¹ He identified knowledge as the foundation of faith and its “antecedent.” The formal act of faith was assent and the immediate “consequent” of faith was confidence or trust.⁷² Arminius argued that this faith was the direct result of the internal persuasion of the Holy Spirit. The assent that constituted the formal act of faith was “infused above the order of nature.”⁷³ Its “author” was the Holy Spirit who proposed truth to the understanding and “there works a persuasion” which was a supernatural, internal working of the Spirit.⁷⁴ Arminius regarded the absence of an “internal grace” as the mark of Pelagianism because it did away with the importance of divine aid, and so his definition of faith did not include works.⁷⁵ Faith could grow by external works, but such works did not constitute faith. Thus, faith, according to

⁷⁰ Dewey D. Wallace, Jr, *Shapers of English Calvinism, 1660-1714: Variety, Persistence, and Transformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 13-14.

⁷¹ See Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*, p. 142

⁷² Jacob Arminius, “Private Disputations,” in XLIV, ii, v, in *The Writings of Jacob Arminius*, 3 vols., trans. James Nichols and W. R. Bagnal (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1977), II:109-110

⁷³ XLIV. V, Writings, II: 110.

⁷⁴ Arminius, “Private Disputations,” XLIV. Vi, in Writings, II:110.

⁷⁵ Arminius, “Nice Questions,” V, in *Writings*, II: 110.

Arminius, was assent to what was known by the understanding – this assent was the work of the Spirit and existed separately from works.

It was in this light that Arminius insisted that faith was both a gift of God and a condition of salvation which involved a human response. According to Arminius,

Faith is the gracious and gratuitous gift of God, bestowed accordingly to the administration of the means necessary to conduce to the end, that is, according to such an administration as the justice of God requires, either towards the side of mercy or towards that of severity. It is a gift which is not bestowed according to an absolute will of saving some particular men; for it is a condition required in the object to be saved, and it is in fact a condition before it is the means for obtaining salvation.⁷⁶

Faith was a gift in the sense that it was the effect of God's prevenient grace. It was a human response in the sense that it was a condition for receiving justifying grace. But no one could come to the Father except those drawn by the prevenient grace of God. Humankind's will to believe, as we have seen above, was the direct result of God's grace. Consequently, faith was fundamentally God's gift since no man could believe unless God had first given them the gift of grace, that is, the will to believe.⁷⁷

However, faith, for Arminius, was also a human act. It was an act of believing as well as an act of assent. Importantly, Arminius distinguished between the "quality of habit" of faith and the "act" of faith. Habitual faith was the capacity, the will to believe, which God infused into humankind. However, actual faith was that which God required for the imputation of righteousness.⁷⁸ Consequently, the habit of faith was the gift – it was the operative grace, but the act of faith was the result of cooperative grace in which man

⁷⁶ Arminius, "Certain Articles," XIX. IX, in *Writings*, II: 500.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, II:500-501.

⁷⁸ Arminius, "Nine Questions," VIII, in *Writings*, I: 387.

submitted to the movement of God's grace. In the reception of habitual faith, man was passive, but in the act of faith, he was both active and passive.

The passivity of faith was seen in two respects. First, the act of faith never arose out of the human subject alone. According to Arminius, God did not give man habitual faith and then cease his activity in some deistic sense. Rather, the gracious work of the Spirit was constant, and at every point he was working to bring humankind to the act of faith. The flow of grace did not stop, but it continued as it brought humankind to the act of faith. The grace of God not only preceded, but also accompanied and followed any good that an individual accomplished. Second, the passivity of faith was seen in the absence of merit. Faith was not to be considered a work, but was rather an act of reception. It was not a work of righteousness because then it could not be imputed, as Arminius explained: "Faith is not righteousness itself, but is graciously accounted for righteousness."⁷⁹ Faith, therefore, was not the ground of justification and Arminius made this abundantly clear:

Christ has not obtained by his merits that we should be justified by the worthiness and merit of faith and much less that we should be justified by the merit of works: But the merit of Christ is opposed to justification by works; and in the Scriptures, faith and merit are placed in opposition to each other.⁸⁰

In other words, Christ's obedience was the merit of justification. Faith had no part in that merit except that it received it. Faith and Christ's death did not stand in the same relation to salvation. The believer was saved by merit, but not a merit that derived from faith, but a merit that was earned by Christ. As a result, salvation, according to Arminius, was not a lessening of the rigor of the law but the fulfilment of it in Christ by the imputation of his righteousness.

However, Arminius did argue that the will of man had an important active role in the coming to faith. Humankind had to cooperate with the grace of God. This cooperation,

⁷⁹ Arminius, "Letter to Hippolytus," V, in *Writings*, I: 474.

⁸⁰ Arminius, "Private Disputations," XLVIII, Corollary iii, in *Writings*, II: 119.

however, was not a co-earning, but was an active reception of a gift, that is, the gift of Christ's merit. Nevertheless, faith remained an act on the part of man (but not without the assistance of grace). In the words of Arminius, "faith is the requirement of God and the act of the believer when he answers the requirement."⁸¹ However, it was an act which was of the nature of "acceptance or apprehension."⁸² It was, therefore, an act only as it was an instrument of justification, that is, the means by which Christ was made ours in cooperation with the Spirit of God. This constituted the "agreement and concurrence" between divine grace and free will.⁸³ Carl Bangs has summarised Arminius' relation between passive and active aspects of the will: "salvation being in Christ, it is not dependent upon free will, but free will is active in salvation."⁸⁴ In sum, then, for Arminius, free will did not act autonomously or meritoriously but it did act to receive what God offered. Unlike the will-full, self-seeking, and extreme Augustinian God as well as the God of early English Calvinists such as William Perkins whose God chose to condemn the majority of humankind before the creation of the world, Arminius's God genuinely wished to save every human being. He offered grace to everyone. He offered enough grace, in fact, that every human being actually had the capacity to respond to God's offer with faith, the capacity to cooperate with grace and be saved. It was because of his emphasis on faith as a human response, however, that Arminius drew criticism and was accused of denying that faith was the instrument of justification.⁸⁵

The important point to highlight at this stage, however, is that Arminius, by arguing that God allowed a degree of free will so that man could respond and accept redemption, was also suggesting that man had a greater capacity of free will as well. As we will see,

⁸¹ Arminius, "Apology." XXVI, in Writings, I: 363

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid., XXVII, in Writings, I: 365.

⁸⁴ Carl Bangs, "Arminius and the Reformation," *Church History*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Jun., 1961), p. 168.

⁸⁵ For an excellent overview, see Aza Goudriaan, "Justification by Faith and the Early Arminian Controversy," in Maarten Wisse, Marcel Sarot, and Willemien Otten (eds.), *Scholasticism Reformed: Essays in Honour of Willem J. van Asselt* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

particularly in chapter 2, it was in this blurred region between man's free will and acceptance of God's grace that the notion of habit operated. Restoration divines believed that English society could be habituated to faith and to performing their religious duties; that English subjects could be brought into alignment with the English church through habituation into sociable dispositions and manners. In other words, habit could prepare humankind enough to accept redemption and God's saving grace. It's important to note that Calvin would have outright rejected such an approach. Since habit would enable the individual to perform actions they would otherwise either could not do at all or could only accomplish with great difficulty such as prepare for God's saving grace, this would, in Calvin's eyes, have eroded the special efficacy of grace. Grace in its primary sense remained in God; properly speaking the individual was not given grace or prepared for it, but received by God into His grace and favour was the object of God's good will. Thus, Calvin would never have permitted the notion of habituation to accept God's grace.

The final part of this section will now briefly focus on the role of habit and virtue in Richard Hooker's soteriology. In *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance*, Deborah Shugrger suggested that early modern "Anglican" churchman marginalised ethical inquiry in their sermons and theological treatises. In the work of Richard Hooker and Lancelot Andrewes, Shugrger argued that "both ethical and theoretical concerns are subordinate to the need for intimate contact with God. There is this little emphasis on morality or natural theology."⁸⁶ According to Shugrger, such works were preoccupied with affective inwardness, spiritual psychology and "theological emotionalism" rather than matters of external conduct: "our account of spiritual psychology in Hooker...has disclosed a pervasive concern with affective inwardness, with the experiences of desire, confusion, fear, and so forth – as

⁸⁶ Deborah Shugrger, *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance: Religion, Politics, and the Dominant Culture* (Berkeley: University of California, 1990), p. 12.

opposed to a concern with sin and morality, which seems to have been more typical in the period.”⁸⁷ Shuger’s equation of morality with outward duty and action is similar to C.F Allison’s *The Rise of Moralism*, which argued that Anglican morality or ‘holy living’ theology only properly began in the mid-seventeenth-century, with the emphasis in Jeremy Taylor’s sermons on rule-following and the belief that sin required practical amelioration through social controls and moral training.⁸⁸

If ‘morality’ is taken in its most restrictive usage to mean favourable external conduct, then Shuger and Allison were correct to note a neglect of morality in the writings of Anglican orthodoxy. However, considering the richness of the moral vocabularies articulated during the early modern period, and considering how central moral philosophy, if not moral conduct, was to mainstream Anglicanism, the identification of morality with external behaviour was an under-theorised affiliation. Moral philosophy, for example, is the focal point of Books 1 and 5 of Hooker’s *Lawes*, where Hooker negotiated the tensions between classical virtue theory and Protestant anti-perfectionism.

Hooker’s challenge was to account for the intimate relationship between justification and sanctification without arguing that one caused the other. If one argued that sanctification caused justification, then one supported a Pelagian doctrine, according to which meritorious works achieved grace. If one argued that justification causes sanctification, then one was still faced with adequately theorising the internal change of character that occurred during regeneration. While a discussion of Hooker’s ecclesiology is beyond the scope of this thesis, Hooker’s position, as we will see, was not that dissimilar to the practical morality and ethics that emerged in post-Restoration latitudinarian writings.⁸⁹ Hooker’s discussion of the church

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 87.

⁸⁸ See C. F. Allison, *The Rise of Moralism: The Proclamation of the Gospel from Hooker to Baxter* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1966).

⁸⁹ For a fuller discussion, see A. J. Joyce, *Richard Hooker and Anglican Moral Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

as a school of virtue, in a sense, demonstrated the extent to which polemical manoeuvring dictated the amount of attention given to sanctification. His concern to enhance the role of the sacraments and liturgical practices was influenced by his Erastianism as well as his desire to counter the Presbyterian exaltation of the invisible church. Hooker proposed a two-fold theory of ethics in which natural law theology was supplemented by a Neo-Scholastic theory of grace which operated within an Aristotelian-Thomistic framework.⁹⁰

Hooker made a distinction, not found in Luther's or Calvin's theology, between two forms of sanctifying righteousness. Habitual sanctifying righteousness, for Hooker, functioned as the efficient cause of justification, from which actual sanctifying righteousness followed. Habitual sanctification, marked by an infusion of the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, established the ultimate ends, natural law, which primarily worked to enlighten and recondition the intellect, established the proximate ends. Hooker, in other words, advocated not a two-fold division between religion and morality, but a two-tiered system of morality. The training of the will was a constituent feature of sanctification, and the training of the intellect assisted the individual in apprehending the axiomatic rightness of natural laws, those which dictated worldly, rather than ultimate ends.⁹¹

Hooker's position on salvation borrowed much from Aquinas but remained in the spirit of the moderate English Calvinist position. Drawing implicitly both on the definition of habit as the condition of possibility of behaving in a certain way and on the traditional definition of the Christian virtues of faith, love and hope as "infused virtues," he described inherent righteousness as a kind of "habitual holiness." Moreover, because of its essentially habitual character, inherent righteousness was to be distinguished from "actual holiness," the

⁹⁰ See Paul A. Cefalu, *Moral Identity*, ch. 3.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, ch. 6.

latter being the sum of all the godly deeds that the individual was able to perform because of the presence of the habit of inherent righteousness within them.⁹²

Although Hooker wrote in *the Learned Discourse* that sanctifying righteousness marked an infusion of a habit of theological virtues, he noted in the *Lawes* that the process of receiving and realising such virtue was very much an ongoing one: “the habit of faith, which afterwards doth come with years, but a farther building up of the same edifice, the first foundation whereof was laid by the Sacrament of Baptism.”⁹³ The infusion of virtue established a union with God, which involved a gradual improvement on the behalf of the justified sinner: “Baptism implieth a covenant or league between God and man wherein as God doth bestow presently remission and the Holy Ghost, binding also himself to add in process of time what grace soever shall be farther necessary for the attainment of everlasting life.”⁹⁴

Furthermore, Grace was given not solely through the sacraments, however, but also through worship and prayer; through holy action:

magnifieth the holy meditations and actions of divine men . . . working in them whose hearts God inspireth with the due consideration thereof, an habit or disposition of mind whereby they are made fit vessels, both for receipt and for delivery of whatsoever spiritual perfection. What is there necessary for man to know, which the Psalms are not able to teach? They are to beginners an easy and familiar introduction, a mighty augmentation of all virtue and knowledge in such as are entered before, a strong confirmation to the most perfect amongst others.⁹⁵

⁹² W. S. Hill (ed.), *The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker*, vol. 6: *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie, Books I-VIII: Introductions and Commentary* (Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1993), 5:129.19; *Justification*, 21.

⁹³ Hooker, *Laws*, 5.64, in *Works*, II. 289.

⁹⁴ Hooker, *Laws*, 5.64, in *Works*, II. 291.

⁹⁵ Hooker, *Laws*, 5.37, in *Works*, II. 141.

There are sections in the *Lawes* in which Hooker claimed that an accurate perception of and turning toward one's union with God required not only a passive bestowal of supernatural virtue through the sacraments, but also a co-operative effort on the part of the individual to train their affections through prayer and church worship. Thus, when Hooker made reference to participation in festivals, he claimed "The constant habit of well doing is not gotten without the custom of doing well, neither can virtue be made perfect but by the manifold works of virtue often practised."⁹⁶

Although feasts and holiday church services were intermittent, such participation was important because it helped maintain a disposition toward virtue that remained active even after the passing of such services: "So that although by their necessary short continuance they abridge the present exercise of piety in some kind, yet because by repetition they enlarge, strengthen and confirm the habits of all virtue, it remaineth, that we honour, observe, and keep them as ordinances..."⁹⁷ Hooker chose his words carefully here in order to avoid any confusion of his rhetoric of habituation to virtue with a classicised regimen of moral perfectionism. He noted only that repetition and practice "confirms" virtue, not that it led to the acquisition or development of virtue.

Hooker's two-tiered moral system was thus notable for its appropriation of the rhetoric of moral habituation in relation to spiritual matters, without directly postulating that moral agents acquire through their own efforts, virtues as dispositions of character. Hooker constantly returned to the improvement of moral conditioning, hence the importance of Aristotelian behaviourism. One emerges from the first chapter of Book V of the *Lawes*, for example, with the idea of godliness or genuine piety as the highest human virtue and the source of other virtues in their purest forms. Godliness, for Hooker, was a virtue in Aristotle's

⁹⁶ Hooker, *Laws*, 5.71, in *Works*, II. 369.

⁹⁷ Hooker, *Laws*, 5.71, in *Works*, II. 370.

sense, a habit of character, not a collection of good deeds or isolated religious experiences, but a reliable and self-conscious disposition to perform godly actions for their own sake, a disposition that could be cultivated: “That which the gospel of Christ requireth is the perpetuity of virtuous duties; not perpetuity of exercise or action, but disposition perpetual, and practice as oft as times and opportunities require.”⁹⁸ While Hooker’s moral theory was derived, in part, from Aristotelian behaviourism the important idea here is that for Hooker moral conduct was not instrumental to justification but rather a key component of double grace, imputed by God and then continued and fully realised by the individual. Nevertheless, the performance of works, according to Hooker, was a requirement in the process of achieving one’s sanctification: “Salvation therefore by Christ is the foundation of Christianity: as for works, they are a thing subordinate, no otherwise necessary than because our sanctification cannot be accomplished without them.”⁹⁹

Again, the main point here is that Hooker emphasised the importance of moral training that led to an appreciation of the final end, union with God. In the pursuit of this final end, the individual had to undergo, as Peter Lake has pointed out, a step-wise process of moral training and education which involved a process of preparing the heart for the “receipt” and “delivery” of spiritual perfection.¹⁰⁰ In sum, the process of turning the individual toward to the final end required not only a passive bestowal of supernatural virtue through an administration of the sacraments, but also a co-operative effort on the part of the justified sinner to train their affections through prayer and church worship. Thus, for Hooker, “the constant habit of well doing is not gotten without the custom of doing well, neither can virtue be made perfect but by the manifold works of virtue often practiced.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Hooker, *Laws*, 5.32 in *Works*, II. 641

¹⁰⁰ Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterians and English Conformist thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), p. 166

¹⁰¹ Hooker, *Laws*, 5.71 in *Works* II. 369.

The intellectual sources that I have briefly sketched above, informed ideas of habit and habituation in the late Early Modern English period. Although earlier, the prevailing outlook of English Protestants, Calvin and Calvinism became for many objects of obloquy and hostility in the generations after 1660. David Field, for example, has described this rejection of Calvinism as “the single most important feature on the theological landscape of England in the later seventeenth century.”¹⁰² As we will see in the coming chapters, late Early Modern English intellectuals invoked a notion of habit that was essentially a hybrid of Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy mixed with the depravity associated Calvinist theology as well as building upon Hooker’s practical moral theory and notion of habitual sanctification. In other words, it attempts to examine what Margo Todd has astutely described as an “intellectual milieu which...combined humanist optimism with the Calvinist doctrine of human depravity.”¹⁰³

Furthermore, whilst the influence of Arminianism on the seventeenth-century English Church has been the subject of much debate, in Restoration England, there existed the distinct religious communities of the Church of England and dissent.¹⁰⁴ With the purging of the Puritans by the Act of Uniformity, the Church presented a different profile, as a new Anglicanism was constructed.¹⁰⁵ This identity, sharpened by the experience of being out of power during the Cromwellian Interregnum, was built on the foundations of Laud and the Caroline Divines, and resulted in a church, in the words of John Spurr, “with a distinct doctrinal, ecclesiological and spiritual identity.” This Anglicanism centred in liturgy and

¹⁰² David Field, *Rigid Calvinism in a Softer Dress: The Moderate Presbyterianism of John Howe, 1630-1705* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 2004) p. 4.

¹⁰³ Margo Todd, *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 18.

¹⁰⁴ See, for example, Nicholas Tyacke, *Aspects of English Protestantism c. 1530-1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), ch. 9.

¹⁰⁵ For a succinct summary of this, see Susan Doran and Christopher Durston, *Princes, Pastors and People: The Church and Religion in England, 1500-1700* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 33, 78, 104-107, 133, 177.

Episcopal authority, and was increasingly Arminian and anti-Calvinist, though distinctly Reformed in its Eucharistic theology and many other matters.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1991), p. XIV

Chapter 1

Henry More, John Wilkins, and the concept of ‘Right Reason’

In his *Ductor Dubitantium or the Rule of Conscience in all her generall measures* (1660), the Anglican divine Jeremy Taylor complained about appeals to reason on the grounds that

reason is such a box of quicksilver that it abides nowhere; it dwells in no settled mansion; it is like a dove’s neck, or a changeable taffata; it looks to me otherwise than to you, who do not stand in the same light that I do: and if we inquire after the law of nature by the rules of our reason, we shall be uncertain as the discourses of the people, or the dreams of disturbed fancies.¹⁰⁷

Taylor’s passage effectively sums up the issues that plagued reason throughout mid- to late seventeenth-century England; mainly that every man’s reason was highly unreliable and not to be trusted. And yet, Restoration England was an era captivated by reason and the search for a rational basis for religion.¹⁰⁸ This first chapter, then, focuses on one form of reason that experienced a surge of popularity during the Restoration period – the concept known as ‘right reason,’ an instrument that was held to a true and solid judgement of things that covered both the sense of correct ratiocination in conformity with the truth of things and the sense of a perfecting action of the mind.

The purpose of this chapter is to present a new reading of the concept of right reason in mid-to late Early Modern England. Whilst much work has been carried out on the concept, there are several fundamental distinctions concerning its conception and application that have gone hitherto unnoticed by scholars. Through a comparative examination of the works of

¹⁰⁷ Jeremy Taylor, *Ductor Dubitantium* (London, 1660), vol. I, p. 231.

¹⁰⁸ See, for example, John Spurr, “‘Rational Religion’ in Restoration England” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (Oct. – Dec., 1988): pp 563-585.

Henry More and John Wilkins, two thinkers whose views, superficially, were very similar, it will be shown that they subscribed to two very different interpretations of the concept – More, an innatist one; and Wilkins, a habitual one.

This chapter, then, proceeds as follows; it begins by offering an improved definition of ‘right reason’ in seventeenth-century England – a more rigorous and accurate terminology and better differentiated appreciation of theological differences makes for a better framework in which to consider its usage. Second, by paying particular attention to the natural law tradition and the thorny issues raised by Thomas Hobbes, it will attempt to contextualise ‘right reason’ more carefully within a distinctively late Early Modern English setting. Third, by using two philosophical categories known as ‘empiricism’ and ‘rationalism’, it will be shown how there were two different conceptions of right reason in existence during the period. The first of these two conceptions was exemplified in the work of Henry More. It stressed the importance of innate ideas imprinted on the human mind and was heavily influenced by Platonic philosophy. The second, embodied in the writings of John Wilkins and consolidated in the work of John Locke, was much more open to evidence drawn from the senses, stressed the importance of ‘experience’ in the acquisition of natural truths and natural law, and was informed by classical theories of habit. The fourth section then explores the implications of these findings in a theological context.

Most importantly, this chapter shows how Wilkins believed that the concept of habit could be used to solve the highly contestable nature of reason. In an ideal world, Man’s natural right reason could discern the Laws of Nature and function as a reliable moral guide. In a fallen world, however, it was felt to be insufficient. This was where habitually acquired patterns of behaviour could act as a potential vanguard against such moral backsliding. Since the majority of English society could not be relied upon to grasp the dictates of reason by themselves, they therefore had to be supervised and habituated by authorities. The dictates of

reason, in other words, had to be internalised through habituation. Thus, according to Wilkins, English society had to be habituated to internalise moral virtues and to govern their passions and actions so as to maintain and cultivate sociability.

Defining ‘Right Reason’

While it must be acknowledged that ‘right reason’ was only an important tool for as long as religion was an all-pervasive aspect of social and private life, and for as long as man believed that the end product of all human action was to arrive at harmony with, and to share in, divine reason, it nevertheless appears to have fulfilled a useful intellectual function, which seems to account for its thorough development and elaboration from the Middle Ages right through to the later Early Modern period.

The concept of ‘right reason’ originated in the writings of Cicero and owed its widespread diffusion in Christian thought to the influence of Aristotelianism.¹⁰⁹ While it depended upon the faculty of reason, it varied in a number of important ways according to how actual human ‘reason’ was used and thought about. In the first instance, it was a faculty of perception that revealed the highest moral virtues: the light within all mankind that enabled them to judge truth from falsity, right from wrong, good from evil, and virtue from vice. In other words, it was reason used in the right way or reason in its perfect state, which, it was thought, allowed the human mind to transcend the boundaries of ordinary physical phenomena as well its strong selfish tendencies in order to share in the rational nature of the divine mind. ‘Right reason,’ therefore, gifted man with the capacity to know God and discern God’s will. In this way, it was also viewed as a faculty of understanding: it allowed man to know the divine law or natural laws that had been given by God which revealed the essential

¹⁰⁹ For a short summary of the origin of ‘right reason’ see, Richard Arnold, *Logic of the Fall* (Peter Lang: New York, 2006), ch. 1.

order of creation. Joseph Glanvill summed this up well in 1676: “To be persuaded by God and right Reason, is one and the same thing.”¹¹⁰

Metaphorically, ‘right reason’ was comprehended in several terms such as the ‘candle of the lord’ a ‘divine spark’, a ‘divine light’, or a ‘natural light’ that resided in the ‘hearts of all men’ which God himself had placed there - as Bishop Lancelot Andrewes wrote in 1611, “...when God created man according to his owne Image, he breathed into him life immortall, he gave him sparkes of knowledge, and inbued his soule with reason and understanding, in which regard it is called the *candle of the lord*”; Similarly, Nathaniel Culverwell (citing Hugo Grotius), wrote that “Right reason (saith he) is that fix’d, and unshaken Law, not writ in perishing-paper by the Hand, or Pen of a Creature, nor graven like a dead letter upon livelesse, and decaying pillars; but written with the point of a Diamond, nay, with the finger of God himself in the heart of man.”¹¹¹

Lastly, ‘right reason’ functioned as a moral as well as an intellectual faculty. This meant that virtue and knowledge were intricately linked to one another and that the divine wisdom, which ‘right reason’ was alleged to discern, was dependent on satisfying a series of ethical conditions as well as following a prudent and sober intellectual method. It was, above all, a psychological process which articulated the force of moral obligation. Furthermore, it should be noted that seventeenth-century actors usually wrote and referred to ‘right reason’ as though everyone knew perfectly well what the concept involved, as though its directives were always plainly evident and represented something that was correct and requisite.

¹¹⁰ Joseph Glanvill, *Essays on several important subjects in philosophy and religion* (London, 1676).

¹¹¹ J. Bliss and J.P Wilson (eds.), *Ninety-Six Sermons by Lancelot Andrewes* (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1841), p. 366; Nathaniel Culverwell, *An elegant and leaned discourse of the light of nature* (Oxford, 1669), p. 36.

Historiography

The concept of ‘right reason’ had had a long history by the time Henry More and John Wilkins were writing. It is not my purpose to review that history in any detail here; my aim in this brief section is to highlight the major seventeenth-century scholarship on ‘right reason’ and how my interpretation fits within that scholarship.

Robert Hoopes in his *Right Reason in the English Renaissance*, for example, traces the concept of ‘right reason’ from its origins in classical antiquity, through selected authors of the medieval periods (notably St. Thomas Aquinas) to the English Renaissance culminating in the works of Hooker, Milton and the Cambridge Platonists. Hoopes’s monograph demonstrates the utility of ‘right reason’ by detailing the ease with which it was assimilated into the Christian humanist tradition.¹¹² Similarly, Robert Greene has shown that, whilst ‘right reason’ was losing ground owing to the strict Protestant attack on human reason, it did survive due to a number of Christian humanist and liberal Protestant transformations of the idea, largely indebted to the Neostoic revival.¹¹³

Lotte Mulligan has shown in several articles how ‘right reason’ was used extensively in Anglican apologetics and sermons to identify reasoning in religion which was held to be congenial with orthodox Christian teachings and revelation.¹¹⁴ In this assertion, Mulligan is essentially correct, although as we shall see later, she has neglected crucial ways in which

¹¹² Robert Hoopes, *Right Reason in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962). See also, Herschel Baker, *The Wars of Truth: Studies in the Decay of Christian Humanism in the Earlier Seventeenth Century* (Gloucester, Mass., 1969), pp. 90-131.

¹¹³ Robert A. Greene, “Syndersis, the Spark of Conscience, in the English Renaissance,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 52 (1991): pp. 195 - 219.

¹¹⁴ Lotte Mulligan, “‘Reason,’ ‘Right Reason,’ and ‘Right Reason,’ and ‘Revelation’ in Mid-Seventeenth-Century England,” In *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance*, edited by Brian Vickers, (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 375-401; “Robert Boyle, Right Reason and the Meaning of Metaphor,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* vol. 55, no. 2, (1994); “Robert Boyle, the Christian Virtuoso, and the Rhetoric of Reason,” In *Religion, Reason, and Nature in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Robert Crocker (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001), pp. 97-116.

various post-Restoration divines differed in their conceptions as to exactly how ‘right reason’ operated.

An argument for the increased use of ‘right reason’ in the Restoration era has been made by John Spurr. Concerned with the problems that confronted the restored Church, he shows how it attempted to maintain its monopoly over rational religion in the midst of various challenges to its hegemony. It adapted its uses of ‘reason’ in order to meet challenges from enthusiasts, non-conformists, sceptics, Catholics, and deists who also claimed reason for themselves. The crux of the matter, for Spurr, was the necessity of the clergy to keep its authority and intellectual supremacy in the face of numerous attacks on the national Church. Among the English clergy, Spurr argues, the tradition of ‘right reason’ was a broken epistemological weapon which undermined the special status of the Church’s teachings by allowing ordinary people to bring dogma before the bar of the teachings of the Church of England.¹¹⁵

This chapter does not seek to dispute any of the above scholarship. It does, however, aim to remedy a gap in our understanding of right reason. What all of these major works fail to address is how late early modern English intellectuals actually interpreted right reason and how they conceived of its operation as a faculty within the human mind. In an article on natural theology in the seventeenth-century Scott Mandelbrote, for example, has suggested that perhaps the key difference between individuals such as More and Wilkins was the former’s emphasis on “the ability of human beings to know God (which) depended critically on the innate presence of the idea of God” and the latter’s reliance on “sensory perception to the correct conclusions.”¹¹⁶ Taking on-board Mandelbrote’s observations, then, as well as drawing upon the philosophical approaches of ‘rationalism’ and ‘empiricism,’ this chapter

¹¹⁵ John Spurr, “‘Rational Religion’ in Restoration England.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 49:563-85.

¹¹⁶ Scott Mandelbrote, “The Uses of Natural Theology in Seventeenth-Century England,” *Science in Context*, 20 no. 3, (2007): pp. 451-480, p. 458.

will put forward a new, more subtle reading of 'right reason.' This reading will show that whilst right reason may have been superficially a homogenous concept, it was, in fact, conceived differently by two key Restoration thinkers.

Context

The standard use of right reason, then, was that it supported, and did not challenge, orthodox religious teaching. In effect, it tended to be invoked primarily on the basis of the belief that man could transcend his postlapsarian state, which restrained him with imperfections and falsehoods, in order to arrive at a place where it was alleged that one could share in the divine knowledge of the creator. This process, of arriving at a place where man shared an intimate connection with the divine mind, was not simply a rhetorical tool. It was, in fact, highly important that man used his faculty of 'right reason' to arrive at infallible conclusions because the concept itself was bound up with highly complex and controversial issues ranging from the foundations of the natural law tradition, the obligatory force of the laws of nature, the source of man's morality, and, not least, whether reason could demonstrate the existence of God and identify the fundamental truths of religion.

In Restoration England these issues were of major concern to those devout clergy and laymen of the Church of England who were convinced that God's existence and his moral laws were amenable to such rational proof. It became more crucial at this point in time after 1660 for the Church of England to defend its official position against the various sects of dissenters and non-conformists that had gained prominence during the civil wars and the Interregnum. Such groups represented a challenge to the authority of the clergy and the church. Right reason, therefore, was a potentially useful tool which could be mustered to stamp out heterodoxy.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ See *ibid.*

Such arguments, however, relied not only on mankind being able to reason in a logical and methodical fashion, but also on the assumption that right reason was an infallible faculty that anyone could access once they had reasoned correctly. This, of course, raised a variety of awkward and tricky questions over the nature, application, and process of right reason: Glaring questions, such as how could one be sure that they had not thought confusedly or reasoned illogically, raised the issue of whether ‘right reason’ could ever be mistaken.

The problem surrounding the highly debatable impartiality of right reason was cleverly exposed by Thomas Hobbes in one of his first major works *De Cive* in 1642 when he wrote that:

By right reason in men’s natural state, I understand not, as many do, an infallible faculty, but the act of reasoning, that is the peculiar and true ratiocination of every man concerning those actions of his...I call it peculiar, because although in a civil government the reason of the supreme, that is, the civil law, is to be received by each single subject for the right; yet being without this civil government,...no man can know right reason from false.¹¹⁸

Hobbes’s definition of right reason reveals the root of the problem which promulgators of the concept had to deal with. Right reason, as Hobbes shrewdly argued, was subjective; there was a startling absence of any objective criteria by which its fruits could be measured. This inevitably rendered the concept extremely untrustworthy. For an individual to suggest that right reason constituted some independent, disinterested and divinely sanctioned, standard of judgement, was an error ‘that hath cost thousands of men their lives. Was there ever a King that made a law which in right reason had been better unmade? And shall those laws therefore not be obeyed? Shall we rebel?’¹¹⁹

Hobbes’s views expressed in *De Cive* clearly anticipate the themes of his more famous *Leviathan* (1651). In his *magnum opus* Hobbes presented a contribution to the religio-political

¹¹⁸ Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive* (1642), p. 33.

¹¹⁹ Hobbes, *The Questions concerning Liberty, Necessity, and Chance* (1656), p.175.

debate which was typically both disruptive and alarming. Out of the many heavy blows that Hobbes dealt to the accepted nature of man and civil society, perhaps his most devastating one was his contention that man's natural reason was insufficient to identify God's will. This powerful and sweeping proclamation carried with it a number of disturbing consequences: it called in to question the entirety of the natural law tradition, man's primal instincts in the state of nature, as well as the nature of political, religious, and societal authority.

The natural law tradition was viewed by many contemporaries as a possible solution to the religious and political strife which had plagued England throughout the course of the seventeenth century.¹²⁰ As a tradition and a concept it presupposed the existence of common notions and values which could be gleaned from the nature of man regardless of his religious disposition, culture or nationality. Hobbes did use the language of natural law theory as the foundation for his political theory, but he purposely subverted it in several key areas. The major problem that dogged the natural tradition was the difficulty of demonstrating what was natural and how it could be shown to be obligatory.

The traditional scholastic approach to natural law entailed that its contents were the dictates of right reason, and so this meant that such dictates were contingent on the virtue of the rationality that man shared with his creator. This standard account of natural law was adapted for a Protestant audience by Hugo Grotius in his *De jure belli ac pacis* of 1625. Grotius's work was essentially an irenic project, which dealt with the problems of religious fanaticism as well as the political, religious and moral fragmentation that religious wars had produced in early seventeenth-century Europe. For the many intellectuals and clergyman who followed Grotius and attempted to develop his work, the major problem with this approach

¹²⁰ For more information, see L. Daston & M. Stolleis (eds.), *Natural Law and Laws of Nature in Early Modern Europe: Jurisprudence, Theology, Moral and Natural Philosophy* (Ashgate, 2008).

to natural law was that it accorded human reason a considerable amount of authority as it necessitated that human reason could reveal God's will and therefore our natural obligations.

Human reason, of course, was held to have a highly ambivalent nature and thus had to be treated with scepticism. In Protestant theology at least, there was a deep-seated pessimistic estimation of man's faculties as fallen and deficient. This was particularly so in England, where Calvinist understandings of the doctrine of original sin predominated. As a result, the narrative of the Fall and its consequences dominated the theological, social and intellectual discussions. The renewed attention on the Fall and original sin that is characteristic of the early modern period was occasioned by the religious upheavals of the sixteenth century. These events not only led to a crisis of confidence in the traditional sources of knowledge, but also coincided with a revival of an Augustinian outlook that emphasized the corruption of human nature and the limitations of the human mind.¹²¹

In his *De jure naturali* (1640), John Selden suggested that God had somehow disseminated special knowledge of the laws of nature to Adam and then to Noah, commanding them to everlasting obedience, but his suggestion that these commands were primarily embodied in the Hebrew tradition was viewed as too much of mystical reliance which undermined the usefulness of his ideas. In a rather more orthodox approach, Jeremy Taylor argued that God's command was simply given through scripture. Others wishing to preserve some aspects of the scholastic argument, such as the Cambridge don Nathaniel Culverwel, sought to find evidence that God had designed the natural world in such a way that the dictates of obligatory natural law could be derived from a careful empirical study of nature.¹²²

¹²¹ William. M. Spellman, *John Locke and the Problem of Depravity* (Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 8-9. See also Peter Harrison, *The Fall of man and the foundations of science* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

¹²² John Selden, *De jure naturali & gentium iuxta disciplinam Ebraeorum libri septem* (London, 1640); Jeremy Taylor, *Ductor dubitantium* (London 1660); Nathaniel Culverwell, *An elegant and learned discourse of the light of nature* (1652).

Hobbes's critical analysis of natural law theory, however, had a number of serious implications for those wishing to use it for irenic purposes. Although Hobbes wrote about natural law in conventional terms, his critical analysis shattered the conventional moral relationships between those terms. While he certainly did believe that God commanded over all things, he thought that using reason, or indeed Scripture, to identify God's instructions was potentially misleading and precarious. Since Hobbes abolished the idea that natural law could bind individuals through reason, the only practical source of moral obligation which remained rested with the state and the magistrate. Moreover, Hobbes's subjective base for moral theory also threw out the idea that there existed an objective, natural morality, beyond that which was determined by the state.

Hobbes's view of human reason and right reason followed a similar path; one that involved authorisation by an absolute sovereign:

...no mans Reason, nor the Reason of any one number of men, makes the certaintie; no more than an account is therefore well cast up, because a great many men have unanimously approved it. And therefore, as when there is a controversy in an account, the parties must by their own accord, set up for right Reason, the Reason of some Arbitrator, or Judge, to whose sentence they will both stand, or their controversie must either come to blowes, or be undecided, for want of a right Reason constituted by Nature; so is it also in all debates of what kind soever.¹²³

Reason and, more importantly, right reason had to be carefully controlled by the state. In the state of nature, which, according to Hobbes, lacked any kind of moral public compass determining right from wrong, every man would have had to act on their own reason in order to decide their actions. Thus one man's right reason is simply another man's special pleading. This, for Hobbes, is not congenial to a peaceable state – if every man were to follow their own right reason then the entire social structure would inevitably fall into chaos. This

¹²³ Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651), pp. 32-33.

therefore led Hobbes to conclude that since “right reason is not existent, the reason of some man or men must supply the place thereof,” and such men had to be civil magistrates who were vested with the sovereign power.¹²⁴

The civil authority, in Hobbes’s account, became the absolute standard for right reason. Peter Dear’s interesting analogy sums this up perfectly: “For Hobbes, notions of God could not by themselves be cashed; the brute force of civil authority necessarily played that role for Him. The king was both God’s banker and God’s trustee.”¹²⁵ The crux of the issue for the Monster of Malmesbury was that an arbiter was required in order to tell individuals when their ‘right reason’ was, in fact, right! Right reason could not operate solely by way of its own virtue – it had to be guaranteed by the power of the absolute sovereign.

This is not to say that Hobbes believed that a common standard for living the virtuous life did not exist, rather the problem lay in the fact that such a standard could never be freed from the subjective interpretation until human beings elected a civil magistrate to legislate on such matters. The search for a common standard and man’s ability to access such a standard through means of his own reason thus formed the bedrock of responses to Hobbes’s totalitarianism in seventeenth-century England.

Historians have come to increasingly recognise that the discomfort caused by Hobbes’s writing was rooted in the fact that his radical ideas were based upon principles shared with contemporaries. This area of Hobbesian studies has been explored by Noel Malcolm and Jon Parkin, who have suggested that critical responses to Hobbes’s writings were based on an uneasy awareness that what Hobbes had advocated was not a far cry from the position of his critics.¹²⁶ Such studies, particularly Parkin’s, have convincingly shown

¹²⁴ Hobbes, *De corpore politico* (1655), p. 225.

¹²⁵ Peter Dear, “Divine Illumination, Mechanical Calculators, and the Roots of Modern Reason,” *Science in Context*, 23, (1998): pp. 351-366.

¹²⁶ See Noel Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes* (Clarendon Press, 2004); Jon Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan: The Reception of the Political and Religious Ideas of Thomas Hobbes in England 1640-1700* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

how Hobbes's influence can be found amongst his many critics who sought to tame and control his ideas, rather than rejecting them. This is a testament to Hobbes's political and religious relevance since the very issues that the *Leviathan* had raised in the 1650s persisted throughout the Restoration. The heart of the matter was that he was "too useful to ignore, but too dangerous to leave unchallenged."¹²⁷

Many Anglican divines throughout the period, such as Edward Stillingfleet and John Tillotson, appealed to an account of sovereign authority in political and religious matters which came very close to Hobbesian ideas, as their critics were more than happy to point out.¹²⁸ Their projects sought to defend the natural basis of restored society by providing a more acceptable natural law foundation as well as reasserting the natural basis of sociability. Richard Cumberland's *De legibus naturae* which was published in 1672 is a good example. Cumberland sought to demonstrate that the state of nature was bound by obligatory natural laws and that it was these laws which determined sovereign power and not the reverse. His primary goal was to show not only the content of natural law, but also its status as God's obligatory law.

The main problem that Cumberland faced was proving that sociable behaviour was a compulsory requirement which could be identified as the will of God. His solution was to argue that from a careful examination of nature it was possible to discover the laws of nature that God had laid down. It is important to note that this approach stemmed from Cumberland's faith in the new natural philosophy. The 1650s and 1660s had witnessed an outpouring of works which had suggested that the study of the natural world was an essential part of a natural theology that could reveal key characteristics about God's will. This new style of philosophical religious literature incorporated and made use of the new experimental

¹²⁷ Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan*, p. 16.

¹²⁸ J. Marshall, "The Ecclesiology of the Latitude-Men 1660-1689: Stillingfleet, Tillotson and 'Hobbism'", *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 36, Issue 03, 1985: pp. 407-427.

philosophy and emerged primarily in response to the upheavals of the 1640s. This natural theology argued emphatically – with clear reference to reason – for the intelligibility of nature, and its logical dependence on the Christian God. This type of natural theology, linking nature, morality and religious doctrine became a hallmark of the religio-theological culture of the Anglican Church. It found its earliest expressions in works such as Edward Stillingfleet's *Origines sacrae* (1662), John Tillotson's *The Rule of Faith* (1666), John Wilkins's *Of the Principles and Duties of Natural Religion* (1675) and its most fullest defence in John Ray's famous marriage between natural history and theology, *The Wisdom of God manifested in the Works of Creation* (1691).¹²⁹

Cumberland was convinced that any study of the human condition and morality could not be separated from the study of matter and motion. The laws of nature in the physical world were thus deeply connected to the divine moral laws that governed the world of men. The laws of nature and God's will could therefore be revealed through a careful observation of creation. Morality was therefore inherent in nature and obligatory moral laws were discoverable to those who were willing to search for them properly.¹³⁰

Where did right reason fit into Cumberland's solution? Cumberland, in fact, agreed with Hobbes that right reason could not be an infallible faculty. Nevertheless, Cumberland remained convinced that it could still be considered as a faculty "not false in the act of judging".¹³¹ Reason, although not infallible, still functioned and drew its conclusion based on sensory information collected from the natural world. On these empirical premises, Cumberland contended that the 'nature of things' was uniform and, more importantly,

¹²⁹ See H. R. McAdoo, *The Spirit of Anglicanism* (New York: Scribners, 1965).

¹³⁰ See Richard Cumberland, *De legibus naturae* (1672), ch. v.

¹³¹ Cited in J. Parkin, *Science, Religion and Politics in Restoration England: Richard Cumberland's De Legibus Naturae* (The Boydell Press, 1999), p. 178.

objective.¹³² Even though right reason was unable to glean conclusions by itself, it was able to ascertain objectively true conclusions from the evidence provided by nature. Thus, in reply to Hobbes, Cumberland claimed that the ‘nature of things’ provided a common standard which allowed all men to put their right reason to the test. In this way, one man’s right reason could be the same as everyone else’s (as long as it correctly understood the ‘nature of things’). For Cumberland, Hobbes’s main oversight was that he had neglected a fundamental truth: “that there was the same standard to all, by which the reason of everyone is to be tried, whether it be right or no; namely, the nature of things”.¹³³ The cornerstone of Cumberland’s natural theory was that in a world governed by God, man is encouraged to investigate the hidden characteristics of the world. This in turn enabled him to realise that he was inherently a social being and that moral behaviour was in fact a natural phenomenon which could be observed in a similar way as to the behaviour of physical bodies.

Cumberland’s novel natural law theory represented an important and influential anti-Hobbesian manifesto. In 1692 James Tyrell, a close friend of John Locke, produced an English version of *De Legibus Naturae* in his *Brief disquisition of the law of nature*, which was written as a response to the accusations of Hobbism that had been brought against Locke’s *Essay concerning human understanding* in 1690. Such an example reveals the significance of Cumberland’s thesis – he had effectively shown how it was possible to discourse about natural obligation and at the same time avoid the spectre of Hobbism.¹³⁴

Henry More and John Wilkins

In the last section we saw Hobbes’s representation of the social reality of right reason to be nothing more than a subjective means of judgement, and Cumberland’s subsequent attempt

¹³² Cumberland was by no means alone in making this argument – Edward Stillingfleet in his *Origines sacrae*, for example, had argued that a disciplined perception could reveal a true picture of the ‘nature of things’. See *Origines sacrae* (London, 1662) pp. 396-7.

¹³³ Cited in J. Parker, *Science, Religion and Politics in Restoration England* (1999), p. 179.

¹³⁴ Locke was presented by his friend James Tyrell with a copy of the translated and abridged version of Cumberland’s treatise that Tyrell had bought in 1692.

to show how it did, in fact, reveal a set of common notions founded on a sufficient analysis of evidence from sensory experience. This now brings us to a consideration of how right reason was conceived as an applied working faculty by two seventeenth-century philosophers, Henry More and John Wilkins.

In order to draw out the subtle, yet fundamental, differences between More's and Wilkins's conception of right reason, I will employ two opposing historical categories; the philosophical approaches of 'rationalism' and 'empiricism'. Rationalism gave human reason the primary role in knowing. A key figure in this school of thought, Rene Descartes' dictum is famous, "Cogito ergo sum" – I think, therefore I am. Empiricism, in contrast, placed the emphasis on experience. John Locke, arguably the father of modern empiricism, gave strong force to the concept of the human mind being a *tabula rasa* at birth upon which experience and the reflection of such experience imprinted knowledge.

While some historians would probably prefer a more taxonomic-sensitive framework when discussing seventeenth-century actors, I believe that such categories remain useful to the study of the early modern period, regardless of whether or not they were used by the historical actors. Always however they must be used with caution for it must be noted the lack of clarity in such a sharp dichotomy and the fact that two approaches tended to intermingle with one another. It is possible, for instance, to see Locke as almost in agreement with Descartes concerning the innate endowments of the mind.

Locke's famous assault against innatism in the *Essay*, whilst primarily directed against the Cartesian world-view, was also aimed at the Cambridge Platonists. It is important to point out, however, that reason's central role in the attainment of knowledge was never up for debate. For the empiricist philosopher, 'experience' involved an interaction with nature as well as reflecting upon such interaction; reason formed an integral part of this reflection. As

Peter Dear puts it, “empiricism could not dispense with reason any more than rationalism could ignore the lessons of the senses.”¹³⁵

Henry More, of Christ’s College, was perhaps the most famous representative of the Cambridge Platonist school. The Cambridge Platonists were a loosely defined group of seventeenth-century English theologians and philosophers distinguished by their strong interest in the writings of Plato, their opposition to religious fanaticism and enthusiasm, and their preaching of a reasonable religion of holiness founded on a deep-seated irenicism. The practical consequences of this Platonic rationalism was a strong contempt for dispute in matters of religion. What mattered most was the revitalising spirit of God and the non-contentious notions of holy living upon which all could agree.

They tended to reject the world of sense in their attempt to recover moral and intellectual truths which were untainted by corporeality. For them, true knowledge came not from the external world, but from a mental world. Accordingly, the Cambridge Platonists came to reply upon the concept of ‘innate ideas’ – those *a priori* truths which every living man knew to be true if he were to reason correctly – which demanded universal assent. This approach can be viewed as a kind of mystical rationalism and must be considered when we come to understand Henry More’s conception of right reason.¹³⁶

In order to understand More’s right reason, we must first grasp what he thought was meant by the term ‘virtue’. In chapter three of his *On the Nature and Principles of Ethics*, More informs the reader that:

Virtue is an intellectual power of the soul, by which it overrules the animal impressions or bodily passions; so as in every action it easily pursues what is absolutely and simply the best. Here it seems fit, in the definition, to call virtue rather a power than a habit. First, because the word virtue implies as much, and signifies the same thing as fortitude. And next because an habit is not essential to virtue...we

¹³⁵ P. Dear, “Divine Illumination...” (1998), p. 352.

¹³⁶ Mystical rationalism is taken to mean a kind of altered state of consciousness or transcendence such as deep philosophical meditation or prayer etc.

term this a power intellectual...because it is always excited by some principle which is intellectual or rational.¹³⁷

Once we consider that More is working within the mystical rationalistic framework embraced by the Cambridge Platonists, it becomes clearer why he would consider virtue as an intellectual power. For him, virtue was not acquired via sense experience, it was an innate power that was placed in man at his inception. Hence virtue was not gained from any external causes but from the ‘internal, which make the essence of a thing.’¹³⁸

More’s internally-based virtue stemmed from his central belief that a state of spiritual perfection or illumination had been promised in the Gospel to every believer, and that this was the true end of living the ‘divine life’, as More put it. This perfected state, according to More, was possible to reach due to the ‘divine seed’ that God has planted in each soul at its conception. This meant that through a process of spiritual and moral cleansing, involving self-reflection and a close identification with this ‘divine seed’ or inner principle, it was possible for man to reach a state of perfection in this life. As this view demonstrates, More rejected the Calvinistic belief that the soul was inherently sinful, replacing it with a more optimistic and positive view that placed the emphasis on the presence of an ‘inherent righteousness’ that had only been impaired by the Fall.

In his “*General Preface*” (1679) More tells the reader how to arrive at such a state of perfection. He describes how he embarked on a period of ‘Holy Discipline and Conflict’, during which he slowly nurtured the ‘divine principle’ within him in order so that he could subdue and overcome his “animal nature”. This released him, he explains, from the “insatiable desire and Thirst...after the knowledge of things” which had consumed his early years.¹³⁹ In order to attain harmony with their creator, human beings, according to More,

¹³⁷ Henry More, *Enchiridion Ethicum* (London 1668), Book I, ch. 3, p. 11.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Cited in Robert Crocker, *Henry More, 1614-1687* (Kluwer, 2003), p. 5.

could not just rely on the grace of Christ's sacrifice, as the Calvinist tradition would say, but from the revival of an inner principle which was the "sole invincible Basis of all true Religion."¹⁴⁰

It should come as no surprise, then, that More's conception of right reason was inherently congenial with the idea of virtue as well as his belief in a deep inner principle:

[Right reason] is that which by certain and necessary consequences is at length resolved into some intellectual principle which is immediately true.¹⁴¹

More's right reason is fully compatible with his ideas on virtue and fits nicely within his mystical rationalistic framework. For More it was not enough to simply remember or formulate a moral rule and act accordingly (like the mechanisms of a habit). Rather, More believed that the intellect had to judge a rule to be true in the here and now of the present situation, before the individual could explicitly recognise a moral obligation.

In this sense, the functional meaning of right reason, for More, signified an act of judgement which asserted, for example, an obligation to act by assenting to normative principles or a 'principle' fact, or law which was undeniably true. Therefore, while this suggests that the technical meaning of right reason was that process which provided the immediate norm of morality and/or the truths of God's creation, More ultimately viewed right reason as though it depended on a spiritual sense which bore its own certainty. A spiritual sense that conveyed wisdom which was confined to those who had undergone a spiritual reformation and mental purgation in order to seek divine illumination and turn away from their passions and corruption. Once one had completed such a process, according to More, access to right reason became a second nature and practically instinctual: "that whatsoever a

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. p.6.

¹⁴¹ More, *An Account of Virtue; or, Dr Henry More's Abridgement of Morals*, (1690).

Man so purg'd shall afterward imagine, must therefore be according to Right Reason, or Right Reason it self, merely because he thinks so."¹⁴²

John Wilkins had much in common with his contemporary Henry More. He, like More, advocated a rational and reasonable religion based on common notions to which all men could assent. Both of them can be described broadly as irenicists – both men strove to curb civil, religious and political disputes which had plagued their country throughout the first half of the seventeenth century, by arguing for a doctrinally minimal, true religion. Yet Wilkins was a member of a group of divines whose works would develop a common-sense empirical tradition which would prove to be profoundly critical of Platonist epistemology, particularly the reliance on the concept of innate ideas.

It should be pointed out, however, that it was common to talk of 'innate ideas'. Various clergyman, laymen, theologians and divines make constant references to 'some *innate idea*' of God in men's souls, of the idea of God being 'stamp'd on the minds of men' or a 'natural knowledge of God in the hearts of men.'¹⁴³ This form of doctrine, nevertheless, was under attack during the Restoration, as John Yolton has shown, from the argument that the human mind, reflecting upon itself in isolation, as More advocated, was an insufficient mechanism for making the soul aware of an implicit knowledge of God. Self-reflection, it was believed, required the additional stimuli of our sense experience. The crux of the problem was if our knowledge of God was innate but unknown until we reflected upon our experiences from our sense data, how could it be separated from our senses and be shown to be innate? The concept of innate ideas was gradually becoming untenable, and it was Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1689) which more or less scrapped the concept all-together.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² More, *Enchiridion Ethicum*, p. 155.

¹⁴³ See Charles Wolseley, *The Unreasonableness of Atheism* (1669), p. 168; William Bates, *Considerations of the Existence of God* (London, 1676), pp. 82-83; William Annand, *Fides Catholica* (London, 1661), p.150.

¹⁴⁴ John Yolton, *John Locke and the Way of Ideas* (Oxford University Press, 1956).

The group to which Wilkins belonged, broadly speaking, came to be known as latitudinarianism, which was a distinctively English phenomenon – intellectual, social, political – and emerged during the Civil War and Interregnum. It came into its own after the Restoration, and became a powerful movement in the reign of William III. One of the fathers of the latitude movement was Benjamin Whichcote, whose philosophy clearly espouses the typical empirical approach which would later come to dominate British philosophy. Whichcote understood reason as the ‘Candle of the Lord’, a phrase taken from Proverbs xx.27, which became a common term of thinking about man’s God given rational faculty and of right reason, subsequently to be found in the work of Nathaniel Culverwel, Simon Patrick, and even John Locke.¹⁴⁵

The ‘Candle of the Lord’ concept had two important features which formed the foundation of Whichcote’s natural religion approach. First, it was ‘lit by God’ and therefore provided an essential means of revealing God’s will, an infallible faculty for perceiving right from wrong. However, the second characteristic was that it was unable to detect God’s will on its own. Reason by itself contained no innate knowledge; Whichcote argued that ‘the Understanding, as Aristotle observes, is *rasa tabula*’. In another work he wrote how men are born ‘a sheet of white paper whereon nothing is written.’¹⁴⁶ The implication of this *tabula rasa* concept was that knowledge must be obtained empirically, from nature illuminated by reason. Whichcote’s empirical approach can be seen clearly throughout his work; as he wrote in the *Aphorisms*, ‘None of us are born knowing or Wise: but men become Wise, by consideration, observation, and experience.’ Thus, it was nature which provided man with the key to understanding God’s will: ‘Things themselves speak to us, and offer notions to our minds, and this is the voice of God.’¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ See Robert A. Greene, “Whichcote, the Candle of the Lord, and Synderesis,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (Oct. – Dec., 1991): pp. 617-644.

¹⁴⁶ Benjamin Whichcote, *Select Notions* (London, 1685), p. 99.

¹⁴⁷ Whichcote, *Moral and religious aphorisms*, ed. J. Jeffery (London 1753) no. 57, p. 482

This empirical epistemology is key to understanding Wilkins's conception of right reason. In his thirteenth sermon, preached sometime in the 1660s, Wilkins told his congregation that:

...we are directed and inclined to supply that right reason, which is not provided for in the words of the written Law. Because 'tis not possible in the making of general Rules or Laws to foresee all such particular cases and circumstances as may happen. Therefore that habit whereby a man is enabled and inclined to deal according to the equitable sense of the Law, and to allow for such particular circumstances as may make a real difference in several Cases, this is styled...*equity*, which is a moral *virtue* placed betwixt the two *extremes* of...*rigour*; or *sumum jus* on the one hand, insisting too much upon the letter; and *relaxatio nimia*, remitting too much from the true sense of it, on the other hand. Now both these extremes, the excess and the defect being evidently vices, it must thence necessarily follow, that the *medium* betwixt them must be a virtue, and have in it the obligation of a duty.¹⁴⁸

It is immediately noticeable that Wilkins's right reason is in stark contrast to the one advocated by More. His formulation of right reason as a 'habit' which would presumably have to be constructed via an interaction with the external senses, is clearly a long way from More's Platonist and innate intellection. Once we consider the empirical tradition that Wilkins is working in, then the reason behind his conception of right reason as a habit becomes much clearer. In *Discovery of a New World* (1638), for example, Wilkins exhibited a strong empiricism by giving an important role to the senses. In his discussion of the nature of life on the moon, Wilkins subtly hinted at his belief in the human mind as a *tabula rasa* as espoused by Whichcote. He proposed but did not develop a thesis that all knowledge had to be gleaned from the senses: "Our understandings [are] capable only of such things as have entered by our Senses, or else such mixed Natures as may be composed from."¹⁴⁹ This is evidence that Wilkins subscribed to a theory of knowledge which emphasized the mind at birth as a *tabula*

¹⁴⁸ Wilkins, Thirteenth Sermon in *Sermons Preached upon Several Occasions* (1682), p. 395.

¹⁴⁹ Cited in Henry G. Van Leeuwen, *The Problem of Certainty in English Thought 1630-1690* (The Hague, 1963), p.60. See also Wilkins, *Discovery of a New World* (1638), p.146.

rasa, of sorts. Such a perspective would have profoundly influenced his conception of right reason; it would have to have been something that was acquired from nature and experience - a habit, in other words.

Wilkins's preoccupation with habit was drawn from Aristotelian notions of virtue and ethical conduct. In an article on the role of habit in late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century theology, Paul Alkon argued for the influence of Aristotelian moral habituation on Robert South, William Law and Samuel Johnson.¹⁵⁰ Wilkins can be added to this list. His conception of right reason reveals how Aristotle's familiar advice that moral virtue was acquired through practice and repetition could be constructed within a Christian context by stressing the benefits of actively developing virtuous habits. For Aristotle, prudence or practical wisdom, the product of ethical habituation, was an improvisational capability to act virtuously in contingent situations.¹⁵¹ Thus Wilkins's right reason, read in this way, espoused a theory of ethical conduct in which a momentous rational choice guided the will to bind the moral agent to habitual action. It demanded a thinking action in order to attain spiritual ends and to guide ethical conduct.

Habitual action, for Wilkins, was fundamental in setting conduct on a rightful path. Human beings, for example, throughout their lives learn right from wrong, truth from falsity as well as the fundamental tenets of religion. This process of becoming competently informed, or the 'habit' of learning the facts of life and making the right judgments, for instance, is, for Wilkins, what is meant by right reason. It was an indispensable habit which informed man on a variety of different matters, all of which fell under the umbrella of living virtuously. It was, first of all, the habit of living a moral life, in harmony with one's neighbour and divine creator and of checking and restraining disreputable actions. It was also a habit which directed man

¹⁵⁰ Paul Alkon, "Robert South, William Law, and Samuel Johnson," *SEL*, 6 (1966), pp. 499-528.

¹⁵¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Penguin Books, 1976).

in the search of truth, judging effects by causes, as well as drawing certain inferences from undoubted premises and proper applications to particular cases. It was, above all, a habit of practical morality which could assist in maintaining unity; since it was not possible to make “Rules or Laws to foresee all such particular cases and circumstances as may happen” then right reason was necessary to derive all particular actions in such cases that were not adequately covered by statute.

Intellectualism and Voluntarism

The operation of right reason and its relationship to the mind represented important differences between Wilkins and More. These important differences in turn shaped the different styles of theological approaches to God’s creation of the world that they subscribed to. It is therefore worthwhile to consider in more detail the structure and conclusions of these differing approaches, namely voluntarist and intellectualist theology.

In the historiography of seventeenth-century intellectual thought these two theologies have been linked to different epistemological approaches. The intellectualist emphasis upon God’s reason is seen to be congenial with rationalist philosophies. Since God followed the dictates of reason in creating the world, we can reconstruct God’s thought processes, and arrive *a priori* via a rational process at an understanding of the world and its laws. On the contrary, the voluntarist emphasis upon God’s freedom of operation, not restrained by the dictates of reason, is associated with a belief in the radical contingency of the natural world and the accompanying belief that we can only understand God’s creation *a posteriori*, by examining it and drawing empirically-based conclusion as to what he actually did, or as to what kind of world he created.¹⁵²

¹⁵²John Henry “Voluntarist Theology at the Origins of Modern Science: A Response to Peter Harrison”, *History of Science*, 47 (1): pp. 79-113. See pp. 79-80.

Although intellectualism and voluntarism are appropriate terms for describing particular viewpoints, it must be pointed out that not every seventeenth-century actor fits neatly into one of the two camps. An historical actor may, for instance, have both intellectualist and voluntarist tendencies in different respects, or may consider the activities of intellect and will as so intertwined that these classifications become useless. Nevertheless, as with the case of the rationalist and empiricist dichotomy, I believe such historical categories remain useful in our analysis of More and Wilkins, revealing further important differences between the two men.

Plainly stated, it is possible to view More and Wilkins as belonging to these two opposing Christian traditions and that this goes a long way to explaining why they differ in their conception of right reason. More's theology was thoroughly intellectualist – God was held to rule by reason not by arbitrary will, and the rules of reasoning were unalterable, so that even God had to abide by them. He equated voluntarism with Calvinism, and rejected Calvinism because, according to More anyway, it denied the idea of absolute moral values by suggesting that anything God decreed was good, rather as More believed, that there were absolute values of goodness to which God had to comply. The supreme creator had to act in accordance with:

mutual Respect and Relations eternal and immutable, and in order of Nature antecedent to any Understanding either created or uncreated.¹⁵³

A significant feature of intellectualist theology was the belief that there was nothing arbitrary in the universe. The “eternal and immutable” set of relations between all things is inherent in the nature of things themselves. As a result, the workings of creation could be attained by a purely rationalist approach. Furthermore, it was only by God using his own powers of reason

¹⁵³ More, “Annotation upon Lux orientalis”, 47, pp. 46-47.

in order to arrive at an understanding of certain essential features inherent in the very nature of things that he was able to ascertain what kind of world to create. Such essentials were things such as absolute moral concepts of good and evil, truth and falsity etc. Once he had identified such essential principles, God, due to his own supreme goodness and righteousness, had to create the world in agreement with the moral demands placed upon Him by His own goodness and in agreement with the relationships inherent in the nature of things.

It is More's intellectualist theology that underpins his ardent rationalism and therefore dictates the nature of his right reason; an intellectual power which required a degree of complex and high-powered philosophizing in order to access *a priori*, innate ideas that were co-eternal with God was clearly developed by a philosopher working in an intellectualist framework. More's right reason operated on the key intellectualist assumption that man could, in principle, use his reason in such a way as to 'think God's thoughts after him' in order to arrive at a state of perfect knowledge, including the external world, man's internal senses, and the nature of the divine.¹⁵⁴

Voluntarists, on the other hand, typically wished to deny *a priori* knowledge of the world, maintaining the belief that God could create arbitrarily, unconstrained by any supposedly eternal uncreated truths. They claimed, therefore, that it was impossible to reconstruct God's thinking as he decided how to create the world. The crux of the matter was that God's will was not constrained to choose between a particular kind of creation by pre-existing absolute conceptions of what was good, or what was possible according to a certain philosophical position.

The idea behind this supposed connection between voluntarism and empiricism is that it was not possible to reconstruct *a priori* God's thinking as to how he decided to create the

¹⁵⁴ Cited in John Henry, "Henry More versus Robert Boyle: the spirit of nature and the nature of providence", in Sarah Hutton (ed.), *Henry More (1614-1687): Tercentenary Studies* (Kluwer: Dordrecht, 1990), p. 64.

world. Therefore, the only way that one could find out whether God had created void space was to see if one could show empirical evidence of a vacuum, or if one could actually make one. This was the only way you could settle such a matter since, according to the voluntarist, God could have gone either way on the issue. In sum, there was nothing in the nature or essence of matter per se which made it impossible for God to make it inherently active, for example.

It is possible to place John Wilkins within the voluntarist tradition since an *a posteriori* view of knowledge is highly compatible with the concept of the human mind as a *tabula rasa*. Wilkins's conception of right reason, as we have seen, operated on the assumption that man obtained *a posteriori* knowledge about the natural world through the senses. By this process man was able to learn a habit of right reason - *a posteriori* way of knowing truth from falsity, good from evil, justice from injustice, virtue from vice, religion from irreligion. His conception of right reason, therefore, was based on the fact that there was no absolute, innate moral values.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the notion of right reason had a variety of different conceptions in mid-to late Early Modern England that were underpinned by different theological and epistemological traditions. In the process it has been demonstrated that, although More and Wilkins shared superficially very similar positions, such positions had rather different philosophical underpinnings which, in turn, led them to different conclusions about the nature of religious belief and about what kind of knowledge human beings might acquire through the mind and through nature.

Whilst we must be wary when invoking sharp and distinct categories such as 'empiricist' and 'rationalist' or 'voluntarist' and 'intellectualist' when discussing seventeenth-century actors, inviting the risk of imposing dichotomies upon the history of intellectual

thought when there was none at all, it is clear that we cannot completely discard them – for it appears that once they are carefully applied we notice that they reveal, as one would expect, important and subtle theological and epistemological differences between leading Restoration thinkers who appealed to the term ‘right reason’.

This chapter has also paid close attention to John Wilkins’s emphasis on habit, particularly his belief that the individual had to be habituated in order to internalise moral virtue, to reason properly, and to govern their actions and behaviour in order to maintain civil society. Moreover, it was the role of reason to rule the human mind and right reason was thus understood to intuit transcendental values, grasping a divinely sanctioned, eternally present morality which could bind all of society. However, in a fallen world, particularly in a Calvinist outlook, reason was highly contested and was cast as the victim of the ineradicable corruption within. Habit, however, as we have seen in the case of Wilkins, could act as this binding agent in place of reason. Habituation was thus, for Wilkins, an effective way of not only correcting an individual’s ability to reason effectively, but also to replace reason with habitually acquired mental dispositions and patterns of behaviour.

In the wider intellectual context, Wilkins’s approach was part of a much broader emphasis on habitually acquired beliefs, behaviour, and dispositions. For Wilkins, as well as his contemporaries, habituation was indispensable in guiding ethical conduct in order to ensure a peaceful coexistence among potentially self-destructive individuals. Wilkins’s belief that the dictates of reason had to be internalised through habituation was to be fully consolidated in the work of John Locke. In *Some Thoughts concerning Education* as well as his *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, Locke was drawing upon a discourse of genealogy of habit that already existed, as we have seen with the case of John Wilkins’s conception of right reason. We will return to Locke in the final chapter.

Chapter 2

Habitually acquired Moral Beliefs and Dispositions in Restoration Religion

The previous chapter showed how habit was an important part of John Wilkins's approach to the problem of right reason and ensuring that English society could think and behave properly. The following chapter broadens the frame of analysis by examining how a group of moderate divines, Wilkins included, preached the importance of habitual moral beliefs and dispositions in matters of faith. Much was left uncertain in 1660 – political and religious questions had hardly been resolved – but the following moderate divines attempted to reshape religious life following the return of Charles II. The key to building a better, more secure society was to figure out how the English population might live together in peace and unity despite religious differences. Hobbes, as we saw in the previous chapter, had famously described one solution: the sovereign could arbitrarily determine religion for all his subjects. But the moderate divines presented another: they attempted to fashion a religion founded on habitually acquired moral beliefs and dispositions. They were not, however, attempting to replace religion with habit; they simply dealt less with the intricacies of faith than with the cultivation of those habits and habitual dispositions that might strengthen it.

This chapter, then, attempts to offer a reasonably comprehensive discussion of habit in Restoration English religion by looking mostly at the sermons and works of a group of divines whose broad area of agreement, which eludes specific textual demonstration of influence, was their common concern for the power of habit, both for good and ill, in the economy of the moral and religious life. It shows how English divines such as John Wilkins, John Tillotson, Isaac Barrow, Richard Baxter, Edward and Fowler permitted conduct that was

habitual as long as such conduct involved a formative period of self-examination during which time one was developing one's knowledge of doctrinal fundamentals as well as gradually firming up one's belief in God's teachings and virtuous character. This process, for them, as we will see, was the key component of religious life.

Much excellent scholarly work has been done on how English religion was slowly transformed into a civilising rather than a saving force towards the close of the seventeenth-century and how ethics began to slowly outweigh soteriology. Blair Worden, for example, has argued that the late seventeenth-century witnessed the retreat of theology as English divines shifted their emphasis from faith to conduct. As Worden make clear, this did not mean the growth of religious difference, but a recognition that moral reformation was of greater importance than theological issues.¹⁵⁵ Likewise, Naomi Taback has recently shown how many of the late seventeenth-century religious reformers tended to look to shared manners and customs rather than shared religious beliefs and practices as the binding agents of English society. Her work has demonstrated how many religious divines during the period actually spoke in secular terms.¹⁵⁶

Similarly, Mark Knight has shown how discussions of 'conscience' moved increasingly onto secular ground in 1687 and 1688. James II's declarations of indulgence, according to Knight, marked the Crown's awareness that magistrates should not persecute religious consciences, and the Church of England began to accept the fact that persecution was not a justifiable weapon to use against dissent.¹⁵⁷ Knight very much follows Worden's line of argument in seeing not less religion after the indulgences, but religion differently conceived. Persecution became less interesting than pragmatism in a society still wrestling

¹⁵⁵ Blair Worden, 'The Question of Secularisation.'

¹⁵⁶ See Naomi Taback, "A Mission to Reform Manners: Religion, Secularisation, and Empire in Early Modern England," (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2013).

¹⁵⁷ Mark Knight, "'Meer religion' and the 'church-state' of Restoration England: the impact and ideology of James II's declaration of indulgence" in in Alan Houston and Steve Pincus (eds.), *A Nation Transformed: England after the Restoration* (Cambridge, 2001).

with belief. Furthermore, in her magisterial study, Isabel Rivers has carefully shown how ethics gradually disentangled from theology and how the notion of grace became synonymous with virtue by the mid eighteenth-century.¹⁵⁸ If there was one religious change above all, then, that characterised the mid-to late seventeenth-century, it was that the test of Christianity became one of conduct, rather than right belief. To the young, explains John Spurr, the “old-fashioned” quarrels between Calvinists and Arminians were “fast becoming incomprehensible.”¹⁵⁹ From the 1650s, both on the Puritan side, where Richard Baxter took the lead, and on the Anglican one, where Henry Hammond took it, there was ever more emphasis on practical Christianity.¹⁶⁰ “When men confine religion to speculation,” observed Sir Charles Wolseley, “they turn divinity into metaphysics, where they dispute without end: to reduce it to practice, is to pursue its proper tendency, and to make it (as indeed it is) the great principle of union and peace.” To attain salvation, he wrote, we only need to “live a sober, righteous, religious life here, such as is rationally best for ourselves, and others, and be gradually preparing for those eternal fruitions that are to come.”¹⁶¹

The arguments made in this current chapter complement and extend such existing work. Whilst much has been written about this transformation of belief to conduct, not enough work has been done to examine the actual underpinning operations of this process. This chapter intends to remedy that gap. It shows how by conduct, religious divines meant habitually acquired patterns of behaviour and dispositions. They meant a process of religious habituation which entailed a pragmatic model of ethical self-management according to which the individual would rationally commit themselves to act habitually and automatically as a

¹⁵⁸ Rivers, *Reason, Grace and Sentiment*.

¹⁵⁹ Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689*, pp. 316-17.

¹⁶⁰ On the Anglican side see Rivers, *Reason, Grace and Sentiment*, pp 18-24. See too Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689*, pp. 316-17

¹⁶¹ Cited in Blair Worden, *God's Instruments: Political Conduct in the England of Oliver Cromwell* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 231.

strategy in the pursuit of salvation. Habituation, for them, was indispensable for correcting the will, conquering sin, and accepting God's grace.

Furthermore, this chapter also supplements Ethan Shagan's work on 'moderation' in early modern England. The core of Shagan's recent arguments is the insight that claims to 'moderation' were also assertions of authority – thus, far from being moderate, such discourses more than legitimated the application of state and local violence to communities and individuals. Irenic rhetoric, in other words, hid a violent state. Bridling the immoderate, executing the heretic, whipping the disorderly, civilising the savage – were all rhetorically 'moderate.' The English *via media* was, then, not the gentle and reasonable Anglicanism that it has been commonly portrayed as, but a violent instrument of order, "written in blood."¹⁶² Shagan's work is an important contribution to our understanding of the ways in which early modern thinkers, working within ecclesiological discourses, constructed the limits of conscience and how the notion of 'moderation' was an emerging ideology of power.

However, whilst Shagan has suggested that the historian of the early modern period needs to take the issue of 'moderation' seriously, his work overlooks how habit and habitual dispositions could also act as a means of authorisation and self-restraint for late seventeenth-century religious life. The purpose of this chapter is to show how leading religious divines emphasised the importance of cultivating internal habitual dispositions as a way to assert moderate authority and to ensure conformity in a fallen world. Members of Restoration English society were not expected to discover true faith, or to become virtuous by themselves; this was why a process of discipline through habituation was necessary.

In a similar vein, Richard Ashcraft has shown that claims to moderation by so-called Latitudinarians were coded arguments that nonconformists could never be rational. According to Ashcraft, "Anglicans – including latitudinarians – denied that individuals were

¹⁶² Shagan, *The Rule of Moderation*, p. 109

rational in the sense of acting according to their consciences. Reliance upon individuals, they asserted, meant that individuals would “follow the wild enthusiasms of their own brains.”¹⁶³ There was, therefore, a reluctance amongst leading Restoration clergy to allow too much of a role to conscience throughout the period. Again, the broader point here is that leading Restoration clergy believed that the majority of humankind could not be expected to use their own reason effectively in order to act morally and acquire a working knowledge of true belief. As this chapter will show, when leading clergymen implored their readers and listeners to use their own reason in their sermons and other various works, what we really find are subtle methods of control and discipline through habit - a kind of modified and softer Hobbesian abandonment of individual conscience in favour of the commands of civil and religious authority.¹⁶⁴ Thus, habituation, for the Restoration clergy, rendered reason – supposed to guide human lives – almost useless for the religious life and offered them a coherent language of control that could act as a useful tool to defend the hegemony of the English church.

The following chapter, then, proceeds as follows: the first three sections establish the intellectual and religious context of the Restoration period. The first section is a brief examination of the increased emphasis on what I have termed ‘the emergence of moralism’ - which stressed ‘holy living’ in action and discourse rather than subtle theological controversy. The second section offers a concise summary of the Restoration settlement and the lasting impact it was to have on the rest of the period. The third section gives an extended overview of ‘latitudinarianism’ as well as how the concept of ‘habit’ fitted into their theology. Since a large proportion of the moderate divines that are under discussion in this chapter fall under the rubric of ‘latitudinarianism,’ an examination of its general tendencies, theology, as well

¹⁶³ Richard Ashcraft, “Latitudinarianism and Toleration: Historical Myth versus Political History,” in R. Kroll, R. Ashcraft and P. Zagorin (eds.), *Philosophy, Science, and Religion in England, 1640-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.163.

¹⁶⁴ For more information on this, see Jon Parkin, *Taming the Leviathan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

as how habit fitted into its intellectual system is necessary. The rest of the chapter is devoted to an examination of habit and habitual dispositions in the works of various moderate divines.

The emergence of moralism

In his monograph *The Rise of Moralism* (1966), C. F. Allison described the religious changes that occurred in Restoration as a “movement away from the Christian faith of the earlier divines towards a moralism masquerading as faith.”¹⁶⁵ While Allison was correct in his assertion of an emergent culture of moralism, his idea of ‘masquerading’ serves to obscure what the moderate divines were actually attempting to achieve. They were not simply replacing English religion with a moral-ethical belief system, rather they were striving to develop a new model of Christianity in which the call to practical reform and holy living, based on shared virtuous habits, was conceived as the best way to engineer peace and harmony in a society still tending to the wounds caused by the mid-century upheaval. For the moderate divines, a moral and practical religion reinforced by nurtured and active good habits represented a practical approach to restoring the fabric of a living faith while avoiding the dogmatic introspective nature of strict Calvinism.

Classical Calvinist doctrine, of course, held that God had chosen, from all time, those who were to be saved. Many Calvinists, though not all, held that God had also preordained those who were to be damned: the doctrine of double predestination. The election and reprobation were inscrutable and ineluctable. God alone determined the fate of mankind and there was nothing that man could do to purchase salvation. All human action was infected by sin and was inadequate to purchase the eternal bliss that God offered. However, God had offered mankind the possibility of salvation by sacrificing his own Son, who took upon himself the sins of the world, and it was by his death that sin was effaced. This was known as

¹⁶⁵ C.F. Allison, *The Rise of Moralism: The Proclamation of the Gospel from Hooker to Baxter* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1966).

the doctrine of atonement: the necessity of Christ's suffering on the cross, by which justice was done. Any suggestion of mankind's moral adequacy to purchase salvation deflected from the centrality of the atonement. None of this, however, entailed that godly people should not lead moral lives, but it did mean that a moral life was not efficacious: a moral life was not the cause of a person's being chosen for salvation, it was simply evidence of the fact of being chosen. Nor was it sufficient evidence, for many people led good lives who were not chosen.

The denial of the role of human moral effort explains why Calvinists often used the term 'moralism' with contempt and disapproval. At worst, a 'moralist' could be accused of Socinianism, the denial of the divinity of Christ, or at least of Christ's special role in the atonement of mankind's sins. Such a denial reduced Christ to being no more than a moral exemplar, a man whose goodness ought to be emulated. Not only was such a doctrine hubristic, it also nullified the special claims and status of Christianity, since being moral was something that even pagans could achieve.

Socinianism – the word derived from the sixteenth-century Italian theologian Faustus Socinus – remained at the margins of Christian theological thinking until the eighteenth century. A much more substantial movement in the seventeenth-century, however, was Arminianism which took its name from the Dutchman Jacobus Arminius, who departed from Calvinist orthodoxy early in the seventeenth-century. Reacting against predestinarian dogma, Arminius offered a more merciful and rational vision of God's saving grace in relation to human effort, and offered the possibility that salvation was potentially available to all mankind. While never denying the sufficiency of Christ's suffering, the Arminians stressed that there was some limited efficacy in human righteousness: God did in fact recognise the efforts made by human beings to obey the moral law. This was a position that incorporated morality into the economy of salvation, while not conceding that our poor efforts were alone

sufficient.¹⁶⁶ Strict Calvinists, however, were appalled. The disputes between Calvinists and Arminians split the Dutch Church, and by the late seventeenth-century there were two Churches, the Arminians being called Remonstrants who strove for a tolerant national territorial comprehension.¹⁶⁷

It is reflective of the changes within English religion and theology that by the late seventeenth-century a number of leading divines were on friendly terms with Remonstrant theologians such as Philip van Limborch at Amsterdam and Johann Graevius at Utrecht and were willing to send their pupils to be taught by them. John Locke, whose own theology was indebted to the Remonstrants and who would be accused of Socinianism, lived in Holland during his exile in 1683-9, where he formed close friendship with Limborch and Graevius. Evidently, the English Church had moved far away from classical Calvinism by the close of the seventeenth-century.¹⁶⁸

In the first half of the century, the Puritans had deplored the spread of Arminianism in England, believing that it was a crypto-Catholic deviation from Protestant orthodoxy. Nonetheless, in the second half of the seventeenth-century, Arminianism became something of a commonplace in England.¹⁶⁹ Calvinist soteriology was dislodged. During the Restoration Dissenters protested that Calvinism was all but dead and lamented that they were its last upholders. Within the Church of England, the retreat from Calvinism was not only found amongst schools such as the Cambridge Platonists and the latitudinarians, but also among the

¹⁶⁶ For a more in-depth analysis, see Willam den Boer, *God's Twofold Love: The Theology of Jacobus Arminius 1559-1609* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010).

¹⁶⁷ See T. Marius van Leeuwen, Keith D. Stanglin, and Marijke Tolsma (eds.), *Arminius, Arminianism and Europe: Jacobus Arminius 1559/60-1609* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); M. Mulsow and J Rohls (eds.), *Socinianism and Arminianism: Antitrinitarians, Calvinists, and Cultural Exchange in Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005).

¹⁶⁸ M. Mulsow and J. Rohls, *Socinianism and Arminianism: Antitrinitarians, Calvinists and Cultural Exchange in Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

¹⁶⁹ See N Tyacke, 'Arminianism and the Theology of the Restoration Church', in *Aspects of English Protestantism, c.1530-1700* (Manchester, 2001), pp. 320-39.

dissenters themselves, and not least Richard Baxter.¹⁷⁰ The key to understanding this retreat from strict Calvinism lies in acknowledging that, after 1640, the fear of Arminianism came to be replaced by the fear of the consequences of hyper-Calvinism. The moderate divines were driven by a pressing need to avoid a dire implication of Calvinist orthodoxy. They introduced a trend towards moralism which entailed freedom of will in sinners and their remedy for sin consisted largely of exhortations to lead a holy life.¹⁷¹

This emphasis was epitomised in what became the definitive work of practical divinity for the episcopal church, *The Practice of Christian Graces, or The Whole Duty of Man* (1658), prefaced by Henry Hammond and almost certainly written by Richard Allestree.¹⁷² Its choice of biblical text was significant: “we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” (Titus 2,12) ‘Sober’ was a key term – in reaction against the experimental and enthusiastic religion of the Interregnum the emphasis was placed upon the common-sensical and the judicious. English religion, in a sense, gradually became a largely ethic-based belief system in which the only genuine significance attached to atonement was the moral example of Christ – one of the titles of Jeremy Taylor’s life of Christ was, appropriately, *The Great Exemplar*. Taylor’s friendships included William Chillingworth and Henry More, and such contacts were reflective of Taylor’s moderate and reasonable approach in matters of religion. He constantly reminded his audience that “Our Love to God consists not in any one determinate Degree, but hath such a latitude as best agrees with the condition of men, who are of variable natures, different affections and capacities, changeable abilities.”¹⁷³

Taylor’s work also devoted considerable time to the role of habit in matters of belief and in ethical conduct. In his *Antiquitates Christianae*, for example, he asserted that an

¹⁷⁰ See F. C. Beiser, *The Sovereignty of Reason* (New Jersey: Princeton University press, 1996), ch. 4.

¹⁷¹ Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689*, p. 282.

¹⁷² P. Elmen, “Richard Allestree and *The Whole Duty of Man*,” *The Library*, 5th ser. Vi (1951-2), pp. 19-27.

¹⁷³ Jeremy Taylor, *Antiquitates Christianae: or, The History of the Life and Death of the Holy Jesus as Also the Lives, Acts and Martyrdoms of His Apostles* (London: R. Royston 1675), p. 235.

individual was only sanctified in the eyes of God when they had developed and constantly practised the “habits of a holy life.” For Taylor, there was no doubt that “vertue must be habitual.” Taylor also stressed the importance of a good education, particularly for children, for instilling good habits of behaviour: “For education can introduce a habit and a second nature, against which Children cannot kick, unless they do some violence to themselves and their inclinations.”¹⁷⁴ In his *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living*, Taylor suggested that parents had a key role in instilling such good habitual behaviour, exhorting them to:

Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, that is, secure their religion, season their younger years with prudent and pious principles, make them in love with vertue, and make them habitually so, before they come to choose or to discern good from evil, that their choice may be with lesse difficulty and danger.¹⁷⁵

Taylor’s *Holy Living* essentially functioned as a practical handbook designed to assist Christians in leading a godly life. It was written to provide the sort of detailed pastoral advice that parish clergy were prevented from dispensing to their flocks during the Puritan suppression of the Church of England. As a handbook of moral guidance, *Holy Living* articulated hundreds of rules for Christian living, which together comprised a method of pursuing holiness in all areas of life. Taylor’s main emphasis was on practical moral guidance rather than theological speculation with frequent appeals to the personal example of Jesus. The notion of habit figured prominently in Taylor’s programme, advising his readers to:

fail not to secure a pious *habitual* intention, that is, that it be included within your general care, that no action have an ill end; and that it be comprehended in your general prayers, whereby you offer your self and all you do to Gods glory.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 34, p. 141, p. 214.

¹⁷⁵ Jeremy Taylor, *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living* (London, 1650), p. 196.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 110.

Another individual closely related to the development of English moralism and the tradition of ‘holy living’ was Henry Hammond who, according to John W. Packer, was the principal transformer of Anglicanism.¹⁷⁷ A leading divine of the Church of England when it was in exile during the Interregnum, the Independent John Owen remarked that he bore “the whole weight of the episcopal cause.”¹⁷⁸ Hammond’s importance derived from a religious manual that he wrote for the young people of his parish, which summarised his understanding of the basic truths of Christianity. The manual, entitled *A Practical Catechism*, was first published in 1644 and focused Christianity as a practical endeavour consisting of personal piety and morality which flew in the face of the prevailing puritan emphasis on God’s grace and orthodox theology. In it, Hammond made reference to the importance of developing a “habit of faith”¹⁷⁹ and in his other works as well, Hammond clarified the sum of the Christian life: “a continued habit of holy *living*, and frequent meditation upon Heaven and Heavenly things; particularly the great mercies of God in the Bloud of Jesus Christ.”¹⁸⁰

By 1650, the *Catechisme* had reached its seventh printing and it was no conventional work of Reformed, or even Protestant, piety, although it began in irenic vein. Hammond explained that it was designed for students who knew the basic principles of Christianity but wanted direction for the practice of their religion. The focus was, therefore, on those doctrines and scriptural texts which would encourage people to live in peace as good Christians. But Hammond felt that Christian living required the rejection of several Reformed ideas – notably predestination – and an understanding of salvation very different from Calvin’s. Christ had died for all men without exception, Hammond thought, and God would only exclude from the kingdom of heaven those who rejected his gracious offer of eternal life. Human beings

¹⁷⁷ See John. H. Parker, *The Transformation of Anglicanism, 1643-1660, with Special Reference to Henry Hammond* (Manchester University Press, 1969).

¹⁷⁸ Cited in Robert S. Bosher, *The Making of the Reformation Settlement: The Influence of the Laudians, 1449-1662* (London: Dacre, 1651), p. 36.

¹⁷⁹ Henry Hammond, *A Practical Catechism* (1645), p. 46, p. 47.

¹⁸⁰ Hammond, *The Daily Practice of Devotion* (1684), p. 137. Published posthumously.

must, he felt, be persuaded that their salvation lay in their own hands and was conditional upon their obedience to the precepts of Christ. Only then would England see the practice of true Christianity.

Of course, the effect of Hammond's publications on public opinion is hard to estimate, but a passage from Gilbert Burnet's *History of his own Time* (1724), is worth pondering:

At the Restoration, *Juxon*... was promoted to *Canterbury* more out of decency than he was then capable to fill that post;...*Sheldon* was a very dextrous man in business... He seemed not to have a deep sense of religion, if any at all: And spoke of it most commonly as an engine of government, and a matter of policy...*Morley*... was a pious and charitable man, of very exemplary life, but extream passionate, and very obstinate. He was first made Bishop of *Worcester*. Doctor *Hammond*, for whom that See was designed, died a little before the Restoration which was an unspeakable loss to the Church; For he was a man of great learning, and of most eminent merit, he having been the person that during the bad times had maintained the cause of the Church in a very singular manner, so he was a very moderate man in his temper, tho' with a high principle; and probably he would have fallen into healing counsels. He was also much set on reforming abuses, and for raising in the Clergy a due sense of the obligations they lay under.¹⁸¹

Hammond's death was clearly a great loss to the English Church and Burnet realised this. Even Richard Baxter lamented that he "took the death of Dr. Hammond... for a very great loss; for his piety and wisdom would sure have hindered much of the violence" of the Restoration period.¹⁸² Hammond was a key representative of English moralism and his model of Christianity loomed large in the minds of the Restoration moderate divines – In chapter two of his *Of the Reasonableness of Christian Religion* (1650) entitled 'Concerning the use of reason in deciding controversies in religion' stated that "the measure of man's natural power of knowing or judging of things is his participating of those things, in some degree,

¹⁸¹ As cited in John Henry Parker, *The Transformation of Anglicanism with special reference to Henry Hammond* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969), p. 197.

¹⁸² Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (London, 1696), p. 208.

with God, in whom they are as in the fountain: so that man may find, and behold them in himself as truly, though not as eminently, or in the same degree, as they are in God.”¹⁸³ The model of Christianity that the moderate divines espoused was drawn, in part, from Hammond’s and Taylor’s – an essentially practical brand of theology and morality which advocated a life of pious devotion, private prayer and privileged practical devotional acts over theological speculation.

The Restoration Religious Settlement

Even though the political and religious upheavals of the 1640s and 1650s seriously undermined the status and identity of the Church of England, it continued to enjoy widespread covert support throughout two decades of anarchy, bloodshed, and revolution.¹⁸⁴ The return of Charles II in 1660 not only offered recovery from that trauma, but also the possibility of building a stable and relatively comprehensive Church. It was a principal concern of the English divines who took up office following the Restoration, notably Gilbert Sheldon, Bishop of London, and subsequently Archbishop of Canterbury, and Charles’ chief minister, the Earl of Clarendon, that the national Church should be restored along moderate lines. Charles II shared that concern and sought immediately to re-establish the Church, on as broad a footing as possible. The declaration of Breda that Charles had issued before his return to England in many ways epitomised the hope for a broad English Church whose doctrinal framework would accommodate tender consciences. The restoration of the English monarchy also meant the possibility of indulgence, or toleration, for the beliefs and practices of other Protestant sectaries. Procedures were undertaken upon the king’s return to carry out the promises that he had made in the hope of healing a nation collapsing under the weight of

¹⁸³ See Henry Hammond, *The Miscellaneous Theological Works*, ed. Nicholas Pocock, Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology, 3rd ed., 5 vols. (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1849), 2:29.

¹⁸⁴ Judith Maltby, ‘Suffering and Surviving: The Civil Wars, the Commonwealth and the Formation of “Anglicanism”, in Christopher Durston and Judith Maltby (eds.), *Religion in Revolutionary England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).

religious and political disunion.¹⁸⁵ In particular, a convocation was held to reconsider the doctrine and liturgy of the Church of England, the Thirty-Nine Articles and *The Book of Common Prayer*.

Due to a variety of reasons, however, the prospects for a broad establishment quickly proved to be illusive. Nonconformists were divided amongst themselves, and only the demands of a few of their more moderate brethren appeared easy for conformist churchmen to countenance. The passing of the Act of Uniformity in 1662 proved to be the final nail in the broad church project. Convinced that any toleration of nonconformity was likely to lead to disorder, the majority of the members of the Cavalier Parliament refused to tolerate any dissent from, or diminution of, the episcopal ideal. Although a very considerable number of clergy felt unable to comply with the act and were forced to abandon their livings, the great majority of parish minister submitted and conformed, as the majority had done during the Interregnum. The decade ended with a concentrated press campaign to eradicate any initiative towards alleviating the proscription of dissent: Simon Patrick's *A Friendly Debate between a Conformist and a Nonconformist* (1669), the *Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie* (1669) by Sheldon's chaplain Samuel Parker, and William Assheton's *Toleration Disapprov'd and Condemn'd* (Oxford, 1670) appeared in quick succession. The ever-ready Roger L'Estrange issued an enlarged edition of his *Toleration Discussed* to halt any resurgence of the threat he had dealt with in 1663. Yet, Puritan opinion was not excluded from the established church overnight. Though they might have been sharply divided over church order and ceremonies, there was no doctrinal division between conformists and nonconformists, or, at least, no difference any greater than could be found within either camp. They shared an equal

¹⁸⁵ I.M. Green, *The Re-Establishment of the Church of England 1660-1663* (Oxford, 1978).

abhorrence both of Catholics and of fanatics, and in many conformists a Puritan temper remained.

It must be acknowledged, however, that comprehensive and tolerationist schemes did in fact emerge in the Restoration period itself. Much has been made of this as the age of the ‘great persecution’, but historians have concentrated too readily on the official policies, on the so-called Clarendon Code, and not on how problematic it could be to implement such statutes at the local level.¹⁸⁶ Even Sheldon, who has been described as “the inexorable opponent of any compromise with dissenters”, was unable to achieve, and indeed did not attempt, a continual purge of nonconformists.¹⁸⁷

Despite the fact that a more aggressive outlook developed in response to the subversive behaviour of some dissenters, the Church authorities’ response to dissent was rarely monolithic; they were aware of the differences, both religious and political, between various groups, fearing the radical sects more than the moderate Presbyterian and Puritans. Moreover, the fear of extreme groups such as the Quakers had deeply disturbed many moderate nonconformists to the point that they opted to support the Restoration and conform to the Anglican Church, in the belief that the threat of the sectaries was far worse than the abuses of an unreformed Church.¹⁸⁸ Overall, intolerance tended to be reserved for those who, it was feared, could potentially be a political and social, and therefore an ecclesiastical threat. The 1662/3 Returns for the Lathe of St Augustine, for example, recorded only the more extreme groups: the Independents, Anabaptists, and Quakers – it paid no attention to Presbyterians.¹⁸⁹ Even Richard Baxter divided dissenting denominations into tolerable

¹⁸⁶ Jeremy Gregory, *Restoration, Reformation, and Reform, 1660-1828: Archbishops of Canterbury and Their Diocese* (Oxford and London: OUP, 2000).

¹⁸⁷ Jenkins, *Canterbury*, p. 365.

¹⁸⁸ Barry Reay, ‘The Quakers, 1659 and the Restoration of the Monarchy’, *History*, 63 (1978): 193-213.

¹⁸⁹ Cited in Gregory, *Restoration, Reformation, and Reform*, p. 186.

(Presbyterians, Independents, and perhaps “honest Anabaptists”) and intolerable (“Quakers, Seekers, Ranters and infidels”).¹⁹⁰

In reality consensus was more useful than confrontation. Strategies of compromise and grudging approvals towards dissenting communities, whose members might attend Church services was one of the most enduring features of the Church of England’s position within local society and far more typical than the persecuting and monochrome uniformity model.¹⁹¹ In fact, the focus on persecution encourages a more fundamental misconception: that England was divided between two monolithic groups, ‘Church’ and ‘Dissent’. The Church of England had always been a broad church, with an ambivalent theology and ecclesiology: the Thirty Nine Articles “were a statement of what the Church held to be true doctrine, but they were not a confession of faith.”¹⁹² Restoration divines, as this chapter will demonstrate, pursued a practical theology which reconnected behaviour and salvation by persuading their congregations and readers, in the words of Richard Baxter, to cultivate an active “habit of faith,” whilst remaining ever mindful to avoid sliding into Catholic teaching on the efficacy of good works.¹⁹³

Latitudinarianism and Habit

It is difficult to write about the late seventeenth-century English intellectual and religious landscape without a discussion of the so-called movement known as ‘Latitudinarianism.’ The latitudinarians, so the traditional story goes, frustrated at the backwardness and intolerance of traditional Calvinism, threw off the shackles of the past and, inspired by an enlightened liberal theology and the new philosophy, embraced instead a faith based upon reason and

¹⁹⁰ Baxter, *Reliquiae Bateriae*, (London, 1696), ii., p. 437.

¹⁹¹ John Miller, *Cities Divided: Politics and Religion in English Provincial Towns 1660-1722* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). ch. 6.

¹⁹² Spurr, *Restoration Church* (1994), p. 109.

¹⁹³ Richard Baxter, *A treatise of justifying righteousness in two books...* (London, 1676), preface.

toleration. Struggling against the residual intolerance during the Restoration, the increasingly powerful movement eventually triumphed in 1688 when, in combination with Newtonianism, it defined the Revolutionary church settlement and laid the lasting foundations for the rational Anglicanism of the eighteenth century.¹⁹⁴

The idea that Latitudinarianism was a significant and progressive movement invites the thought that it must have had deep philosophical roots which ought to be exposed to light. In reality, there are so many different ‘latitudinarianisms’ that the term has come to mean virtually nothing or everything, with scholars having their own interpretation of the concept.¹⁹⁵ The difficulty of coming to an agreement about the tendencies and principles within the movement is aggravated by the confusion generated by scholars from different disciplines writing about it with different aims. Theologians, for example, have been at pains either to praise the Latitudinarians’ achievement or to simply decry it as being responsible for the dark age of the Church of England. Horton Davies described the movement as a “combination of eudaemonism, utilitarianism, and pelagianism, masquerading as Christianity.”¹⁹⁶ Historians, by contrast, have attempted to demonstrate the “movement’s”

¹⁹⁴ For a great example of this narrative see, Margaret C. Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution* (Ithaca, 1976).

¹⁹⁵ See R.W.F. Kroll, “Introduction,” in R. Kroll, R. Ashcraft and P. Zagorin, *Philosophy, Science, and Religion in England, 1640-1700* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 1-28. Kroll describes the scholarly discussions about Latitudinarianism during the conference held at the Clark Library that gave birth to the anthology as follows: “What was interesting...was the extent to which four days of often intense discussion yielded surprisingly little substantive or methodological agreement about the putative object of our pursuit. For this reason alone, the title of our volume purposely omits reference to ‘latitudinarianism.’ But the essays that follow demand the more general grouping suggested by the present title.” For the problem of defining Latitudinarianism, see also Spellman, *The Latitudinarians and the Church of England*, p. 1: “As seventeenth-century labels go, ‘Latitudinarianism’ is as broad and as problematic a term to define as ‘Puritanism.’” Sykes equally points out towards the difficulty of providing a satisfactory definition: “The term ‘Latitudinarian’ indeed covered a wide diversity of opinion and outlook.” (*From Sheldon to Secker*, p. 146). As early as 1950, Cragg maintained that “the boundaries of the group are ill-defined.” (*From Puritanism to the Age of Reason: A Study of Changes in Religious Thought within the Church of England, 1600 to 1700* (Cambridge, 1950), p. 63.

¹⁹⁶ Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England* (Princeton, 1961), IV, p. 56.

scientific,¹⁹⁷ political,¹⁹⁸ and philosophical significance. Latitudinarianism occurred at a time which has proved to be problematic for the historian of ideas, a time when political and religious allegiances were unstable and intellectual developments unusually rapid. Many of the concepts that are frequently discussed in connection with Latitudinarianism such as ‘toleration’ and ‘reason’ are equally ambivalent and elusive. To make matters even worse, the selective and partly arbitrary character of scholarly reading tends to distort judgements. Isaac Barrow’s theological output, for example, comprised nine copious volumes, and no less than two hundred and fifty-six of Tillotson’s sermons have survived. Thus, the multiplicity of perspectives and different methodological approaches as well as the difficulty and scope of the subject have all contributed, in a way, to the present confusion about what Latitudinarianism was or might have been. However, there is also considerable merit in recent scholarship inasmuch as it has revealed that any attempt to summarise a complex of ideas as variegated as Latitudinarianism has often led to misleading results, especially if the ‘system’ in question comprised a great variety of heterogeneous thinkers. This insight, however, must not lead us to overlook the existing similarities between Latitudinarian writers. It is a fact that, although scholarship about Latitudinarianism seems to have become as enigmatic as the movement itself, the term is still used widely, and often with (too) great assurance.

The last couple of decades have seen numerous attempts to pin down the major characteristics of Latitudinarianism. Acknowledging the existence of a group that *can* be labelled “Latitudinarian,” these attempts vacillate between two extremes. On the one hand, there is a minimalist tendency, associating Latitudinarianism with a few general tenets, such

¹⁹⁷ See, for example, Shapiro, *Probability and Certainty*; James R. Jacob and Margaret C. Jacob, “The Anglican Origins of Modern Science: The Metaphysical Foundations of the Whig Constitution,” *Isis* 71, no. 2 (Jun., 1980), pp. 251-267; See as well, Margaret C. Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution, 1689-1720* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1976), esp. ch. 1.

¹⁹⁸ See especially John Gascoigne, *Cambridge in the Age of Enlightenment: Science, Religion and Politics from the Restoration to the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); See also F. G. James, “The Bishop in Politics, 1688-1714,” in W.A. Aiken and B. D. Henning (eds.) *Conflict in Stuart England: Essays in Honour of Wallace Notestein* (London, 1960), pp. 227-57.

as that for the “latitude-men religion is two things, reason and morality.”¹⁹⁹ Another view sees “Latitudinarianism as a natural culmination of the tendency within the Anglican Church toward moderation and sweet reasonableness.”²⁰⁰ A third, earlier, position attempted to reconcile these two accounts: “We have found the three outstanding elements in latitudinarian thought to be a conviction of the reasonableness of religion, a sober acceptance of the principle of limited toleration, and a conviction that religion must not stand apart from morality.”²⁰¹ The problem inherent in such narrow definitions is clear: a complex system of thought is treated reductively. On the other hand, there are attempts at comprehensive and precise definitions. In a more recent study of Samuel Clarke’s Trinitarian thought, Thomas Pfizenmaier distinguished between “orthodox” and “heterodox” Latitudinarians and identified five focal points around which their thought was claimed to have revolved.²⁰² Elsewhere, seven or eight positions are rather enigmatically thought to be typical of a Latitudinarian: “It is...the *combination*, steady and almost without exception, of all these characteristics taken together, that provides a basis by which the norms and standard of seventeenth-century Latitudinarianism may be distinguished.”²⁰³ Conversely, however, such definitions can also

¹⁹⁹ Isabel Rivers, “Grace, Holiness, and the Pursuit of Happiness: Bunyan and Restoration Latitudinarianism” in N. H. Keeble (ed.), *John Bunyan: Conventicle and Parnassus* (Oxford, 1988), p. 69. Rivers also provides an extensive study of Latitudinarianism in her magisterial book published a few later, but conclusion largely remains the same: “The central tenets of latitudinarian Christianity are the rational basis of religion and happiness of the moral life.” (See Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, vol. I, p. 87.

²⁰⁰ Thomas H. Fujimura, “Dryden’s *Religio Laici*: An Anglican Poem,” *PMLA*, 76 (1961), p. 216.

²⁰¹ Joseph Cope, *Joseph Glanvill: Anglican Apologist* (St. Louis, 1956), p. 85.

²⁰² Thomas C. Pfizenmaier, *The Trinitarian Theology of Dr. Samuel Clarke (1675-1729): Contexts, Sources, and Controversy* (Leiden, New York, Köln, 1997), pp. 43-75; especially pp. 46 and 61. According to Pfizenmaier, the five foci are (1.) the relationship between faith and reason, (2.) the importance of moral virtue in religion, (3.) toleration, (4.) a bias against mystery, and (5.) a special perspective on the role of tradition in doctrinal formulation (see p. 61). Among Orthodox Latitudinarians he saw Edward Stillingfleet and Thomas Sherlock, while Benjamin Hoadly and John Locke were regarded as heterodox. Such a division was clearly inspired by Martin Griffin, *Latitudinarianism in the Seventeenth-Century Church of England*, p. 46: “Orthodoxy was genuinely a hallmark of the norm and standard of seventeenth-century Latitudinarianism. But it was not, however, of the Latitudinarianism of the eighteenth-century.”

²⁰³ Martin Griffin, *Latitudinarianism in the Seventeenth-Century Church of England* (Leiden, New York, Köln, 1992), p. 43. Note, however, the cautionary interpolation “almost without exception.” The characteristics are (1.) orthodoxy, (2.) a reasonable religion, (3.) a common doctrine of justification, (4.) theological minimalism, (5.) the attitude towards church government and worship, (6.) the pre-eminence of personal morality, (7.), moderation in terms of points indifferent and, conditionally, (8.) the adherence to the new philosophy (see p. 43). A similar themed monograph by William Spellman concentrates on the Latitudinarians’ interpretation of

blur the distinction between Latitudinarianism and other groups within or outside the Restoration Church of England. In response, John Spurr, in the course of his study of the Restoration Church, claimed that “no specifically ‘latitudinarian’ party or outlook can be distinguished among the Restoration churchmen.”²⁰⁴ Spurr’s contention that “‘Latitudinarianism’ will never be pinned down” is most certainly correct.²⁰⁵ However, to regard it as merely a “chimera” and to suggest that “‘Latitudinarian was their opponents’ words” in order to demonstrate that there was no Latitudinarian movement is an evasion of the problem at hand.²⁰⁶ Furthermore, if one were to accept the implications of Spurr’s scepticism, then almost all labels would have to be abolished. Under such circumstances, a methodological *via media* seems called for. It is neither necessary nor possible to circumscribe Latitudinarianism exactly. What is possible, however, is a description of general tendencies which were bundled up by the Latitudinarians, and which culminated in a distinctive theological spirit.²⁰⁷

Latitudinarians and their theology were made up of inherent tensions. They were formed by their time, out of insecurity and intellectual strife. Their moral theology was informed by one overriding objective: the moral reformation of the English people in the interest of civil peace as well as political and religious stability. The Latitudinarians emphasised the social significance of the Gospel and a moral education stood at the centre of their thought. Their educational views were shaped by the forces oscillating between their ideal, the Christian ethics of duty postulating the harmony of the universe and assuming the

human nature as shaped by original sin and on their soteriology (see *The Latitudinarians and the Church of England*, pp. 4-5).

²⁰⁴ John Spurr, ‘Latitudinarianism and the Restoration Church,’ *Historical Journal* vol. 31 (1988): pp. 61-82, p. 82. See also the comments in his *The Restoration Church of England* (1991).

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ Gerald Cragg ingeniously noted that Latitudinarianism “stood for a temper rather than a creed.” See his *Puritanism to the Age of Reason*, p. 81.

inherent goodness of the *Deity*, and their experience of the social reality in England, tainted by the picture of human depravity in God's chosen country.

There was a considerable tension between the ethical ideals of the Latitudinarians and their everyday experience, which reflected the traditional conflict between *Is* and *Ought*, and they witnessed every day that their projected *Ought* clashed with a disillusioning *Is*. In other words, whilst the rational individual ought to discern their obligation through the dictates of right reason, in reality fallible human beings were more easily persuaded by their passions. Almost every single aspect of their moral theology, ranging from their anthropology to their soteriology, has to be read against the backdrop of this tension. For the Latitudinarians, the ideals they postulated had to stand the test of Restoration England reality, and that is why the theology of these divines was influenced by social experience to such an extraordinary degree. Yet, coming to terms with this experience always necessitated promoting the cause of virtue, so that the life individuals led had a salutary effect on their future condition:

This is then is the grand design of Christianity, to make men happy in another world, by making them good and vertuous in this: It came to reform this world that it might people another; so to purifie the souls of men, as to make them meet to enjoy the happiness designed for them.²⁰⁸

In a true Christian, according to the latitudinarians, there was a strong interconnection between their religious faith and them being virtuous. They therefore paid special attention to the acquisition of virtuous habits. Humankind being a creature of habit, customary conduct became a strong focus of latitudinarian educational theory. Not only did humankind have to understand the nature and propriety of virtue; this insight also had to be followed up by the acquisition and recollection of virtuous habits. Temptations were everywhere, and so the fragile plant of virtue required constant nurturing, that was, a continuous endeavour to train oneself into the habit of acting virtuously. This process of self-inspection supposed the

²⁰⁸ Edward Stillingfleet, "Sermon V," *Six Sermons* (London, 1669), pp. 140-141.

individual's awareness of responsibility for their actions: the moral doctrine of the Gospel was plain and open to all, and thus there could be no excuse for transgressing its requirements. Such an Aristotelian conception of virtue as habit emphasised the procedural character of virtuous behaviour. Analogously, habitual vice was counted among the principal reasons for the dissemination of immorality. Thus, the education of those most susceptible to the salutary influence of Christian doctrine became a valued mean of checking the progress of vice. By contrast, the force of evil habit aggravated the plight of fallen man:

And now besides the *original* depravities of our Natures, we have *contracted* many *vitious habits* by *corrupt* and *evil* usages; which we were drawn into at first by pleasure and vanity in our young and inconsiderate years, while we were lead by the doctrines of sense: *These*, by *frequent* acts, grow at last into *habits*; which though in their beginning they were tender as a Plant...yet *time* and *use* hardens them into the firmness of an *Oak*, that braves the Weather, and can endure the stroak of the Ax and a strong Arm.²⁰⁹

Tillotson aligned habit with the Augustinian conception of second nature: "It is an acquired and a sort of Second Nature, and next to Nature it self a principle of greatest power. Custom bears a huge sway in all Human Actions."²¹⁰ This distinction between humankind's first (inborn) and second (acquired) nature served Tillotson to highlight the value of education, by which the principles of religion and virtue left the first external imprints on the human mind, Gradually, these imprints would wax into pious and virtuous habits. In terms of the Christian view of human nature such teaching was significant – the latitudinarian concept of second nature qualified Man's natural depravity as a result of original sin. Unlike Augustine's harsh anthropology which revolved around the concept of each individual's sin engendered by *concupiscentia carnalis*, second nature was not necessarily aligned with *mala consuetudo* and

²⁰⁹ Joseph Glanvill, "The Way of Happiness," *Some Discourses, Sermons and Remains* (1681), pp. 12-13. See also Benjamin Whichcote, "The Miserable Degeneracy of Men Through their Affection of Atheism, and Practice of Wickedness," in *The Works* (1751), p. 258.

²¹⁰ John Tillotson, "Of the Education of Children," in *Works* I, p. 508.

“a corruption of God-given first nature.”²¹¹ According to the latitudinarians, it involved the possibility of amelioration: humankind’s natural propensity to evil *could* be checked by the power of education.

In this context, it is important to keep in mind the latitudinarians’ innatism, according to which God endowed humankind with common moral notions. The natural difference between good and evil was imprinted on the hearts of every individual, and however blurred one’s insight into these notions might be, a residue always remained.²¹² The main point to stress here is that the latitudinarians believed that humankind was not utterly depraved, but that they carried the seeds of virtue in themselves. Their first nature was split into the corruption consequent of the Fall and the inherent seeds of morality that constituted a remainder of prelapsarian purity. Thus, it was not custom that was the source of morality, but humankind’s own (first) nature.²¹³ Thus, the habits that education inculcated could bring forth what was best in human nature without eradicating the fact of human depravity. Yet, as William Spellman astutely reminds us: “Education would never serve as a universal palliative to a problem whose roots were coterminous with the historic Fall of Adam.”²¹⁴ However, humankind could also attain a moderate degree of virtue by habit. The latitudinarians, then, not only differentiated between human nature before and after the fall, as Isabel Rivers has correctly shown, but also between humankind’s two natures in the aftermath of the fall. Humankind’s first nature was stable, and so this was why concentration on moulding their second nature so as to make it averse to vice and sin and inclined to virtue was so important. Humankind’s second nature, their custom as shaped by education, was malleable, being a

²¹¹ Mischa Gubeljcic, Simone Link, Patrick Muller, and Gunther Osburg, “Nature and Second Nature in McDowell’s Mind and World,” in Marcus Willaschek (ed.), *John McDowell: Reason and Nature – Lecture and Colloquium in Munster 1999* (Hamburg, London, 2000).

²¹² See William M. Spellman, *The Latitudinarians and the Church of England* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993), p. 81.

²¹³ See Patrick Muller, *Latitudinarianism and Didacticism in Eighteenth-Century Literature: Moral Theology in Fielding, Sterne, and Goldsmith* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009), p. 98

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

superstructure erected upon first nature. Consequently, it was possible for the latitudinarians to maintain that humankind could return, to a certain degree at least, to the divine image implanted in them. It was in the power of education to extenuate humankind's original corruption – according to Joseph Glanvill, “custom is very *powerful*; and as it makes a kind of Nature, so, many times it *masters* and *subdues* it.”²¹⁵

Education, then, had a considerable influence on whether a human being's natural vice would reign supreme or whether they would be held in check by Christian principles. As we will see in chapter 4, it was the power of education that made Lockean subjects and Lockean liberal society possible. John Tillotson thought that children could be educated so as to practise virtue habitually and that even accustomed sinners could be reclaimed for the cause of religion. However, the malleability of humankind also had potential pitfalls. As Isaac Barrow pointed out, a reverse effect, namely that “vice by custom may pass into nature, and prove so congenial, as if it were born with us,” could occur.²¹⁶ Since moral tenets were only capable of moral certainty, a good religious education did not necessarily yield proper fruits, but, as Tillotson argued with Aristotle, it probably would more likely than not.²¹⁷ In sum, for the latitudinarians, good habits instilled by education were the surest way of anchoring morally certain principles of virtue firmly in the human mind.

Habit in Restoration Religion

In the introduction, we saw how Richard Hooker inherited the English Calvinist challenge of not only clearly distinguishing justification from sanctification, but also of incorporating a theory of practical morality into the order of salvation. Similarly, we have also observed how leading divines such as Henry Hammond and Jeremy Taylor focused Christianity on morality,

²¹⁵ Joseph Glanvill, “The Way of Happiness,” *Some Discourses, Sermons and Remains* pp. 12.

²¹⁶ Isaac Barrow, “The Danger and Mischief of Delaying Repentance,” *Theological Works*, A. Napier (ed.), III, p. 315.

²¹⁷ See John Tillotson, “Of the Education of Children,” *Works*, I, p. 487.

duty, and personal piety rather than theological speculation. Restoration doctrinal and textual positions on the relationship between grace and morality marked a fundamental departure from the Reformed theories of morality of Luther and co. In the interests of consolidating the English church as well as society after the divisive civil war years, moderate churchmen – John Wilkins, John Tillotson, Isaac Barrow, Richard Baxter, Robert South, Edward Fowler, and others – rejected all manner of polemicizing about unprovable fundamentals of revealed religion.²¹⁸

These moderate churchmen were critical of excessive self-scrutiny as a means of personal assurance. Affective individualism was described in their sermons as an over-scrupulous devotional exercise that bred only frustration and religious despair rather than dutiful expressions of practical piety. Their sermons, particularly the latitudinarians, focused instead on a reformation of behaviour and manners as well as the reasonable and practical means by which congregants might be disciplined into participating in a comprehensive English church. For their interest in practical rather than dogmatic theology, the approach of the following moderate divines was aptly described as “holy living” theology.²¹⁹

Regarding moral and religious education, the moderate divines were more willing than their English Calvinist predecessors to incorporate a system of behavioural and moral conditioning into the scheme of salvation – a theory of ethical habituation which, they hoped, would foster a religion of virtuous behaviour based on acquired and regulated habits. In their desire to introduce a process of moral habituation into the order of salvation, the moderate divines eased away from the Calvinist hostility toward developmental virtue based on the Aristotelian ethic of habituation – they presented an English religion that was as much a process through which moral apprentices gradually acquire discrete moral virtues and

²¹⁸ N.H. Keeble, *The Restoration: England in the 1660s* (Oxford: Blackwell. 2002), pp. 124-29.

²¹⁹ See Spellman, *The Latitudinarians and the Church of England, 1600-1700*, ch. 6.

practical wisdom, as it was a belief system; a process that encouraged the English subject to make a series of rational choices, based on a sense of temporal and heavenly rewards in conjunction with the regulation of behaviour according to the protocols of shared habits. The moderate divines thus attempted to circumvent many of the soteriological problems faced by earlier theologians and writers by effectively working a measure of self-interest and moral progress into an acceptable Calvinist scheme of salvation. This is not to argue that they advocated a Christianity divorced from dogma and hardly more than ethical in content. Rather, they believed their faith to be at least continuous with the historic mainstream of Protestant English belief. Moreover, as already stressed in this chapter's opening comments, they were not somehow less religious than their predecessors, rather they were more concerned with the habits that would in turn strengthen that religion.

The increased emphasis upon the importance of habitual dispositions in matters of religion was not consigned to any particular religious group or position. As a result, identifying a given Restoration divine within this habitual-religious discourse is not meant to pinpoint their precise theological position, or to confine individuality and originality of their thoughts and works within a rigid systematic cage, like placing a specimen into a box, but rather to express their kinship with other thinkers, whose theology was similar at certain significant points, even if it is not necessarily identical in all aspects.²²⁰ In other words, identifying an individual within this tradition does not mean that they held all and only those theological views that were held by others as well as their predecessors within the tradition. The divines that are the focus of this chapter were a loose group of clergymen whose theology adapted to new insights and circumstances, adopting and engaging with new patterns of thought and controversies as they emerged. In many ways, the organic development of this

²²⁰ Donald Greene, 'Latitudinarianism and Sensibility: The Genealogy of the "Man of Feeling" Reconsidered,' *Modern Philology*, Vol. 75, No. 2 (Nov., 1977), pp. 159-183, p. 180.

theology which was based on an interplay of reason, habit, and faith during the period can be understood as one example of the way in which the Christian Protestant intellectual tradition was able to maintain useful forms, methods, and doctrinal ideas while at the same time incorporating the changing approaches to exegetical and theological investigation and epistemology. Collectively, the moderate divines attempted to develop a religion founded on habitually acquired moral beliefs and dispositions whereby a rational choice, or a series of rational choices, guided by an habitual awareness of the benefits of acting one way rather than another in the pursuit of salvation. In other words, habit mediated an initiating rational choice and the eventual acquisition of right action and religious truth.

If one examines John Wilkins's systematic discussion of habits together with the comments of other moderate divines on this subject, and if one assumes that their views are sufficiently representative, it is possible then to unpack the main issues in seventeenth-century English appeals to the role of habit in the religious and moral life. Regarding the general nature and effects of habit, there was agreement on the following assumptions: (1) Repetition of any particular thought or action makes it habitual; (2) Habits may either be mental or physical, both: that is, they may take root in, and affect, either the mind or the body – as Tillotson put it: “by virtue of a habit a man's mind or body becomes pliable and inclined to such kinds of actions as it is accustomed to”; (3) Habits of thoughts had the potential to dictate conduct; (4) Firmly developed habits had the potential to affect humankind so powerfully that they became a kind of second nature, and their affects considered as important as those dispositions which all humankind naturally inherit by virtue of their common humanity. Acquired traits, therefore, were viewed as significant, if not more so, than inherited ones.²²¹

²²¹ John Tillotson, “Sermon X, Of the Deceitfulness and Danger of Sin,” *The Works of the most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson* Vol. III, p. 97.

These assumptions equally applied to both good and bad habits, but there were several assumptions about bad habits that were broadly held: (1) bad habits, because human nature is corrupted by original sin, are more easily acquired than good habits; (2) bad habits had the potential to diminish one's light of reason and judgement, unbalancing the mind by impairing the rational powers and thus making it difficult to act rationally and hence virtuously; (3) bad habits made one retreat from the kind of self-examination which was crucial to the carrying out of one's religious duty and acquiring God's grace. Furthermore, it was believed that good habits, though possibly more difficult and arduous to acquire than bad habits, would help sustain the light of reason in the mind as well as encourage one to undertake self-examination. Good habits, when finally acquired, could generate their own rewards in this temporal life. Deliberately cultivating virtuous habits was viewed as not only a means, but the most important, if not the only means, of developing a virtuous character – as John Wilkins phrased this key Aristotelian concept with a typical Christian spin: “*An habitual frame of mind, whereby we are fitted for vertuous actions, and more especially for the Duties of Religion.*”²²²

The moderate divines as well as a variety of their predecessors and contemporaries held that habit was indispensable in guiding ethical conduct as well as matters of belief. Various Reformed and Puritan divines, for example, used the idea of habit in the Aristotelian-Thomistic sense, primarily in their discussions of regeneration, grace, and virtue. Their interest was the meaning of the term “habit” as used in their doctrinal formulations. The habit of grace, infused into a person by God, for example, was said to be an active propensity: “a disposition active and inclining,” and not just a “remote power,” according to John Owen (1616-1683).²²³ William Ames, in his *Marrow of Theology*, suggested that a “virtuous habit moves the faculty, which otherwise would not be so moved, toward good.”²²⁴ Habits are

²²² Wilkins, *Essay Towards a Real Character, And a Philosophical Language* (London, 1668), p. 204.

²²³ John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, 17 vols. (Philadelphia: Leighton Publications, 1865), 3: 289, 295. 468-485.

²²⁴ William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, trans. John D. Eusden (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1968), p. 228.

“active and living powers,” taught John Flavel (c.1627-1691), which are “to a course of action as fountains or springs to the streams and rivers that flow from them.”²²⁵ The habit of grace was also a “state of character” that enhanced and perfected the life of the whole person. Ames spoke of habit as “a state of mind of various perfection.” Habits of grace bestowed upon the individual a newly acquired ability and propensity “to do well.” The habit of grace as a “state of character,” furthermore, was also an abiding, real principle. It constituted a “new life of the soul,” a “second nature.”²²⁶

A survey of John Wilkins’s sermons and his numerous works reveal that he advanced a model of faith that entailed a systematic procedure of rationally committing oneself to act habitually as a strategy in the pursuit of salvation as well as for everyday life. In the last chapter, we saw how Wilkins’s conception of right reason was constructed on the mechanics of Aristotelian habituation, yet this was not the only area of Wilkin’s approach that utilised the idea of habit. Wilkins’s *Ecclesiastes* (1646), for example, a popular preaching manual that would have eight editions by 1704 gives us a glimpse into Wilkins’s views on faith and habit. In the 1669 version of the text, Wilkins identified the basis of Christian belief:

Religion may be described to be, That general habit of reverence towards the Divine Nature, whereby we are enabled and enclined to worship and serve God after such a manner as we conceive most agreeable to his will, so as to procure his favour and blessing. The Doctrine which delivers the Rules of this, is stiled THEOLOGY, or Divinity.²²⁷

Religion, for Wilkins, was practice whilst theology was the theoretical principles that underpinned and directed it. He advocated a religion of ‘habit of reverence towards the Divine Nature’ whose duties were established, and regulated, on the principles of a natural theology that brought the characteristics of the divine within the bounds of human understanding. What

²²⁵ John Flavel, *The Method of Grace* (New York: American Tract Society, 1820), p. 102.

²²⁶ Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, p. 224.

²²⁷ Wilkins, *Ecclesiastes, or, a Discourse Concerning the Gift of Preaching*, 5th ed. (London, 1669), p. 121.

did Wilkins mean by the term ‘habit’? A comprehensive definition was provided in his *Essay Towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language* (London, 1668) in which he gave the concept its fullest expression. Habits, according to Wilkins, were:

Such *superinduced Qualities*, whether infused or acquired, *whereby the natural Faculties are perfected*, and rendered more ready and vigorous in the exercise of their several Acts, according to the *more or less* perfect Degrees of them, are styled by the name of

- HABIT, *Endowment, enure, qualifie, Gift, Talent.*
- DISPOSITION, *Propensity, Proclivity, Promptitude, Proneness, Inclination, readiness, given to, addiction, fitness, aptitude.*

To the more general consideration of Habit may appertain

- Those *States* or Conditions of life which either reward or enable men for vertuous Actions; comprehending the
 - ENDS OR REWARD OF VERTUE. I.
 - INSTRUMENTS OF VERTUE. II.
- Those *Qualifications*, which, though they are not properly Vertues, yet do prepare for, and dispose unto, and, in other respects, circumstantiate Vertue it self, both in the *Habit* and *Operations* of it, and are therefore styled AFFECTIONS OF VERTUE, either
 - INTELLECTUAL. III.
 - MORAL. IV.
- The *Kinds* of vertuous Habits, whether
 - INFUSED· [...]th Intellectual and Moral. V.
 - ACQUIR[...] INTELLECTUAL. VI.²²⁸

There are a number of observations that can be drawn from Wilkins’s exposition of habit. First, the term habit and disposition were synonymous with each other. Wilkins was certainly not alone in taking this position. Richard Baxter (1615-91) in his *Two Disputations on Original Sin* (1675), for example, alluded to the idea of the Christian virtue of charity as being

²²⁸ Wilkins, *Essay Towards a Real Character*, p. 200.

either a “habit or disposition,” as well as the notion of “Virtue in habit or disposition.”²²⁹ Second, it is clear that habits were intimately connected with virtuous dispositions and traits of character, or as means-to-an-end strategies which individuals engaged in order to acquire virtue. Third, according to Wilkins, there existed two kinds of virtuous habits: those that were infused and those that were acquired. Wilkins was not alone in formulating this dichotomy. Robert Ferguson (*d.* 1714) in *A Sober Inquiry* (1673), for example, made reference to those “*acquired habits* which are in unregenerate men, and the *infused habits* which are in believers.”²³⁰ Meanwhile John Owen (1616-1683) made the same division, arguing that “Habits both *acquired*, and *infused*, are increased and strengthened by frequent acts.”²³¹

Regarding infused habits, Wilkins described them as those “to which the Divine favour and assistance is required after a more especial manner; which are therefore styled by the general name of GRACE.”²³² They involved, as previously stated, the development of “*An habitual frame of mind*, whereby we are fitted for vertuous actions, and more especially for the Duties of Religion.”²³³ Wilkins position here is not too dissimilar to Hooker’s idea of ‘habitual sanctification’ – that faith was a habit that required the help of God’s given grace. This was a position that was shared by a variety of Wilkins’s contemporaries across the denominational divide: in a funeral sermon given in 1663, Edmund Calamy the Elder (1600-1666), for example, spoke of the “habit of Grace” as “a planting of holiness in a man, and making him a partaker of the Divine Nature.”²³⁴ Similarly, Baxter wrote of that “Habit of grace” which was given to mankind through God’s “superadded sustentation.”²³⁵ Additionally, John Wallis (1616-1703) in his sermon on regeneration described how the

²²⁹ Richard Baxter, *Two Disputations on Original Sin* (London, 1675), p. 69.

²³⁰ Robert Ferguson, *A sober enquiry into the nature, measure and principle of moral virtue* (1673), p. 32.

²³¹ John Owen, *A Brief Instruction in the Worship of God* (1667) p. 39.

²³² Wilkins *Essay Towards a Real Character*, pp. 204-05.

²³³ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

²³⁴ Edmund Calamy, *A Compleat collection of farewell sermons preached by Mr. Calamy, Dr. Manton, Mr. Caryl ... [et al.]; together with Mr. Ash his funeral sermon, Mr. Nalton's funeral sermon, Mr. Lye's rehearsal ... with their several prayers* (London, 1663).

²³⁵ Baxter, *Catholick Theologie* (London, 1675), p. 69.

“Habit of Grace” was worked “in us” by God “whereby we are inclined to Love and Delight in Good, as, by the habitual Corruption of our Nature, we are inclined to Evil.”²³⁶ Robert Ferguson held a similar position, arguing that grace was “a quality impressed on the minds and souls of men, whereby they became habitually disposed for God.”²³⁷ For William Sherlock (1639-1707), the “Habit of Grace” was akin to “the very nature of God.”²³⁸ The more conservative Robert South (1634-1716), argued that “the Habit of Holiness...must needs to be produced by supernatural Infusion, and consequently proceed, not from Acquisition, but gift.”²³⁹

On the subject of acquired habits, Wilkins described them as those “which may be gotten by Industry, and tend to the perfecting of the Mind or Understanding.”²⁴⁰ Wilkins placed virtues such as ‘wisdom’ and ‘prudence’ within the realm those habits that had to be acquired. The notion of ‘wisdom’ is important for our understanding of Wilkins’s approach and how the concept of ‘habit’ fitted into his efforts on guiding the ethical conduct and religious beliefs of congregations and readers. Wisdom, according to Wilkins, was “so essential to Religion” and consisted in “an ability and inclination, to make choice of the right *Means* in the prosecution of our true *End*.”²⁴¹ There is a clear theme of moral responsibility here – of observing a median in one’s actions. In his seventh sermon, Wilkins elucidated further on the idea of wisdom and how it functioned in a religious context:

²³⁶ John Wallis, *The Necessity of Regeneration: in two sermons to the University of Oxford* (London, 1682), p. 34.

²³⁷ Robert Ferguson, *A sober enquiry*, pp. 40-1.

²³⁸ William Sherlock, *Practical Discourse concerning a Future Judgement* (London, 1692), p. 485.

²³⁹ Robert South, “False Foundations Removed, and Trues Ones Laid,” in *Sermons*, 2:237.

²⁴⁰ Wilkins, *Real Character*, pp. 204-05.

²⁴¹ Wilkins, *Sermons Preach'd upon Several Occasions before the King at White-Hall* (London, 1677), pp. 17-18.

Christian Wisdom may be defined to be that *habit* of mind whereby a man is inabled to propose the true end of eternal blessedness, and to judge aright concerning such means as may be most fit for the attaining of this end, conforming his life and carriage accordingly.²⁴²

Wilkins's remark gives us an insight into his theological position regarding grace and human effort in relation to salvation, demonstrating the key reciprocity in Wilkin's thinking between acquired and infused habits - God's grace was necessary for habitual good works, but the proper way of inviting such 'infused habits' was to acquire a habit of holiness by acting virtuously until they became almost second nature – as Wilkins explained: “*Infused* habits are usually wrought in us after the same manner as *acquired*; that is, gradually, and not without humane endeavour and cooperation.”²⁴³ John Tillotson, Wilkins's son-in-law was in full agreement with his father-in-law that “*habits of every Grace and Virtue...are afterwards attained by the frequent practice of them.*”²⁴⁴ Likewise, the nonconformist minister Oliver Heywood (1630-1702) asserted that “Habits of grace are no otherwise known but by their acts.”²⁴⁵ The main point here is that Wilkins regarded habits as vital to setting the English subject's conduct and religious faith on the rightful path. Such habits had to be carefully nurtured, developed, and practised by the individual.

Isaac Barrow (1630-1677), a contemporary of Wilkins, whom he befriended during his time at Cambridge and whom Wilkins helped become geometry professor at Gresham College in 1662, also advocated the centrality of habits in the formation of good Christian virtues and conduct. According to Barrow, it was “the habit that qualifies and denominates a

²⁴² Wilkins, *Sermons Preached upon Several Occasions by the Right Reverend Father in God, John Wilkins* (London, 1682), 209.

²⁴³ *A Discourse Concerning Gift of Prayer* (1646), p. 8.

²⁴⁴ John Tillotson, Sermon VIII, Of the Nature of Regeneration, and its Necessity, in order to Justification and Salvation in *Several Discourses*, p. 227

²⁴⁵ Oliver Heywood, *Heart-treasure, or, An essay tending to fil [sic] and furnish the head and heart of every Christian* (1667), p. 61.

man such or such in any kind or degree of morality.”²⁴⁶ In order to describe the perfect moral Christian, Barrow turned to Scripture

A good man is in Scripture frequently compared to a *Tree bringing forth fruit in due season*; and the root thereof is this habitual disposition, which being nourished by the dew of Heaven, and quickened by the benign influence of Divine Grace, sprouts forth opportunely, and yields a plentiful increase of good fruit.²⁴⁷

Barrow’s concept of habit echoed that of Wilkins’s. Like Wilkins, he advocated an habitual approach that occupied a middle way between grace on one side and good works on the other – an habitual inclination that could only be developed through “constant exercise” on the behalf of the individual with the assistance of God’s grace.²⁴⁸ Barrow was primarily concerned with how men might be guided into truth and right living, emphasising that true faith must issue in right action – which could only come from good habits of mind. It was therefore crucial that the proper Christian developed “An habitual skill or faculty of judging aright about matters of practice, and chusing according to that right judgment, and conforming the actions to such good choice.”²⁴⁹ Such an habitual inclination was not only important in developing a virtuous character, it was also foundational to the performance of the duties of religion and the carrying out of God’s commandments which required “an habitual disposition of mind, in a constant tenour of practice.”²⁵⁰

Matthew Hale (1609-1676), one of the most intellectual lawyers of the early Restoration, also wrote profusely on the role of habit and his perspective is worth a brief examination. A prolific writer, although a reluctant publisher; several of his key tracts were printed only posthumously. Hale’s irenicism manifested itself in the Restoration period in

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 312-13.

²⁴⁸ Practical discourses upon the consideration of our latter end, and the danger and mischief of delaying repentance, p. 115.

²⁴⁹ The First Sermon, p. 1.

²⁵⁰ Barrow, *Practical Discourses*, p. 107.

familiarity with moderate Anglicans such as Barrow, Tillotson, Stillingfleet, and Wilkins, as well as moderate nonconformists such as Richard Baxter. He sent manuscript versions of his *Contemplations moral and divine* (1676) and *The Primitive origination of mankind* (1677) to Wilkins who showed them to John Tillotson²⁵¹ while his *Discourse of the Knowledge of God and of ourselves*, was published by Richard Baxter in 1688 and was written, Baxter tells us, when Hale was about thirty or thirty-one (1639-41).²⁵² Baxter had read the manuscript while Hale was still alive, and he discussed the contents with its author, admiring the knowledge of the schoolmen it displayed.²⁵³

Hale's writings were intended to encourage piety, and he viewed theological speculations as a dangerous distraction. The mark of true religion, he believed, was the way that it transfigured the duties of everyday life: "this is the great art of Christian chymistry, to convert those acts that are materially natural or civil into acts truly and formally religious; whereby the whole course of this life is both truly and interpretatively a service to Almighty God, and an uninterrupted state of religion..."²⁵⁴ Hale's *Discourse* was divided into two parts – an extensive treatment of nature before grace and of reason before scripture's revelation. He devoted chapter twenty-nine to a discussion of the role of habit regarding man's sanctification and the rule of righteousness. He began with a definition of habit:

The Habit it self: it is a frame and temper of Mind arising from the Love of God, to give every Man his due, according to the Will of God. The great Duty that the Creature owes to his Creator, is Love: *Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy Heart*: and this as hath been shewn, is the first and great Commandment, and the first and most natural Duty and Bond that can be: the *Consequence* of this Love, is the doing all the good we can unto him, and for him, from whom we receive our Being: now all the good we can do him, is but to please him, to be conformable to his Will; for it is impossible, that any thing can

²⁵¹ Alan Cromartie, *Sir Matthew Hale, 1609-1676*, p. 157.

²⁵² Matthew Hale, *A Discourse of the Knowledge of God and of ourselves* (1688), sig.a2.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Cited in A. Cromartie, *Sir Matthew Hale, 1609-1676: Law, Religion and Natural Philosophy* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), p. 173.

contribute any thing to him, that is infinitely full: all the good we can do him therefore, and all the expressions of our Love, consists in this...²⁵⁵

Hale then moved on to a discussion of the “Rule of Righteousness,” which, according to him, formed the basis of man’s sanctification and the notion of habit assumed an important role. Hale described righteousness as an “habitual Righteousness” whose “foundation” was “Love to God.”²⁵⁶ Furthermore, in order to ascertain such righteousness, mankind had to regulate their behaviour. Thus, the Christian’s duty, according to Hale, did not merely consist of “that external Conformity to the Divine Law.” God also required mankind to develop an “habitual frame of Mind and Life in all Vertue.” In order to attain this, Hale, in the same vein as Edward Fowler, pointed to the “*Example of Christ*” whose life offered a “Pattern of Holiness towards God, and Righteousness towards Man.” Hale recommended that his readers turned “the practice of his Life into Precepts, and concluding what we ought to be, by observing what he was and did.”²⁵⁷

The *Discourse* was not the only work of Hale’s which advocated the importance of habit and habitual dispositions in forming religious and ethical conduct. In his *Contemplations moral and divine*, he stressed the importance of “a habit of Religion towards God in his Son Jesus Christ; which is the *magnum oportet*, the one thing necessary, and overweighs all the rest.”²⁵⁸ What did this habit of religion consist of? For Hale, it was a “habit of piety” whereby the “whole course” of a man’s life was directed to “truly and interpretatively a Service to Almighty God, and an uninterrupted state of Religion, which is the best, and noblest, and most universal redemption of his Time.”²⁵⁹ Like Wilkins, Hale also wrote of the “habit of Wisdom” which aided man in his knowledge of God’s commandments, essentially

²⁵⁵ Hale, *A discourse of the knowledge of God and of ourselves*, p.435.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 436.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 443.

²⁵⁸ Hale, *Contemplations moral and divine* (1676), p. 19.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

functioning as a deterrent against irreligious and sinful actions by instilling in man a “*fear of God*” thereby directing him to the “exercise of the *Duties* of his *Relations*” and enabling him to bring “forth the glory, and excellency, and goodness of God”²⁶⁰

Another important habit, for Hale, was patience. He lamented that a:

great cause of folly in the World is *Inadvertence, Inconsiderateness, Precipitancy*, and over-hastiness in speeches or actions. If men had but the patience many times to pause but so long in actions and speeches of moment as might serve to repeat but the Creed or Lord's Prayer, many follies in the World would be avoided that do very much mischief both to the parties themselves and others...²⁶¹

Patience bestowed upon man the ability to give “pause and deliberation” in their “duty to God” as well as the “ingredients of wisdom and prudence requisite to the choice of actions and words, and the manner of doing them.” Therefore, according to Hale, it worked to “mightily advanceth and *improveth the worth and excellency of most Humane actions* in the World” because it “habituates the mind to a temper of caution, and advertence, and consideration in matters as well of smaller as of greater moment, and so make a wise, attentive, and considerate man.”²⁶²

Hale’s “habit of religion” was essentially an instrument that set the Christian on a rightful path. To use Paul F. Cefalu’s terminology, it advocated a form of “personalized deism,” whereby the English subject was modelled as a well-running mechanism who did not have to be directed once the habit had taken root and programmed the them to act ethically and responsibly in English society.²⁶³ The “habit of religion,” once acquired through habitually rightful conduct had the ability to govern the subject, directing them toward virtuous actions as well as buttressing their faith:

²⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 17, p. 19, p. 34.

²⁶¹ Ibid., p. 39.

²⁶² Ibid., p. 41.

²⁶³ Cefalu, *Moral Identity in Early Modern English Literature*, p. 162.

Whatever you do, be very careful to retain in your heart a *habit of Religion*, that may be always about you, and keep your heart, and your life always as in his presence, and tending towards him. This will be continually with you, and put it self into acts, even although you are not in a solemn posture of Religious worship, and will lend you multitudes of Religious Applications to Almighty God, upon all occasions and interventions, which will not at all hinder you in any measure in your secular occasions, but better and further you; it will make you faithful in your Calling, even upon the account of an actual reflexion of your mind upon the presence and command of the God you fear and love.²⁶⁴

Wilkins's treatment of habit along with Barrow's remarks and Hale's 'habit of religion' raises questions concerning the philosophic and operative role of habit. Aristotelian thought, for example, held that habit played an important philosophic role, essentially as a dynamic principle that perfected the operations of human beings.²⁶⁵ In Restoration England, a period in which the Aristotelian world-view was coming under increased pressure by the new epistemological approaches in natural philosophy, habit was understood as the rational capacity of the mind rather than a mere ancillary principle to the rational capacity – to use the term 'rational' in a broad sense to mean the mind's ability to apprehend the structure of reality. It was much more than mere custom or the usual way something was done or the regular way something happened. It was, rather, an active tendency that governed and brought about certain types of actions and behaviour. "...virtuous habits," wrote Wilkins, "will enable a man for worthy designs and actions."²⁶⁶ Likewise, Tillotson asserted that "Habits of Virtue, like new Cloathes upon a young and comely Body, sit very gracefully upon a straight and well shap'd Mind, and do mightly become it."²⁶⁷ For Baxter, the "habitual understanding" had to be "active, so as to keep a man from erring, and from turning back."²⁶⁸ Habit, then, was conceived as an element of facility giving specific direction and worked to enhance the

²⁶⁴ Hale, *Contemplations moral and divine* (1676), p. 25.

²⁶⁵ For this in an Early Modern context, see Joshua Schodel, *Excess and the Mean in Early Modern English Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), esp. pp. 1-48.

²⁶⁶ John Wilkins, *Of the Principles and Duties of Natural Religion*, (London, 1675) p. 359

²⁶⁷ John Tillotson, Sermon VI in *Works*, p. 195

²⁶⁸ Baxter, *The Divine Life* (1664), p. 226.

rational capacity of the mind. It was an active tendency which issued forth in certain types of events – in the sense that it governed the type of actions or behaviour and the type of context upon which those actions or behaviour would become actual.

Richard Baxter's practical works provide a good example of this position. In the *Christian Directory* (1673), Baxter expounded a systematic programme in which the role of habit in ethical and religious affairs was given extended treatment. Baxter viewed 'habits' as fundamental in forming good conduct and conditioning the individual to act morally:

The intending of God's glory or our spiritual good, cannot be distinctly and sensibly re-acted in every particular pleasure we take...but a sincere, habitual intention well laid at first in the heart, will serve to the right use of many particular means. As a man purpose at his first setting out to what place he meaneth to go, and afterwards goeth on, though at every step he think not sensibly of his end; so he that devoteth himself to God...will carry on small particulars to that end, by a secret, unobserved action of the soul, performed at the same time with other actions, which only are observed...As the accustomed hand of a musician can play a lesson on his lute, while he thinks of something else: so can a resolved Christian faithfully do such accustomed things as...labouring in his calling, to the good ends which he (first actually, and still habitually) resolved on, without a distinct remembrance and observable intention of that end.²⁶⁹

A habit, for Baxter, was a faculty which, when developed properly, could positively condition the actions of an individual – it was a controlling faculty, which after being developed properly, could command the actions of the individual. Furthermore, the ideal Christian was so proficient in their habits of faith that Baxter compared them to an expert labourer whose proficiency in a craft permitted them the freedom to contemplate worthy objects and ideas while they worked: "A weaver, a tailor, and some other tradesmen, and day-labourers, may do their work well, and yet have their thoughts free for better things, a great part of the day:

²⁶⁹ Baxter, *Christian Ethics*, in *The Practical Works of The Reverend Richard Baxter*, 23 vols., ed. Willim Orme (London, 1830), vol. 3, pp. 101-2.

these must contrive an ordinary way of employment for their thoughts; when their work doth not require them...”²⁷⁰

Whilst Baxter aligned himself with non-conformity, it is clear that his views on moral conduct and reliance on good habits to foster social unity takes him into territory that is similar to that which was headed under the banner of latitudinarianism. In his autobiography, for example, showed a strong appreciation for the writings of moderate conformists such as Wilkins, Tillotson, Stillingfleet, whose sermons he attended and valued in the 1660s: “Ordinarily I went to some parish church, where I heard a learned minister that had not obtruded himself upon the people, but was chosen by them, and preached well (as Dr. Wilkins, Dr. Tillotson, Mr. Nest, etc.), and I joined them in the common prayers of the church.”²⁷¹ According to Isabel Rivers “The respect in which Baxter was held by moderate Anglicans is evidenced by the fact that in 1660, when a moderate church policy for a short time seemed possible, Charles II made him one of his chaplains...And his respect for the latitudinarians especially Wilkins (‘a love of mankind, and of honesty, peace and Impartiality and Justice’), Tillotson, Whichcote, and Stillingfleet, emerges at several points in his autobiography.”²⁷²

Baxter and his latitudinarian contemporaries shared the conviction that orthodox Calvinism underestimated the role of moral training and holy living in the acquisition and promulgation of faith. The latitudinarian position, embraced by Edward Stillingfleet, Robert South, Isaac Barrow, and John Tillotson among others, held that Scripture contained only a few self-evident principles, and that in place of an undue concern with mystery, revelation

²⁷⁰ Baxter, *Christian Ethics*, in *Works*, vol 2., p. 203.

²⁷¹ J. M. Lloyd Thomas, *The Autobiography of Richard Baxter* (London, J. M. Dent, 1925), p. 190.

²⁷² I. Rivers, *Reason, Grace and Sentiment*, Vol. 1, p.100.

and doctrinal purity, the English nation should focus on matters of pastoral discipline and congenial behaviour.²⁷³

Tillotson like Baxter, advocated the notion of habitual conduct not just as an important factor in guiding human action, but also as a crucial part of one's salvation:

Not that we are obliged always actually to think upon [salvation]; but to have it frequently in our minds, and habitually to intend and design it, so as to make it the scope of all our endeavours and actions, and that everything we do be either directly in order to it, or some way or other subservient to this design...like the term and end of a man's journey, towards which the traveler is continually tending, and hath it always habitually in his intention, tho' he doth not always think of it every step that he takes, and tho' he be not always directly advancing and moving towards it, yet he never knowingly goes out of the way...if our mind be once fixed and resolved, that will determine and govern all our motions, and inspire us with diligence, and zeal, and perseverance in the prosecution of our end."²⁷⁴

For Tillotson and Baxter, these moral habits once developed and implemented required constant management in order to remain operative and self-governing. And this emphasis on the formulation of moral habits made up a large part of Baxter's moderate theological position. Whilst he did not attribute salvation solely to the benefice of the human will, he was convinced that exclusive reliance upon unmerited free grace was antithetical not only to the moral life but to all civil and religious order. For Baxter, uncompromising predestinarianism such as that espoused by John Owen, came dangerously close to permitting ungodliness since discussion of guaranteed election, unconditional and complete justification, the unmerited free gift of grace, the repudiation of the Mosaic law and the necessary perseverance of the elect too easily detached the life of faith from the challenge of the moral effort:

²⁷³ For a good account of the complexities of the latitudinarian position, see Gerard Reedy, *Robert South (1634-1716): An Introduction to His Life and Sermons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), ch. 6. See also Patrick Muller, *Latitudinarianism and Didacticism in Eighteenth-century Literature: Moral Theology in Fielding, Sterne, and Goldsmith* (Peter Lang: Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2009), ch. 2.

²⁷⁴ Tillotson, *Sermons on Several Subjects and Occasions*, 12 vols. (London, 1744), vol. 6, p 155.

I doubt it is the undoing of many to imagine, that if once they are sanctified, they are so unsure in the hands of Christ, that they have no more care to take, nor no more danger to be afraid of, and at last think that they have no more to do, as of necessity to Salvation: and thus prove that indeed they were never sanctified.²⁷⁵

For Baxter, “*much of the Work of your Salvation is yet to do, when you are Converted. You have happily begun; but you have not finished. You have hit of the right way, but you have your Journey yet to go.*”²⁷⁶ Christ

never intended to justifie or sanctifie us perfectly at furst...but to carry on both proportionably and by degrees, that we have daily use for his daily mediation, and may daily pray, *Forgive us our trespasses.*²⁷⁷

In the same vein as Wilkins, Baxter argued that a continuing effort toward personal improvement was an integral part of Christianity: “your Conversion is not sound if you are not heartily desirous to increase. Grace is not true, if there be not a desire after more.”²⁷⁸ By wedding morality to the process of salvation, his soteriology guaranteed that the pursuit of the holy life would be disregarded and placed a kind of accountability and obligation on the individual who would have to lead a moral and pious life in order to be saved. A religion which promoted good habitual behaviour thus offered a viable and practical solution to the misconduct and immorality of English society.

Tillotson was in full agreement with his non-conformist fellow and in a sermon entitled, “Of the difficulty of reforming vicious habits” he stressed the importance of good habitual behaviour. He began with an exploration of the nature of habits: “the farther we proceed the more we are confirmed in them: and that which at first we did voluntarily, by

²⁷⁵ Baxter, *Directions for Weak Distempered Christians to Grow up to a Confirmed State of Grace* (1669), pp. 89.90.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

²⁷⁷ Baxter, *The Life of Faith* (1670), p. 196.

²⁷⁸ Baxter, *Directions for Weak Christians*, pp. 17-18.

degrees becomes so natural and necessary that it is almost impossible for us to do otherwise. This is plainly seen in the experience of every day, in things good and bad, both in lesser and greater matters.” According to Tillotson, individuals “who have been deeply engaged in vicious habits and long accustomed to them,” had lost touch and forgotten their true duties and interests, but went to great pains to stress that their reformation and redemption was not unfeasible – “The result of my discourse will be not to discourage any, how bad soever, from attempting this change, but to put them upon it, and to perswade them to it.”²⁷⁹ Furthermore, it was important to identify bad habits and rectify them because they had a considerable effect on man’s faculties and condition:

The perfection of any habit whether good, or bad, induceth a kind of necessity of acting accordingly. A rooted habit becomes a governing Principle, and bears almost an equal sway in us with that which is natural. It is a kind of new nature superinduced, and even as hard to be expelled as some things which are Primitively and Originally natural.²⁸⁰

Good habits were possible, however. According to Tillotson, “let a man but habituate himself to a religious and vertuous life, and the trouble will go off by degrees.”²⁸¹ Virtue and saintliness was second-nature for those who practised it: “When a man hath once engag’d himself Religious course, and is habituated to piety and holiness, all the exercises of Religion and devotion, all acts of goodness and virtue are delightfull to him.”²⁸² Religious duties, therefore, had to be constantly practised and repeated for them to become good life habits. For Tillotson, they formed the basis for an active and living faith; the governing body of Restoration English society’s religious and moral stability:

A strong and vigorous faith is the principle and root of all graces and virtues, and may have such a powerful influence upon the resolutions of our minds, and the government of our actions, that from this

²⁷⁹ Tillotson, Sermon XXIX, in *Works*, pp. 442-443.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Tillotson, Sermon VI, *Works*, p. 241.

²⁸² Tillotson, Sermon IV, in *Works*, p. 156.

principle all graces and virtues may spring and grow up by degrees into habits...I doubt not but that the habits of several graces and virtues are afterwards attained by the frequent practice of them.²⁸³

Such moral habits represented a distinctive theory of ethical conduct: a series of rational choices, guided by an awareness of the utilities and benefits in acting one way rather than another – as a measure in pursuit of salvation as well as moral obedience.

Furthermore, a focus on shared habits, for Tillotson, was not only a way in which individuals could find common ground, it was also the best means of preserving unity in English society: “We have the same notions of right and wrong; we are all obnoxious to one another, and may be beneficial to one another; we all love ourselves and study the advancement of our interest and happiness.”²⁸⁴ A subsidiary development of such an approach was also the construction of a Church of England that would not only present a united front against the Romanist menace, but also express a stable and certain institution where moderation and morality were the standard. Such stability was inherently reliant on man’s ability to acquire moral virtue through habitual practice and repetition – in Tillotson’s own words: to “conform our selves to the *holy* God; endeavour to be *habitually holy*, which is our conformity to the *Nature* of God.”²⁸⁵

Edward Stillingfleet (1635-1699), was another member of the latitude men who employed the concept of habit. Considered by many historians as the leading theologian and apologist of the Church of England, his work fell into three phases.²⁸⁶ Up to the revolution of 1688 he wrote on issues which were of paramount importance to the Church of England in positioning it in relation to a broader Protestantism and to Rome. During the early years of

²⁸³ Tillotson, Sermon LV, in *Works*, p. 385.

²⁸⁴ Tillotson, Sermon CCLV in *Works*, p. 264

²⁸⁵ Tillotson, Sermon CXLII in *Works*, p. 454.

²⁸⁶ See, for example, Richard H. Popkin, “The Philosophy of Bishop Stillingfleet,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 9, No. 3, July 1971, pp. 303-319; Robert T. Carroll, *The Common-Sense Philosophy of Religion of Bishop Edward Stillingfleet, 1635-1699* (The Hague, 1975).

his episcopate he wrote at slightly less length on more immediately practical concerns; for his last three years he returned to major theological controversies prompted by what he felt were attacks on, or dangers to, the fundamentals of Christianity.

Whilst Stillingfleet's sermons, much like Tillotson's, made reference to the "common Principles of Religion" that helped foster "good Impressions on the Mind" as well as an "Habitual Temper and Disposition," the majority of his employment of 'habit' was spent alerting his congregations to the potential dangers of evil habits²⁸⁷ Like his other fellow Restoration divines, Stillingfleet viewed habit as an active and controlling faculty, and was ever mindful of the problems that evil habits posed to the Christian's religious duty:

There is no doubt in Mankind, considered in it self, a Power of acting according to Reason, which is the truest Freedom, (for a Power of acting otherwise is Weakness and Folly,) but what through the Natural Propensity to Evil; what through the Power of bad Examples; what through the violence of some Tempers and Passions; what through the Cloudiness of some Understandings, from bodily Distempers; what through the strength of evil Habits, and corrupt Dispositions, there is scarce such a thing as Freedom of Will left, especially as to Matters of Salvation.²⁸⁸

Habits, then, whether good or bad, assumed a vital role in the attainment of salvation. Like Tillotson, Stillingfleet was also adamant that such bad habits could be reformed. He advised his audience that once "such evils Habits prevail" the individual had to "repent, and search, and examine themselves in order to a particular Repentance."²⁸⁹ Such a repentance, according to Stillingfleet, was no easy task and involved "a thorough Change of a Man's Mind, and the Course of his Life... like the taking violent Physick in some Diseases, where the Humour must be purged out."²⁹⁰ It could also not be achieved by human effort alone. In the same vein

²⁸⁷ Edward Stillingfleet, *A sermon preached before the Queen at White-Hall, March the 13th, 1691/2 by the Right Reverend Father in God, Edward, Lord Bishop of Worcester* (1692), p. 11.

²⁸⁸ Edward Stillingfleet, Sermon III in *Thirteen sermons preached on several occasions three of which never before printed / by the Right Reverend Father in God Edward, Lord Bishop of Worcester* (1698), p. 105.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 117-18.

as Wilkins, Stillingfleet claimed that “a higher Principle of Divine Grace” was necessary” to enable us to break through all these Difficulties.”²⁹¹ The main duty of the Christian, for Stillingfleet, therefore, was to develop “an habitual Temper and Disposition of Mind towards God. This is that which is commonly called the *Love of God*; and is opposed to the *Love of Sin*.” This “habitual love,” Stillingfleet argued, was “our chief end.”²⁹² and attaining such a habit was a dual process that involved not only improving one’s behaviour but also one’s general religious nature:

But certainly the Love of God must go deeper, and rise higher, or else it will never come up to the great Design of Religion; which is, not only to do those outward Acts of Service which he commands and expects from us; but to bring our Souls nearer to him, to make him our chief End; and to direct the Course of our Lives and the Acts of our Obedience in order to it.²⁹³

Stillingfleet also used the notion of ‘habit’ in his defence of the reasonableness of Christianity. In his *Origines Sacrae, or a Rational Account of the Grounds of Natural and Reveal’d Religion* (1662), Stillingfleet set out to continue the explorations of William Chillingworth (1602-1644) into the limits of knowledge and the proper basis of belief, exemplifying the approach taken by all the Anglicans who engaged in the controversy. Genuine faith, according to Stillingfleet, could be based only on rational assent to proper evidence, but to demand the wrong sort of evidence – say, mathematical certainty or concrete sense experience – for proving matters of fact was to distort God’s requirements for mankind. Matters of faith may not be so “clear to us as demonstrations,” argued Stillingfleet, but “God doth not require us to believe any thing without *sufficient grounds* for our believing it, and those *grounds* do bear a proportionable evidence to the nature of that *assent* which he requires.”²⁹⁴ Stillingfleet, along with his latitudinarian counterparts, shared the conviction that the principles of religion,

²⁹¹ Ibid., p. 127.

²⁹² Edward Stillingfleet, Sermon X in *Thirteen sermons preached on several occasions*, p. 385, 387.

²⁹³ Ibid., pp. 385-6.

²⁹⁴ Carroll, *The Common-Sense Philosophy of Religion of Bishop Edward Stillingfleet*, p. 68.

of natural religion in particular, were only capable of moral certainty, those, according to Wilkins, “yet may they be so plain, that every man whose judgement is free from prejudice will consent unto them.”²⁹⁵

The building of a firm belief in God’s power and providence was a “discursive act of mind,” declared Stillingfleet: “By Faith we understand a rational and discursive Act of the Mind. For Faith being an assent upon Evidence or Reason inducing the Mind to assent, it must be a rational and discursive Act.”²⁹⁶ Thus, as David Foster has argued, Stillingfleet and other Anglican divines “constructed a rhetoric of assent by contextualising reason as a flexible instrument capable of developing conviction on the basis of the probable”²⁹⁷ In building such assent, they argued that the mind moved from visible evidence to an inward conviction which was “morally certain” and “unquestionable.”²⁹⁸

Furthermore, throughout Stillingfleet’s defence of Christianity there was a constant appeal to the “Man of Common Sense and Reason.” Now, when Stillingfleet appealed to this man of common-sense, he was not implying that any human being – however young, or irreligious – would immediately assent to a reasonable argument upon hearing it. If one could not understand the meaning of the terms in which the argument appeared, one could not be expected to give a reasonable assent to it. But if one understood the meaning of the argument, then, one would assent to it if (1) it was a reasonable argument, and (2) one was a reasonable person. For Stillingfleet, any man of common sense would approve that position and assent to that which best seemed to be indicted by the facts of experience.

²⁹⁵ Wilkins, *Of the Principles and Duties of Natural Religion* (1675), pp. 5-9.

²⁹⁶ Edward Stillingfleet, *A Rational Account of the Grounds of Protestant Religion* (1665) p. 203.

²⁹⁷ David Foster, “‘In Every Drop of Dew’: Imagination and the Rhetoric of Assent in English Natural Religion,” *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric*, Vol. 12 No. 3, (Summer 1994): pp. 293-325, p. 298.

²⁹⁸ Wilkins, *Principles and Duties*, p. 31.

But what about the actual process of assent? What was the epistemology underlying it? In his *The Council of Trent examin'd and disprov'd* (1688), Stillingfleet hinted at the process. Paraphrasing one of the chief medieval canonists - William Durand the Elder (c.1230-1296), bishop of Mende's thoughts on the principles of theology - Stillingfleet laid out the central tenets of the Protestant faith:

1. For a habit whereby we assent to those things which are contained in Scripture, as they are there delivered. 2. For a habit whereby those things are defended and declared which are delivered in Scripture. 3. For a habit of those things which are deduced out of Articles of Faith; and so it is all one with the holy Scripture.²⁹⁹

Stillingfleet's paraphrasing of Durand – assenting as a habitual process or an habitual frame of mind – demonstrates the close interplay between reason, habit and faith during this period. Richard Baxter advanced a similar position. In his *Certainty of Christianity without Popery* (1672), Baxter, also with reference to Durand, defined the “Measure of faith” as “a habit by which we only or principally assent to those things, that are delivered in Scripture, and as they are there delivered.”³⁰⁰ Likewise, John Pearson (1613-1686), bishop of Chester, defined faith “as Assent unto truths credible upon the testimony of God delivered unto us in the writings of the Apostles and Prophets and a “habit of the intellectual part of man.”³⁰¹ Habit, therefore, in this context, functioned with a kind of necessity in bringing about a certain type of mental operation – in the sense that it governed that process whereby the individual assimilated the tenets of faith and accepted the fundamental truths of religious doctrine as well as advancing one's religious understanding. Thus, while Anglicans stressed the importance of reason in aiding the individual to make inferences and reach conclusions about

²⁹⁹ Stillingfleet, *The Council of Trent examin'd and disprov'd by Catholick tradition in the main points in controversie between us and the Church of Rome with a particular account of the times and occasions of introducing them* (1688), p. 10.

³⁰⁰ Baxter, *The Certainty of Christianity without Popery* (London, 1672), p. 102.

³⁰¹ John Pearson, *An Exposition of the Creed* (London: Roger Daniel, 1659), p. 21.

God and his providence, habit acted as the key intermediary in this process – it mediated between an initial rational choice and the acquisition of faith.

Furthermore, Stillingfleet's 'habit of assent' approach demonstrates how he considered faith as something that had to be instilled into the individual. Whilst the doctrine of innate knowledge was still widespread in the seventeenth-century and considered to be essential for the stability of religion and morality, Stillingfleet and his moderate contemporaries had no illusions about the strength of innate ideas as a guide for behaviour and belief.³⁰² Mankind, therefore, had to be trained towards the Christian faith; they had to learn to conduct themselves as a proper Christian; learn how to apprehend God's everlasting truths and carry out one's Christian duty. Stillingfleet, in this sense, viewed religion as an active faith built upon the habitual assent of believers. Faith, in his interpretation, was not a passive and unthinking faith – rather, it was one that entailed full assent and constant practice; one that gave the English subject an active role in their salvation.

Robert South, despite occupying a position more conservative than his latitudinarian contemporaries on doctrinal points, dedicated large sections of his sermons to the crucial issues of how good and bad habits affected the individual as well as the proper use of habits in forming and maintaining a virtuous character. South emphasised the fact that, because of original sin, "there is in every man naturally (Nature *now stands*) a *sensual* Principle disposing him to Evil." This disposition meant that mankind was naturally more prone to acquiring bad habits rather than good habits, as South asserted in his discourse on the education of youth: "this principle will be sure...if not hinder'd, to produce vicious Habits and Customs...this ill principle is controulable and conquerable only by *Discipline*, and the

³⁰² Yolton, *John Locke and the Way of Ideas*, p. 29.

infusion of good and contrary Principle into the mind.”³⁰³ South, owing much to his conservative approach in religion, was less inclined than Baxter, Tillotson, and Wilkins to stress the temporal rewards of good habits. In his sermon on ‘The Recompence of the Reward,’ preached at Christ-Church, Oxford in 1698, for example, South argued at length against what he considered the dangerous doctrine that virtue was its own reward and therefore was not to be practised primarily in order to gain the joys of heaven.³⁰⁴

On the important subject of the proper use of good habits, however, South was even more emphatic than Tillotson and Wilkins in recommending the Aristotelian method of instilling virtue. In a sermon performed in 1661 which addressed the nature of salvation, for example, South stressed the necessity of active virtue rather than mere faith, good intentions, or membership in a particular church, arguing first and foremost that “*Practice or Obedience is the best and surest Foundation* (still supposing it bottomed upon the Merits of Christ) *for a Man to build his Designs for Heaven and the Hopes of Salvation upon*”:

...there is an universal Stain and Depravation upon Man’s Nature, that does incapacitate him for the Fruition, and infinitely pure converse of God. The Removal of which cannot be effected but by introducing the contrary Habit of Holiness, which shall by Degrees expel, and purge out the other. And the only way to produce an Habit, is by the frequent Repetition of congenial Actions. Every pious Action leaves a Certain Tincture, or Disposition upon the Soul, which being seconded by Actions of the same Nature, whether by the Superaddition of new Degrees, or a more radicate Fixation of the same, grows at length into an Habit, or Quality, of the Force and Energy of a second Nature.³⁰⁵

South, like Wilkins, then argues that God’s grace was necessary for habitual good works in order to remove the stain of original sin that resided in every man’s soul because “a Person in the State of Nature or Unregeneracy cannot by the sole Strength of his most improved

³⁰³ Robert South, “The Virtuous Education of Youth...” in *Twelve Sermons and Discourses on Several Subjects and Occasions*, 6 vols. (London, 1715-1717), vol. V, p. 15.

³⁰⁴ South, Sermon IV in *Sermons and Discourses*, pp. 188-189, 205.

³⁰⁵ South, Sermon III in *Sermons and Discourses*, pp. 137-138.

performances, acquire an Habit of true Grace or Holiness.”³⁰⁶ The main point of his sermon was that the proper way of inviting that “supernatural Infusion” of Grace was to acquire a “Habit of Holiness” by performing virtuous actions until they became “a second Nature,” as he explained:

...in the Duties of a meer natural Man, there is sometimes an hidden, Divine Influence, that keeps Pace with those Actions, and together with each Performance, imprints a holy Disposition upon the Soul...We have an illustration of this, though not a parallel Instance, in natural Actions, which by frequency imprint an Habit, or permanent facility of acting, upon the Agent. Godliness is in some Sense an Art or Mystery, and we all know that it is Practice chiefly, that makes the Artist.³⁰⁷

South was, in effect, invoking the Aristotelian notion that the moral and virtuous life was one of constant activity and applying it to the method of acquiring, not only a virtuous character, but a “holy Disposition” of the soul which, due in part to the assistance of God’s grace, liberated mankind from original sin. In this Christian context, the emancipation from original sin was a vital process in achieving a truly virtuous character in the temporal world as well as the promise of salvation in the next.

Edward Fowler (1632-1714) shared South’s view on the importance of attaining a virtuous character. In his retreat from Calvinism, Fowler attempted to fashion a practical and living faith in which Jesus Christ was the moral exemplar, in the words of Isabel Rivers, “the model Anglican gentleman”³⁰⁸:

His whole life was one Continued Lecture of the most Excellent *Morals*, the most Sublime and exact Vertue. For instance; He was a Person of the Greatest *Freedom*, *Affability*, and *Courtesie*, there was nothing in his Conversation that was at all Austere, Crabbed or Unpleasant. Though he was

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 139.

³⁰⁸ Rivers, *Reason, Grace and Sentiment*, Vol. 1, p. 83.

always *serious*, yet was he never *sowr*, sullenly Grave, Morose or Cynical; but of a marvellously conversable, sociable and benign temper.³⁰⁹

As William Spellman has pointed out, for Fowler the moral life was one of constant activity whereby “works were necessary for salvation.”³¹⁰ Fowler believed that the essence of faith, a belief in the gospel’s truth that “includes a sincere resolution of Obedience unto all its Precepts,” was holiness:

*That the Business that brought the Blessed Jesus by the appointment of God the Father down from Heaven; and the End of His making us the Objects of such Rich and Transcendent Kindness, was the destroying of Sin in us, the Renewing of our depraved Natures, the Ennobling our Souls with Virtuous Qualities and Divine Dispositions and Tempers, and (in one word) the making us partakers of His Holiness.*³¹¹

Fowler defined holiness as follows:

...*Holiness* is so excellent a Principle, or Habit...First, To perform all Good and Virtuous Actions, whensoever there is occasion and Opportunity; and ever Carefully to abstain from those that are of a Contrary Nature. Secondly, To do the one, and avoid the other, from truly *generous* Motives and Principles.³¹²

Fowler’s reference to holiness as a habit was not unlike that of South’s or Baxter’s; a practical habit that was necessary for the performance of one’s individual’s religious duties.³¹³ Fowler perceived holiness ultimately as the restoration of human qualities:

³⁰⁹ Edward Fowler, *The Design of Christianity* (1671), p. 39.

³¹⁰ Spellman, *The Latitudinarians*, pp. 98-99.

³¹¹ Fowler, *The Design of Christianity*, p. 3.

³¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

³¹³ The similarities between Fowler’s and Baxter’s work is unsurprising - in 1671, for example, he published a tract in defence of Fowler’s *Design of Christianity*, which had been attacked by the Baptist John Bunyan for placing too great an emphasis on the efficacy of human moral effort.

*a Divine or God-like Nature, causing an hearty approbation of, and an affectionate compliance with the Eternal Laws of Righteousness; and a behaviour agreeable to the Essential and Immutable differences of Good and Evil.*³¹⁴

Fowler was resolute in the belief that “acquiring the habit of holiness” was “the very business” of religion, and that Christ was the perfect model for which the Christian could aspire to.³¹⁵ Like Hale, Fowler argued that Christ’s virtues and qualities were all perfectly imitable by human beings. It was therefore the duty of the Christian to do “their utmost endeavour to subdue their lusts, and to acquire vertuous habits.”³¹⁶ Fowler’s definition of faith was such that holiness was not, as was the case for hard-line Calvinists, its consequence but its essential component. He regarded the doctrine of justification by faith alone as necessarily antinomian.³¹⁷ Moreover, despite his insistence in chapter xiv of the *Design of Christianity* on the superiority of the gospel to classical ethics, there was little doubt that he was far more sympathetic to classical moralists, whom he repeatedly cited (the stoic philosopher Hierocles in particular), than to Reformation theologians (of his contemporaries he cited Simon Patrick and John Smith).

Conclusion

This chapter has surveyed the use of habit by various moderate divines in the Restoration period, observing how they recommended the cultivation of habitual beliefs and dispositions as the direct route to moral virtue, Christian piety, as well as true belief. The immediate intellectual and religious context was the memory of a bloody and destructive civil war that had devastated the English nation. Given the depths of human depravity coupled with a society that was seen as inherently self-destructive, standard religious discourse on doctrine

³¹⁴ Fowler, *The Design of Christianity*, p.6.

³¹⁵ Ibid., p. 30.

³¹⁶ Ibid., p. 172.

³¹⁷ Ibid., chap. xx.

and beliefs was simply unequal to the task producing a virtuous society, so a process of habituation was necessary.

The moderate divines believed that English society had to be habituated in order to accept the Christian life. They were not, however, somehow less religious or less concerned about faith than their predecessors were, they simply dealt less with the intricacies of faith than with the cultivation of those habits and habitual dispositions that might strengthen it. They drew on the notion of habituation as a potentially binding agent of English society – to habituate people to internalise moral virtues and to govern their passions and actions so as to maintain and cultivate sociability. In this reading, we can see that they believed that most individuals governed their behaviour and beliefs primarily through habitually-acquired mental dispositions rather than through conscientious internal motivations.

This chapter has also extended the scholarship that has argued for an increased emphasis upon conduct rather than belief in late early modern England. It has shown how various moderate divines were interested in the very psychology of belief, and particularly, the relationship of habitual assent and practice to a well-exercised and grounded faith. We can see how this transformation of faith to conduct, described by Isabel Rivers's as grace becoming synonymous with virtue or by Mark Knight as secular rhetoric beginning to dominate religious discourse, was based on an increased emphasis on religious habits rather than religious doctrine.³¹⁸ For the moderate divines, habituation was indispensable in guiding such religious conduct.

Moreover, just as Ethan Shagan has shown how moderation could carry with it an authoritarian meaning, this chapter has demonstrated how the notion of habituation could also

³¹⁸ Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660–1780*; Knight, "'Meer religion' and the 'church-state' of Restoration England: the impact and ideology of James II's declaration of indulgence."

represent assertions of authority, particularly religious authority. Whilst the moderate divines did not necessarily believe in compelling individuals to true beliefs and virtuous action through the threats of coercive penalties, they were adamant that most of society had to be habituated to adopt moral norms and ensure a peaceful coexistence. The result, as we have seen, was a religion founded on acquired habitual beliefs and dispositions as they attempted to bridle the excesses to which English society was inevitably prone. But at the same time, those assertions had to be irenic and restrained rather than excessive in order to be legitimate, not only producing but also proceeding from restraint and regulation. The consequence, in many ways, was that Restoration religion came to be authorised by its limitation – focusing more on the practical, than on the doctrinal. Therefore, whilst Restoration religion, read in this way, comes across as a discourse of peace, equanimity, reason and irenicism, this also disguised a degree of coercion within the language of habituation and habitual dispositions.

The works of the divines that this chapter has examined thus reveals the maintenance of a peaceable yet subtly coercive social order in which habit facilitated the religious life. The conduct of English society was to be both reflective and unreflective, although not entirely mechanical - it was to be predictable, disciplined, and sufficiently routine. In this way, English religion slowly became a civilising rather than a saving force in late early modern England. As Blair Worden has argued, in the later seventeenth-century we find “a growing sense that religion should be what civilises us; that it should have less to say about salvation and more about integrity in our dealings with ourselves and others; that the test of a doctrine is not its truth but its usefulness to that human end.”³¹⁹ A part of this civilising process required subtle notions of coercion, discipline, and self-control within the language of religious habituation. As we will see in chapter 4, John Locke was to not only consolidate

³¹⁹ Blair Worden, “The question of secularisation,” p.32.

this religion based on habitual dispositions, but elevate it into an educational programme that was to be the prerequisite for his vision of liberal society.

Chapter 3

Habit and the New Experimental Philosophy

In his essay “The Usefulness of Real Philosophy to Religion” (1676), Joseph Glanvill, the Anglican divine and vigorous apologist of the ‘new experimental philosophy’ of the early Royal Society argued that the new approach to the study of nature played an important role in the moral and intellectual formation of its practitioners:

And I dare affirm, that the *Free, Experimental Philosophy* will do this to purpose, by giving the Mind another *Tincture*, and introducing a *sounder Habit*, which by degrees will repel and cast out all Malignities; and settle it in a *strong* and *manly* Temperament, that will master and put to flight all *idle Dotages*, and *effeminate Fears*.³²⁰

Furthermore, according to Glanvill, such virtues were epitomised in the person of Robert Boyle:

the greatest *Strength* and the *Gentilest smoothness*, the most *generous* Knowledge and the *sweetest* Modesty, the *noblest* Discoveries and the *sincerest* Relations, the *greatest* Self-denial and the *greatest* Love of Men, the profoundest insight into *philosophy* and *Nature*, and the most *devout, affectionate* Sense of *God* and of *Religion*.³²¹

Glanvill’s immediate aim in this text was to demonstrate how the new philosophy could be used as a remedy for the epidemics of enthusiasm, melancholy, and superstition which currently plagued English society, but his focus upon how it could shape the moral and

³²⁰ Glanvill, *Philophia Pia* (1671), p. 46.

³²¹ Glanvill, *Plus Ultra: or, The progress and Advancement of Knowledge since the days of Aristotle* (London, 1668), p. 55

religious lives of those who practised it, imbuing them with disciplined habits of mind, is worth a consideration. In *his Plus Ultra* (1668), for example, Glanvill boldly claimed that:

there is nothing tends more to the undermining and supplanting the *humour* of *Disputing*, than the *Experimental* and *Free Philosophy*. For this *inlargeth* the Mind, and gives it a *prospect* of the *vastness* of things, and the *imperfections* of our *Knowledge*, the *Difficulties* that are to be incountr'd in the search of Truth, and our *liableness* to *deception*, the *stumbles* of *Confidence*, the *prejudices* of *Education*, the *shortness* of our *Senses*, the *precipitancy* of our *Understandings*, and the *malign influence* of our *Affections*; I say, the *Free* and *Real Philosophy* makes men deeply sensible of the infirmities of humane Intellect, and our manifold hazards of *mistaking*, and so renders them *wary* and *modest*, *diffident* of the *certainty* of their *Conceptions*, and averse to the *boldness* of *peremptory asserting*.³²²

Having shown in the first two chapters how the notions of habit and acquired habitual dispositions were used to address right reason and religion and their associated problems, this chapter examines how such notions were reshaped and redeployed in the new experimental philosophy which gave them a slightly different form, and which allowed for the earlier problems of reason and religion to also be addressed more fully. It will demonstrate how there was an analogous deep-seated preoccupation with habit in the writings of the practitioners of the early Royal Society. My focus will be on those practitioners of the new natural philosophy who argued that the new experimental approach constituted a special kind of mental training which inculcated the mind with good habits of examination, observation, and personal piety. My intention is to highlight the ways in which the new philosophy was presented as a practice that could contribute to the moral and religious formation of the natural philosopher.

The following chapter, then, proceeds as follows: the first section gives a brief examination of the emergence of a new philosophical persona in the second half of the seventeenth-century; the second section offers a concise historiographical review of the

³²² Ibid., p. 146.

relevant literature how the arguments put forward in this chapter contribute to and critique this body of work; the third section examines some recent historiographical developments in the history of philosophy and the history of science, concentrating on the *cultura animi* tradition in early modern thought, particularly in the work of Francis Bacon. The main aim of this section is to show how the new experimental philosophy could also lead to moral improvements and was, concomitantly, a practice of virtue. The rest of the chapter is devoted to an examination of how apologists for the early Royal Society incorporated this notion of *cultura animi* into their experimental programmes, explicitly identifying how the concept of habit and the acquisition of habitual dispositions formed a crucial part of the experimental life. It focuses particularly on the works of Robert Boyle, Robert Hooke, Thomas Sprat, and John Hartcliffe. The instillation of good habits of experimentalism, for example, forced the mind to measure its ideas against repeatedly observed realities. In effect, such habitual dispositions were intended to govern and order the operations of the mind, extracting the inquirers from their private perspective. Thus, as we will see, the search for truth about nature was at the same time a search for ways of rectifying and improving the mind.

The main purpose of this chapter is to show that the new experimental philosophy had a clear moral dimension, and if we look back at the previous two chapters, taking into consideration the problems that plagued human reason and English religion, we can understand why this moral dimension was such a crucial part of experimental philosophy. The point that I am making here is that the experimental philosophy was also responding to the problems of reason and religion. The apologists of the early Royal Society, who are subject of this chapter, presented the experimental philosophy as a practice that could provide the basis for morality and religion. In other words, the kind of knowledge that that experiential philosophy yielded was the kind of knowledge that one needed for a good foundation of natural religion and hence of Christian ethics. Therefore, as this chapter will show, there was

another shift in late early modern English intellectual thought, this time in natural philosophy. There was an emerging vocabulary of habit and habitual dispositions and an examination of such notions allows us to see more clearly how the experimental philosophy was conducive to the restoration of some of the natural faculties and powers of the fallen mind, effecting a complete transformation of the human being and thus placing them in a better position to receive Divine grace.

The Perfect Virtuoso

It is important to note that there was a double and paradoxical claim involved in the notions of habit and habitual dispositions that are examined in this chapter. The apologists that this chapter focuses on argued that in order to engage in the experimental philosophy, one had to be a virtuous and moral person, which involved cleansing the mind and taming the passions. At the same time, the experimental philosophy was viewed as a practice that was helpful in the process to become a moral person, providing the tools for cleansing the mind and taming the passions. As a result, the practice of the experimental philosophy was a complex practical discipline, similar to the ancient understandings of philosophy: a constant process of learning and “curing” oneself, always tending towards an idea of moral and cognitive excellence that was seldom achieved in this earthly life.³²³ Furthermore, experiments were intimately connected with the discipline of the mind: according to Sprat they were integral to “the management of the private motions and passions of our minds.”³²⁴ When the apologetic literature of the early Royal Society is read in this light, the experimental philosophy comes

³²³ For further details on this Dana Jalobeanu, “Experimental Philosophers and Doctors of the Mind: The Appropriation of a Philosophical Tradition.” in V. Alexandrescu & R. Theis (eds), *Naturel et surnaturel: Philosophies de la nature et metaphysique aux XVI-XVII siecles* (Georg Olms Verlag: Hildesheim, 2010).

³²⁴ Thomas Sprat, *History of the Royal Society of London for the Improving of Natural Knowledge* (London, 1667), p. 341

across as a fundamentally practical philosophy that was conducive to a moral life and even a better civic society. Even the great Isaac Newton echoed such a sentiment:

And if natural philosophy in all its Parts, by pursuing this Method, shall at length be perfected, the Bounds of Moral Philosophy will also be enlarged. For so far as we can know by natural Philosophy what is the first Cause, what Power he has over us, and what Benefits we receive from him, so far our Duty towards him as well as that towards one another, will appear to us by the Light of Nature.³²⁵

If the outcome of an experimental approach to nature was practical piety, then the character of the natural philosopher, it was argued, was also removed from the curious pursuer of profitless knowledge or the purveyor of vain disputes. Thus, the experimental philosophy was a discipline that enhanced the moral integrity of its practitioners. In practical terms, such a claim meant that the experimental approach had moral and religious benefits; that engaging in experiments led to moral improvements, that the experimental philosophy was, concomitantly, a practice of virtue. As a result, the experimental philosopher, the *virtuoso*, acquired the moral qualities and the religious expertise that formed the cornerstone of his character and hence his authority and credibility. Observe, for example, the following passage taken from Walter Charleton's *Immortality of the Soul*, first published in 1657:

I can introduce you to the knowledge of a Person, noble by Birth, and of high condition, but infinitely more noble by the Heroick endowments of his better part, and the large measure of Knowledge he hath acquired in all things of most use, to the well government of our selves, in all the various occurrences of life. He is a prudent Estimator of mens actions and opinions, but no rigid Censor of either. A valiant Assertor of truth, yet far from Tyranny; where he finds an errour, as alwaies reflecting on human frailty, and the obscurity of things in themselves. He well knows how to overcome, but not at all to triumph; And when he hath overcome, you can hardly perceive he ever contended. For, he doth not seem so much to refute, as to teach, rather gently insinuating verity, then struggling in the detection of falshood. Curious in the collection of Books, diligent in reading them, accurate in examining what they deliver,

³²⁵ Isaac Newton, *Opticks, Query 31* (New York: Dover, 1979), p. 405.

& alwaies more favourable to Reason, then to Authority, unlesse in matters of Faith. A great Lover of Experiments in Physick and Chymistry; Yet no waies infected with the vanities of the one, or frauds of the other. A friend to all learned & judicious men of your Profession, he meets with; and a Patron to the Art it self.³²⁶

Charleton's *Immortality of the Soul* was a philosophical dialogue featuring Lucretius, the advocate of an Epicurean view on the morality and materiality of the human soul, Athanasius, an advocate of the immateriality of the soul with Cartesian overtones and Isodicastes, the "perfect Virtuoso", and judge of the debate.³²⁷ Isodicastes was introduced as a moral, religious and epistemological authority, assuming the role of weighing the arguments of the proponents and deciding the victor. He also assumed the role of the arbiter of the moral and religious implications of such a debate, preventing the arguments from going in forbidden directions, and safeguarding the philosophical claims from the dangers of heresy and immorality. The 'perfect Virtuoso' therefore had a dual role in the dialogue – whilst his qualities made him the perfect judge in a philosophical debate over the nature of the human soul, his moral profile and practical expertise made him the perfect candidate in the attempt towards finding peace of mind in a period of turmoil; to find a cure for the distempers and diseases most damaging to philosophers: vain disputations and sectarianism. He knew how to advance the dialogue and where to stop, since the debate over the nature and properties of the soul was difficult and potentially dangerous and because absolute certainty in such matters is not possible. One must therefore proceed with caution since "the thing will remain involved in much obscurity."³²⁸ Isodicastes, thus, demonstrated the proper, irenic philosophical attitude toward major unsolved problems in philosophy and natural philosophy. In sum, he espoused the ideal moral and epistemological model for any natural philosopher to follow and emulate.

³²⁶ Walter Charleton, *The immortality of the human soul, demonstrated by the light of nature in two dialogues* (1657), p. 18.

³²⁷ Ibid., p. 19.

³²⁸ Ibid., p. 100, See also p.107, p. 124

Charleton's introduction of such an impartial character is not coincidental. *The Immortality of the Soul* begins with a section on the current state of natural philosophy in England in the 1650s, describing it as a major reformation. Echoing Bacon's *New Atlantis*, Charleton painted a vivid picture of two institutions engaged in the reformation of learning: an institutional one, the Royal College of Physicians akin to "*Solomons House* in reality" and an informal one, the group of virtuosi assembled in Oxford around John Wilkins, unnamed but identifiable through their description.³²⁹ These two groups, the dialogue tell us, are made up of *virtuosi*: virtuous individuals with high moral standards and appropriate moral qualities for the study of nature, who are engaged in a thorough reform of the whole state of learning. Such a reformation was no easy task and no less hazardous than discussing theological-charged subjects, thus the individuals involved had to have to an impeccable moral profile and persona:

So neither have we introduced any Alterations in Natural Philosophy, Physick, and other parts of Human Learning, but what carry their utility with them, and are justifiable by right reason, by autoptical or sensible demonstration, and by multiplied experience. So that every intelligent man may easily perceive, that it hath been the Reformation, that drew on the Change; not the desire of Change, which pretendeth the Reformation. Did you, *Lucretius*, but know the Gravity, Solidity, and Circumspection of these worthy Reformers of the state of Learning now in *England*; you would not suspect them of incogitancy, or too much indulgence toward the Minerva's of their own brain: but confesse that they have precisely followed that counsel of the Scripture, which injoynes us, *to make a stand upon the Ancient way, and then look about us, and discover, what is the straight and right way, and so to walk in it.*³³⁰

The character of the *virtuoso* was therefore employed as a moral standard ensuring that the reformation of natural philosophy was carried out in a proper way, without endangering the civic or religious order. Charleton's *Immortality of the Soul* was not alone in this apologetic

³²⁹ Ibid., pp. 33-48.

³³⁰ Ibid., p. 52.

discourse. It is noteworthy, however, because it not only precedes Robert Boyle's well known *Christian Virtuoso* (1690), but also Thomas Sprat's and Joseph Glanvill's apologies for the Royal Society.

Its basic argument, however, was very similar to these later writings: the existence of a strong connection between the experimental study of nature and the process of moral and religious reformation in its practitioners, the fashioning of a moral persona; and that the experimental philosophy provided not only an advancement of knowledge, but a set of religious values and moral qualities.³³¹ Moreover, as this chapter will show, such authors claimed that the experimental philosophy also provided a set of exercises and techniques for training the mind, making it fit for scientific inquiry. The concept of habit formed an integral part of this process – the experimental philosopher, the *virtuoso*, acquired moral qualities and religious expertise, which was informed by the notion that the mind could be transformed by a process of habituation, which had the potential to restore some of the natural qualities and powers of the fallen mind, imbuing it with good habits of examination and right judgement.

This process was founded upon a Stoic tradition that viewed the training of the human mind toward the excellences of judgement, the art of self-government as well as the mastery of oneself in terms of habituation. Cicero, for example, suggested that the training of the mind's assent was a matter of habituation: the judicious and temperate disposition of the mind was a habit, in opposition to the habit of the distempered mind.³³² The aim of such Stoic philosophical exercises, as John Sellars has pointed out, was to achieve a transformation of character and therefore of life and behaviour, by means of a process of habituation.³³³ Such an habituation, moreover, was understood "not as an unthinking habit but rather as a

³³¹ See, for example, Robert Boyle, *The Christian Virtuoso* (1690), pp. 710-11.

³³² See, for example, Margaret R. Graver, *Cicero on the Emotions: Tusculan Disputations 3 and 4* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002).

³³³ John Sellars, *The Art of Living: The Stoics on the Nature and Function of Philosophy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p. 121, p. 119.

conscious learning process.”³³⁴ It is my contention that this pre-occupation with habit and acquired habitual dispositions deeply pervaded the epistemological construction of the experimental philosophy. Robert Hooke, for example, wrote that “without an acquired habitude and handiness by long practice and experience, nothing could be done to any certainty.”³³⁵ Of course, not every single active practitioner of the early Royal Society demonstrated such a preoccupation with such notions, but my aim is to understand the specific role that they played in the experimental life of the early Royal Society.

Historiography

My aim in this section is to give a brief overview of the existing literature and how the arguments put forward in this chapter fit into this body of work. In examining the relationship between the moral and the epistemological, I follow Susan James’s contribution to this issue. James has surveyed the inheritance of ancient and medieval doctrines about the passions and has shown how these were incorporated into new philosophical approaches throughout the course of the seventeenth-century.³³⁶ Whilst the quest for dominion over nature, for example, was largely seen to lie in knowledge – as Francis Bacon had pointed out, “knowledge and human power are synonymous” – the passions assumed also an important role as essentially obstacles to the production and accumulation of knowledge.³³⁷ Thus, in order to achieve dominion over nature, the passions had to be held in check, because they had the potential to impair the fundamental observations and judgements on which the new philosophy was based. As Robert Hooke informed his readers in the opening pages of his *Micrographia*

³³⁴ Ibid., p. 119.

³³⁵ Robert Hooke, *Lectiones Cutlerianae, or, A collection of lectures, physical, mechanical, geographical, & astronomical made before the Royal Society on several occasions at Gresham Colledge : to which are added divers miscellaneous discourses* (1679), p. 69.

³³⁶ See Susan James, *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997). See also, Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002).

³³⁷ Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum* (1620), Aph. 3.

(1665): “The only way which now remains for us to recover some degree of those former perfections, seems to lie, by rectifying the operations of the Sense, Memory, and Reason, since upon the evidence, the strength, the integrity, the right correspondence of all these...all our command over things is to be established.”³³⁸

The emergence of a moderate epistemological approach in early modern English intellectual thought which rejected the notion of infallible and certain knowledge, choosing instead to embrace an element of doubt and hold that knowledge was, at best, only probable has been developed in a number of studies.³³⁹ Richard Popkin’s account of the early modern ‘sceptical crisis,’ a European intellectual crisis fuelled by the upheaval of the Reformation and the revival of Greek scepticism in the sixteenth century is one such influential thesis. Popkin defined scepticism as “a philosophical view that raises doubts about the adequacy or reliability of the evidence, reasons, or proofs employed as grounds for our various beliefs”.³⁴⁰ On this account, the philosophical opposite of scepticism is dogmatism. Thus one could be a sceptic and a believer, since the sceptic was not calling into doubt the veracity of any particular religious belief, just the rational justification offered for the belief. Common to both the Reformation and Greek scepticism, Popkin explained, was a basic epistemological problem: the problem of measuring the standard of truth. Various solutions to this problem included the Cartesian “quest for certainty” approach and the “quest for reasonableness” (the

³³⁸ Robert Hooke, *Micrographia* (London, 1665), Preface.

³³⁹ Henry G. Van Leeuwen, *The Problem of Certainty in English Thought, 1630-1690* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1963); Margaret Osler, “John Locke and the Changing Ideal of Scientific Knowledge.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 31, no. 1 (1970): 3–16; Barbara Shapiro, *Probability and Certainty in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton University Press, 1983). Douglas Lane Patey, *Probability and Literary Form: Philosophic Theory and Literary Practice in the Augustan Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); John Henry, ‘The Scientific Revolution in England’ in Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich (eds.) *The Scientific Revolution in National Context* (Cambridge University Press, 1992); Lorraine Daston, “Probability and Evidence,” in Daniel Garber & Michael Ayers (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 1998); Richard W. Serjeanston, “Testimony and Proof in Early-Modern England.” *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science* 30, no. 2 (1999): 195–236; James Franklin, *The Science of Conjecture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); Richard Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Savonarola to Bayle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

³⁴⁰ Richard Popkin, *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle*, p. xxi.

‘mitigated sceptical’ approach).³⁴¹ This ‘mitigated sceptical’ approach was a position that “could accept the full force of the sceptical attack on the possibility of human knowledge, in the sense of necessary truths about the nature of reality, and yet allow for the possibility of knowledge in a lesser sense, as convincing or probable truths about appearances.”³⁴² For Popkin, this was the position which was adopted and developed by a variety of Early Modern intellectuals: Gassendi and Mersenne in France and Wilkins, Glanvill, Boyle, and Locke in England.

In the case of the early Royal Society, a variety of historians have argued that the major source of their moderate epistemological position was drawn from the theological epistemology and methodology of the reformed Church of England – the Church’s emphasis upon doctrinal minimalism, irenicism, and epistemological common sense, adopted as the safest way to not only religious knowledge but salvation in general amid theological disagreements and social upheaval, presented a method of mitigated scepticism and probability which the members of the early Royal Society embraced in the development of the epistemology and methodology of the new experimental philosophy. In the words of John Henry: The Royal Society “borrowed from the English Protestant Reformation tradition...[key] methodological principles which seemed to offer the best hope of settling disputes and arriving at ‘truth’.”³⁴³

Similarly, Barbara Shapiro, although she focuses almost exclusively upon Latitudinarian thought, has labelled this development, heavily influenced by the revival of scepticism and Augustinianism, as a new distinctively English cultural style which was

³⁴¹ Ibid., p. 15

³⁴² Ibid., p. 112.

³⁴³ John Henry, ‘The Scientific Revolution in England,’ in Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich (eds.) *The Scientific Revolution in National Context* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 200; and National Styles in Science: A Possible Factor in the Scientific Revolution?’ in D. N. Livingstone & C. W. J. Withers (eds.), *Geography and Revolution* (Chicago University Press, 2005).

characterised by the emergence of probabilistic empiricism and which permeated a wide range of disciplines – natural philosophy and religion, but also history, law and literature. Shapiro argues that this approach formed the basis of the several important features of the early Royal Society: emphasis upon the communal production of knowledge, an anti-dogmatic manner of knowledge presentation, and inherent restraint in drawing observable matters of fact from experiments.³⁴⁴

Steven Shapin has suggested that the new philosophy of the early Royal Society forged a self-conscious middle-way between scepticism and credulity, ostensibly restoring moderation by basing ‘epistemological decorum’ upon gentlemanly norms of conduct. Such norms, Shapin argues, formed an important basis for securing reliable knowledge about the natural world and were understood as a guarantee of both credibility and social order, since they contained features such as trust, decorum, and prudence, as well as “judicious scepticism about the quality of knowledge and a temperate probabilism about its certainty.”³⁴⁵ This crucial genteel social feature of late seventeenth-century natural philosophy, according to Shapin, partly informed its moderate epistemological approach; shaping the virtuosi’s method for assessing testimony and managing assent.

Recent work by Peter Harrison and Joanna Picciotto has stressed the importance of theological anthropology for the problem of knowledge in the early modern period. Harrison has explored the ways in which understandings of the Fall and its effect on human nature and reason functioned in the seventeenth-century as a primary motive for conceiving the search for knowledge and the intellectual tools needed to get there. In short, a deep awareness of the post-lapsarian states of the human faculties underpinned any and all statements about the

³⁴⁴ See Shapiro, *Probability and Certainty*, pp. 64-5.

³⁴⁵ Steven Shapin, *Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago, 1994), p. 118.

possibility and extent of human knowledge. In context of the emerging experimental philosophy that was practiced by the early Royal Society, the all-pervasive influence of a Protestant Augustinian anthropology led to a pessimistic valuation of the capacities of the human faculties, which in turn fostered a scientific culture which emphasised the modest prospects that could be achieved epistemologically and a method which entailed a set of measures that could secure probable knowledge.³⁴⁶

In the same vein as Harrison, Joanna Picciotto has examined how an ethic of *imitatio Adami* emerged in seventeenth-century England and what new devotional and intellectual practices it encouraged. She traces the change from a sacramental theology centred on the consumption of Christ in the Eucharist to the productive and experimental Protestantism, where believers needed to “work out” salvation. This development in religion was paralleled by the rise of Baconian experimentalism in natural philosophy, seen especially in the writings of key members of the Early Royal Society such as Thomas Sprat and Robert Boyle.³⁴⁷

These studies of seventeenth-century intellectual thought interpret the moderate epistemology of the early Royal Society as: firstly, a response to the epistemological problem based on the justification of knowledge; secondly, a cultural approach to epistemology, one that emphasises shared values and characteristics and the appropriation of methods from English theology into English natural philosophy; thirdly, a social history of knowledge, for epistemological methods and solutions were informed by social discourses; lastly, a response to the underlying problem of the capacities of human nature informed by Augustinian anthropology.

³⁴⁶ P. Harrison, *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science* (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

³⁴⁷ See Joanna Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, Mass., & London: Harvard University Press, 2010).

The arguments made in this chapter do not seek to scotch any of the above positions. Rather, it suggests the pursuit of knowledge in this period was perceived as a process of habituation; habituating the mind toward right judgement and good observation which, in part, informed the moderate epistemological approach of the early Royal Society. Recent work, for example, has emphasised the persona of the experimental philosopher. Matthew Jones in his work on the ‘good life’ in the scientific revolution has shown that for Descartes, geometry was “an exemplary exercise in cognitive habituation, a good requisite for the more advanced stages of the philosophical life.”³⁴⁸ Similarly, Jan Golinski, drawing upon Michel Foucault’s term, ‘the care of the self,’ has argued that early modern thinkers conceived of the passions as threats to proper mental functioning and challenges to the formation of the intellectual persona. As a result, practices of the care of the self were of central importance in seventeenth-century knowledge production and natural philosophers were “particularly concerned to protect and enhance the capacities of their senses to register external conditions.”³⁴⁹ Golinski identifies such regimens in the works of Boyle, Locke, and Newton.

It also draws upon work on the body as a vehicle for natural knowledge, represented by Christopher Lawrence’s and Steven Shapin’s collection, *Science Incarnate* (1998). The chapters in this volume explored the historical embodiments of scientific knowledge, its rootedness in specific modes of bodily experience, behaviour, and deportment. Their case studies demonstrate how ‘self-fashioning’ by natural philosophers required bodily discipline – regimen, exercise, fasting, or celibacy – in order to avert the interference of the body in the workings of the mind.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁸ Matthew Jones, *The Good Life in the Scientific Revolution: Descartes, Pascal, Leibniz, and the Cultivation of Virtue* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 43.

³⁴⁹ Jan Golinski, ‘The Care of the Self and the Masculine Birth of Science,’ *History of Science*, 2002, 40:125–145).

³⁵⁰ See Christopher Lawrence and Steven Shapin (eds.), *Science Incarnate: Historical Embodiments of Natural Knowledge* (Chicago, 1998).

More recently, Sorana Corneanu has suggested that a crucial dimension to the new science can be witnessed in “its capacity to serve as a practice that cultivates the moral person.” She argues that the experimental programmes of the early Royal Society virtuosi fulfilled the role of regimens for curing, ordering, and educating the mind toward an ethical purpose, an idea that she traces back to the ancient tradition of *cultura animi*.³⁵¹ In short, her basic claim is that discussions of epistemology and method in the early Royal Society were also fundamentally debates about how the human mind should be regulated with the aim of moral improvement. This chapter seeks to build upon Corneanu’s work by examining the notion of habit and acquired habitual dispositions in the epistemological schemes of the early Royal Society, arguing for the central role of ‘habit’ in the English experimental natural philosophers’ approach to knowledge.

I depart from Corneanu’s work only in regards to my focus upon the role of religion regarding the context of habit and new experimental philosophy. Whereas Corneanu argues that the early Royal Society drew upon writings concerning the ‘cure of the mind’, such as the works of Francis Bacon and Edward Reynold’s *Treatise of the Passions and the Faculties of the Soul of Man* (1640) which espoused an “anthropological-therapeutic core” of ideas about the mind, (im)perfectibility and the conditions for its assent to real truths, she does not consider the role played by religion in the construction of the Society’s epistemological and methodological schemes.³⁵² In my analysis of Robert Boyle’s *Christian Virtuoso* (1690), I suggest that the ‘religious virtues’ which the experimental philosophy secured for the virtuoso, in fact, had an important epistemological dimension since they helped secure proper cognitive functioning.

³⁵¹ See Sorana Corneanu, *Regimens of the Mind: Boyle, Locke, and the Early Modern Cultura Animi Tradition* (2011), esp. ch. 2 and 3.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 78.

The previous chapter demonstrated the prevalence of habit and acquired habitual dispositions in Restoration religious discourse. This chapter makes the case for an analogous one in English experimental philosophy, and for a different kind of connection between the two during this period. I want to suggest that not so much a mutually supportive relationship existed between the two, but rather that they shared a significant identity. The main pay-off with such an approach is that it reveals that the fusion of religion and natural philosophy was one of the most important features of Restoration intellectual life. Religion, for example, long seen as the apologetic adjunct to the English natural philosophical enterprise, comes across more clearly as a discourse with close conceptual and practical links to its schemes of inquiry and natural philosophical investigations. Isaac Barrow, teacher of Newton, for example, held that the same principles governed both religious and scientific discourse:

[When religion] “hath, to the satisfaction of man’s mind, with solid reason made good its principles; it then enjoins men to surcease further scruple or debate concerning what it teaches or draws from them; which is a proceeding most reasonable, and comfortable to the method used in the strictest sciences being either demonstrated out of some higher science, or evidenced by fit experiments to common sense.”³⁵³

The arguments made in this chapter also complement Harrison’s position on the notion of the Fall in seventeenth-century epistemological thought: the awareness of the limits of man’s capabilities, his reason, and thus the knowledge that he could acquire was often presented in terms of the regulation of the mind and the need to develop virtuous habits. I depart from Harrison, however, in my emphasis upon a more optimistic view of man than the Augustinian perspective which is Harrison’s focus, a view that found room, in keeping with a Christian humanist reworking of the ancient traditions, for both virtue and habit. Thus, against Harrison, I show that the virtuosi found the mind to be somewhat perfectible, given the application of

³⁵³ Isaac Barrow, *Theological Works* (Cambridge, 1859), vol. 3, p. 399. See also Joseph Glanvill, *The Vanity of Dogmatising* (London, 1661), pp. 229-231.

the right habits and habitual dispositions. Therefore, I want to suggest that the moderate epistemological methodology of the early Royal Society was shaped by an appreciation of the importance of habituating the mind toward mental self-control. Accordingly, the mitigated scepticism and emphasis on the probability of knowledge advocated by its fellows was informed, in part, by self-fashioning mental exercises which disciplined the intellectual activity of the mind. In this interpretation, the experimental philosophy comes across not only as a method which expounded the values of moderation, regimentation, and temperance, but also as an edifying programme which aided the experimenters mind in their search for knowledge and as a regimen for cultivating mental virtues. Thus, for instance, in his *Considerations Touching the Usefulness of Experimental Naturall Philosophy* (1664), Robert Boyle informed his readers that he sought to demonstrate “Usefulnesse in reference to the Mind of Man”³⁵⁴ whilst Joseph Glanvill was convinced that the experimental philosophy yielded “practical knowledge” that “will assist and promote our *Vertue*, and our *Happiness*, and incline us to imploy our selves in living according to it.”³⁵⁵

Experimental Philosophy and the Cultivation of the Mind

In her book, *Regimens of the Mind: Boyle, Locke and the Early Modern Cultura Animi Tradition*, Corneanu demonstrates how the early modern *cultura animi* tradition – “an eclectic approach that interweaves Stoic, sceptical, and Christian virtues and that makes it possible to conceive of the virtues of the mind without associating them with the activity of (metaphysical) contemplation” - informed the epistemological approaches of late seventeenth-century English experimental philosophers.³⁵⁶ Falling squarely within the

³⁵⁴ Robert Boyle, *Considerations Touching the Usefulness of Experimental Naturall Philosophy* (1664), preface.

³⁵⁵ Joseph Glanvill, ‘Usefulness of Real Philosophy to Religion’, 5, in *Essays on Several Important Subjects in Philosophy and Religion* (London, 1676), 25. Cf. *Philosophia Pia*, p. 46.

³⁵⁶ Corneanu, *Regimens*, p. 8.

realms of what R. C. Roberts and Jay Wood have termed “regulative virtue epistemology,”³⁵⁷ its practitioners aimed “to offer ‘medicine’ or ‘physick’ [...] to prescribe the best ‘culture’ for a mind described as ‘diseased,’ ‘distempered’, or ‘perturbed’.”³⁵⁸ Its literature spanned Anglican, Puritan, and Protestant treatises and drew in different measures from two traditions. The first was Augustinian - as Peter Harrison has demonstrated, early modern Protestant thinkers followed Augustine in stressing the deep-set limitation on human epistemic capacities resulting from the Fall, and the imbrication of man’s epistemic judgements in the post-lapsarian vices of self-love, pride and curiosity.³⁵⁹ The second was the classical pagan tradition in the forms of neo-Stoicism which equally challenged the Aristotelian notion that people’s contemplative capabilities operated independently from the passions, rather than themselves being shaped by characteristic, emotively-shaped forms of intellectual vice.³⁶⁰

Why was the experimental philosophy helpful in regulating the mind? And, more, importantly, why was a cure of the mind required in the first place? Francis Bacon, for example, believed that attaining a true philosophy of nature was intimately connected to the health of the human mind:

Is not knowledge a true and only natural pleasure, whereof there is no satiety? Is it not knowledge that doth alone clear the mind of all perturbation? (...) Is there any such happiness as for a man’s mind to be raised above the confusion of things, where he may have the prospect of the order of nature and the error of men?³⁶¹

³⁵⁷ Robert C. Roberts and W. Jay Wood, *Intellectual Virtues: An Essay in Regulative Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

³⁵⁸ Corneanu, *Regimens*, p. 7.

³⁵⁹ Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 205-265; “Curiosity, Forbidden Knowledge, and the Reformation of Natural Philosophy in Early Modern England,” *Isis* 92 (2001): pp. 270-280, at pp. 270-272, 279-280.

³⁶⁰ Corneanu, *Regimens*, pp. 67, 73-75, 87.

³⁶¹ Francis Bacon, *In Praise of Knowledge*, in J. Spedding, R.L. Ellis and D.D. Heath, *The Works of Francis Bacon* 14 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 123.

Similarly, Descartes stressed the importance of “*Rules for Direction of the Mind*” while Robert Hooke emphasised the need for “methodical proceedings in the making experiments and observations.”³⁶² Additionally, there is a range of claims in Thomas Sprat’s *History of the Royal Society* in which experiments are presented as crucial for a variety of non-epistemological reasons. Experiments, according to Sprat, would lead to “the liberty of Mens Minds”³⁶³

Bacon’s use of elements of the *cultura animi* tradition has already been noted by others, most specifically in relation to how his treatment of this moral theme was related to his natural philosophical programme.³⁶⁴ Moreover, recent scholarship on Bacon’s medical vocabulary has also convincingly shown that his discipline of the mind is worth taking seriously and that it can be placed within the larger cultural context of the Renaissance tradition of *medicina mentis*.³⁶⁵

Bacon believed that the natural process of knowledge acquisition was fundamentally flawed – that it was distorted at each stage by various impediments. His Great Instauration, therefore, aimed to provide the human mind with the necessary ‘aids’ and ‘instruments’ which would restore some of the lost capacities of the pre-lapsarian mind. Such ‘aid’ and ‘instruments’ were diverse and ranged from particular techniques to discipline the mind and the use of experimental investigations to keep the idols of the mind at bay. The Great

³⁶² Hence Descartes’s *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* (1626 – 1628) and *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting One’s Reason and of Seeking Truth in the Sciences* (1637); and Robert Hooke’s “A General Scheme, or Idea of the Present State of Natural Philosophy, and how its defects may be remedied by a methodical proceeding in the making experiments and collecting observations,” posthumously published in 1705.

³⁶³ Sprat, *History* (1667), p. 63.

³⁶⁴ See Corneanu, *Regimens*, ch. 1.

³⁶⁵ Sorana Corneanu, “Teaching the Mind How to See: Francis Bacon on the Imagination, Rhetoric and Art of Direction,” in K. Vermeir (ed.), *Knowledge and Imagination in Early Modern Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2015); Dana Jalobeanu, “Experimental Philosophers and Doctors of the Mind: The Appropriation of a Philosophical Tradition,” in V. Alexandrescu & R. Theis (eds), *Naturel et surnaturel: Philosophies de la nature et metaphysique aux XVI-XVII siecles* (Georg Olms Verlag: Hildesheim, 2010); Rhodri Lewis, “Francis Bacon and Ingenuity,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 67, no. 1. (2014); “A Kind of Sagacity: Francis Bacon, the ars memoriae and the Pursuit of Natural Knowledge,” *Intellectual History Review* 19 (2009).

Instauration, then, aimed to accomplish both a reformation of the mind as well as a reformation of knowledge by following the proper method. For Bacon, this method amounted to the successful construction of two intellectual disciplines: natural history and natural philosophy.

As well as providing the materials for induction, Bacon presented natural history as a good exercise for the mind to keep a constant contact with nature – it allowed the investigator to escape from the limited and distorted perspective of a ‘private experience,’ keep the idols at bay, record facts undistorted by private beliefs and contribute to the advancement of knowledge. It was important, according to Bacon, for the natural historian to “consider what [were] the true ends of knowledge,” and to “seek [natural knowledge] not either for the pleasure of the mind, or for contention, or for superiority to others, or for profit, or fame, or power, or any of these inferior things; but for the benefit and use of life.”³⁶⁶ Moreover, in the preface to the *Great Instauration*, Bacon wrote that “it is necessary that a more perfect use and application of the human mind and intellect be introduced.”³⁶⁷ Thus, Bacon believed that natural history, properly undertaken, had the potential to remove the bad habits of the mind and as well as remedy the mind of its ‘idols.’³⁶⁸ As Dana Jalobeanu has correctly argued, for Bacon, there was no medicinal propaedeutic prior to natural history: natural history was a *cultura animi* itself.³⁶⁹ Natural history offered ‘observances’ and ‘exercises’ that would “keepe mynd in continual obedience.”³⁷⁰ Bacon was adamant that the natural history of his predecessors had narrowed the world “till it w[ould] go into the understanding (which has been done hitherto).” Bacon’s approach to natural history, on the other hand, would develop

³⁶⁶ Francis Bacon, *The Great Instauration*, in *The Works* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), vol. IV, p. 21.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, IV p. 18.

³⁶⁸ Stephen Gaukroger, *Francis Bacon and the Transformation of Early-Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 122.

³⁶⁹ D. Jalobeanu, “Francis Bacon's Natural History and the Senecan Natural Histories of Early Modern Europe,” *Early Science and Medicine* 17 (2012).

³⁷⁰ Bacon, *The Works*, vol. IV, p. 153.

and nurture the understanding, empowering it “to be expanded and opened till it [could] take in the image of the world, as it is in fact.”³⁷¹ Natural history, thus, would augment the attention and memory while also furnishing “the intellect with the most trustworthy aides and bodyguards.”³⁷² In sum, Bacon viewed natural history as a therapeutic discipline – that it was able to treat some of the ailments of the mind, such as the problem of hasty generalisation and could liberate the mind from its slavery to a specific theory or doctrine.

The apologists of the early Royal Society absorbed much of this therapeutic aspect present within Bacon’s concept of natural history. Bacon’s idols, for example, occupied an important role in Hooke’s posthumously published *General Scheme or Idea of the Present State of Natural Philosophy* (1705), in which he wrote that his main aim was to develop “the true method of building a solid philosophy” or a “Philosophical Algebra.” The emergence of the new experimental philosophy in Restoration England was marked by a growing number of discourses which stressed the moral and religious value of studying nature. Natural Philosophers of the early Royal Society claimed that the empirical study of the natural world brought the mind closer to nature, enhanced the intellectual faculties, regulated the passions of the mind and brought a variety of moral and religious benefits. Robert Boyle, for example, suggested that the proper study of nature placed the intellect of the true knower – a “minister of nature”³⁷³ – in a better, more privileged position:

The study of nature, with design to promote piety by our attainments, is useful, not only for other purposes, but increase our knowledge, even of natural things, if not immediately, and presently, yet in time, and in the issue of affairs. For, at least, in the great renovation of the world, and the future state of things, those corporeal creatures, that will then, be knowable, notwithstanding such a change, as the universe will have been subject to, shall probably, be known best by those, that have here made their

³⁷¹ Ibid., vol. IV, p. 255-6.

³⁷² Ibid., *The Works*, XIII, p. 17.

³⁷³ Robert Boyle, *Some considerations touching the vsefulness of experimental naturall philosophy* (1663), p. 20.

best use of their former knowledge, which there will, together with their other gifts, be congruously, as well as munificently, rewarded, And then the attainment of a high degree of knowledge, which here, was so difficult, may, to the enlightened and enlarged mind, become as easy, as it will be satisfactory; and our improved understanding will, with joy, perceive, how much all the knowledge, that we can give ourselves of God's works, is inferior to what their divine author can impart to us, or them.³⁷⁴

Most apologists of the Royal Society agreed that a proper investigation of nature had moral and religious value as well as therapeutic benefits. In his *History of the Royal Society*, Thomas Sprat explained how the experimental philosophy served as an important moral function because it worked to discipline the practitioner's mind, "composing, and purifying...their thoughts."³⁷⁵ For Joseph Glanvill, the experimental philosophy was a discipline of the mind which was connected to moral, religious, epistemological and theological questions alike. It provided medicines for the common illnesses of the philosophers, tools for taming the passions and methods for enlarging the bounds of the understanding:

So that the *Philosopher thinks much*, and *examines* many things, separates the *Certainties* from the *Plausibilities*, that which is *presumed* from that which is *prov'd*, the *Images of Sense*, *Phansie*, and *Education*, from the *Dictates of genuine and impartial Reason*. Thus he doth before he *Assents* or *Denies*; and then he takes with him also a *Sense of his own Fallibility and Defects*, and never concludes but upon resolution to alter his mind upon contrary evidence. Thus he conceives *warily*, and he speaks with as much *caution* and *reserve*, in the humble Forms of [*So I think*, and *In my opinion*, and *Perhaps 'tis so---*] with great difference to *opposite Perswasion*, candour to *dissenters*, and *calmness* in *contradictions*, with *readiness* and *desire to learn*, and great delight in the *Discoveries of Truth*, and *Detections of his own Mistakes*. When he argues he gives his *Reasons* without *passion*, and *shines* without *flaming*, discourses without *wrangling*, and *differs* without *dividing*. He catcheth not at the *Infirmities* of his *Opposite*, but lays hold of his *Strength*, and weighs the substance without blowing the *dust* in his *eyes*. He entertains

³⁷⁴ Robert Boyle, *Christian Virtuoso*, II, Aphorism IX in M. Hunter and E. Davis (eds.), *The Works of Robert Boyle*, 14 vols, (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999-2000), vol. 12, pp. 723-4.

³⁷⁵ Thomas Sprat, *The History of the Royal Society* (London, 1667), p. 341-2.

what he finds *reasonable*, and *suspends* his judgment when he doth not clearly *understand*. This is the Spirit with which men are inspired by the Philosophy I recommend.³⁷⁶

The experimental philosophy, therefore, had therapeutic effects. It kept speculation in check and revealed the limitations of one's explanations. It functioned as a 'guardian' for the mind, keeping it in a constant 'regulation,' and only focused on the 'things themselves.' Such techniques for disciplining the mind and cultivating the intellect were a characteristic feature of the new experimental philosophy.

Robert Boyle

This section is divided into two parts; the first part details Robert Boyle's irenic approach to natural philosophy; the second part makes the case that Boyle's irenic programme of natural philosophy was partly informed by a deep seated preoccupation with habit, a focus upon habituating the human mind toward careful examination, right judgement, and discernment of the facts of nature. It will argue that the ideal Boylean natural philosopher was one whose mind was furnished with habitual dispositions that guided the investigator only to discern the observable evidence and not to engage in lengthy conjectures and speculations.

Robert Boyle's natural philosophy and his experimental method was characterised not only by the doctrines it included, but also by those doctrines that it excluded. An important feature of the new mechanical philosophy as Boyle articulated it was the fact that certain doctrines and debates were considered off limits. When Boyle introduced the new mechanical philosophy it did not matter whether there really was a vacuum, a genuinely empty space, or whether the interior of his vacuum pump was filled with some kind of ether.³⁷⁷ He set aside such issues and concentrated on the issues that *he* thought were of the most importance – that

³⁷⁶ Glanvill, *Plus Ultra*, pp. 146-7.

³⁷⁷ Boyle, *Works*, Vol. V, p. 292.

there was one matter in the physical world, that it was divided into parts through motion, and that all the phenomena of the natural world could be explained in terms of size, shape and motion. In the preface to his *Some Specimens*, Boyle's irenic approach is evident:

I esteem'd that notwithstanding these things wherein the Atomists and the Catesians differd, they might be thought to agree in the main, and their Hypotheses might by a Person of a reconciling Disposition be look'd on as, upon the matter, one Philosophy, which because it explicates things by Corpuscles, or minute Bodies, may (not very unfitly) be call'd Corpuscular; though I sometimes stile it the Phoenician Philosophy, because some antient Writers inform us, not only before Epicurus and Democritus, be ev'n before Leucippus taught in Greece, a Phoenician Naturalist was wont to give an account of the Phaenomena of Nature by Motion and other Affections of the minute Particles of Matter, which because they are obvious and very powerfull in Mechanical Engines, I sometimes also term it the Mechanical Hypothesis or Philosophy.³⁷⁸

Boyle was definitely a natural philosopher 'of a reconciling Disposition': he desired to convince advocates of the competing positions to put aside their disagreements, and recognise one another as heeding to a single philosophy. In the experimental part of his *Some Specimens*, as well as his other chemical writings, Boyle focused precisely on the elements of the mechanical philosophy that thoughts were uncontroversial, making plausible through experimentation that everything could be explained in terms of size, shape, and motion, and crucially setting aside questions relating to infinite divisibility or the real existence of empty space.³⁷⁹

Boyle's natural philosophical approach was partly to undermine and overcome the disagreements between various camps, especially between those who advocated atoms and the void, and those who preferred infinite divisibility and the plenum, by focusing on fundamentals. His main point, ultimately, was to direct actual empirical research on those

³⁷⁸ Boyle, *Works*, Vol. II, p. 87.

³⁷⁹ See, for example, William. R. Newman, *Atoms and Alchemy* (University of Chicago Press, 2006), pp. 79-81.

parts of natural philosophy that fell into this common area. Furthermore, Boyle went farther still by suggesting that the issues of disagreements that went beyond the possibility of being settled through empirical means, were therefore not appropriate subjects for discussion and debate. In the preface to *Some Specimens* Boyle stated that the difference between “the Cartesians and the Atomists” over “the Notion of Body in general, and consequently about the Possibility of a true Vacuum, as also about the Origine of Motion, the indefinite Divisibleness of Matter...seem to be rather Metaphysical than Physiological Notions...”³⁸⁰ Moreover, in his *New Experiments Physico-Mechanical, Touching the Spring of the Air and its Effects* (1660), Boyle presented the results of the experiments with his air-pump and was very explicit about excluding debates about the nature of the vacuum from the realm of what was empirically meaningful and useful, and thus from serious debate.

In this work Boyle refused to come down on one side as to whether the chamber of his air-pump was “truly empty, that is, devoid of all Corporeal Substance.” After carefully analysing arguments from both sides, Boyle concluded that in the end, the controversy was over anything that could be determined experimentally, but over the notion of a body: He concluded:

This reason, I say, being thus desum'd seems to make the Controversie about a *Vacuum*, rather a Metaphysical, then a Physiological Question; which therefore we shall here no longer debate, finding it very difficult either to satisfie Naturalists with this Cartersian Notion of a Body. Or to manifest wherein it is erroneous, and substitute a better in its stead.³⁸¹

This approach, whereby Boyle eliminated certain questions from the natural philosophical inquiry in order to promote agreement among different factions can be viewed as the irenic programme of the mechanical philosophy. It must be pointed out that Boyle’s version of the

³⁸⁰ Boyle, *Works*, Vol. II, p. 87.

³⁸¹ Boyle, *Works*, vol. I, p. 197f. On Boyle and the question of the divisibility of matter, see P. Anstey, *The Philosophy of Robert Boyle*, (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 43f.

mechanical philosophy was not the only conception in play in the seventeenth-century. One has to consider other different conceptions of the mechanical philosophy in the period. Descartes, Gassendi, and Hobbes, for example, were all in sharp contention with one another. All of them set themselves against Aristotelian orthodoxy about the natural world. All three were attempting to present a vision of what a new natural philosophy should look like, something that could replace the accepted world of prime matter and substantial form. But each also opposed the ‘new philosophies’ proposed by their competitors. Though they all agreed that Aristotelian natural philosophy was sterile, and that everything in nature should be explained in terms of size, shape, and motion, they pointedly disagreed about a variety of other issues. And they were also unwilling to set aside these disagreements. The three represented what they considered to be importantly different visions for the future of natural philosophy. In this way, there was nothing irenic about their programmes: Descartes, Gassendi, and Hobbes directed their insults as much against one another as they did against their common enemy, the philosophy of the scholastics. Thus, their intellectual programmes departed in a significant way from Boyle’s mechanical philosophy. Though they may have agreed with the explanatory project that Boyle proposed, they were quite at odds with his irenic project.

The conflict between Descartes, Gassendi, and Hobbes is only the tip of the iceberg. There were plenty of others who vigorously opposed the Aristotelianism of the schools. And it is this intellectual context which can help us understand where Boyle’s irenic approach came from. Boyle’s mechanical philosophy, I think, should be viewed as a reaction to this context. The programme that he laid out in his *Origin of Forms and Qualities* and in other related texts can be read as a call for a new programme intended to diffuse the chaos of anti-Aristotelian views fighting it out with one another. In identifying certain doctrines as the central issues, and in setting aside all others which intellectuals had differed, Boyle created

something new in early 1660. Boyle's position was essentially irenic: he strove to convince adherence of opposing positions that their agreements were more important than their disagreements. This was a central part of Boyle's project to undermine disagreement by focusing on fundamentals, indeed, to eliminate those points of disagreement from even being a part of natural philosophical activity. In sum, Boyle's irenic approach, to paraphrase John Henry, was not merely to arrive at an interim position until something better came along, it was the only sure way to approach the truths of nature.³⁸²

This irenic approach in natural philosophy was also echoed in Thomas Sprat's *History of the Royal Society*. In Book II, Sprat described the Royal Society's "way of inquiry" in terms of its free, flexible and tentative approach³⁸³ – great care was taken that the mind remained free from any imposition so that it would be alert to circumstances and able to follow the direction of the observed things themselves, even if they indicated a different course to the one already engaged in:

They are careful...to keep themselves free, and change their course, according to the different circumstances, that occur to them in their operations; and the several alterations of the Bodies, on which they work. The true *Experimenting* has this one thing inseparable from it, never to be a *fix'd* and *settled Art*, and never to be *limited* by constant Rules.³⁸⁴

Boyle's irenicism was also demonstrated by his approach to the ministrations of Valentine Greatrakes and his subsequent correspondence with Henry Stubbe over the issue. Stubbe formulated his theory after witnessing Greatrakes performing cures at the Conway estate and had immediately published his praise of Greatrakes's effort in a pamphlet, *The Miraculous Conformist*, written in the form of an open letter to Robert Boyle. In the pamphlet, Stubbe put forward his firm belief in Greatrake's curative powers, which he described as miraculous in

³⁸² John Henry, "The Scientific Revolution in England," p. 196

³⁸³ Thomas Sprat, *History of the Royal Society*, p. 157.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

origin but natural in implementation: God had bestowed upon Greatrakes a sanative temperament which Greatrakes could utilise when performing his cures. This particular mixture of supernatural and natural explanation worked to upset the religious sensibilities of a substantial group of his contemporaries and provoked a variety of responses, not least from Boyle. The primary concern, of course, was Stubbe's physical explanations of Greatrakes's so-called powers. Boyle was particularly aggrieved about the introductory section of Stubbe's pamphlet, which described the origins of Greatrakes's gift as miraculous and compared his healing powers to those of Christ and the apostles.

Boyle replied to Stubbe in a lengthy letter - while most of which outlined the heretical implications of Stubbe's depiction of Greatrakes as a miracle worker, Boyle also detailed his specific reservations regarding Stubbe's physical explanation of Greatrakes. He was critical of attempts to explain natural phenomena in terms of insufficiently proven theories and evidence. Boyle's approach to Greatrakes was that of an impartial observer, whose mind was free of all perturbation and flawed judgement, devoted to making numerous observations in order to discover an explanation for the miraculous performances. As Michael Hunter has pointed out, Boyle had "adopted the persona of experimentalist in defence of Christian orthodoxy."³⁸⁵ He was, therefore, unable to accept Stubbe's argument that Greatrakes's performances were miracles, though he conceded that he had never "met with...any cogent proof, that miracles were to cease with the age of the Apostles." Boyle disavowed Stubbe's "meddling with theological matters" and "irreverent mention" of Scriptural writers:

I must confess to you, that I was somewhat surprised to find this epistle of yours brought [to] me from the press, before I had seen it any other way: and it is no small trouble to me, both upon your score and my own, that I did not see the manuscript before it came abroad. For if I had seasonably seen what you wrote about miracles, I should freely have dissuaded you from publicly addressing to me, what I

³⁸⁵ Michael Hunter, "How Boyle became a scientist", *History of Science*, xxxiii (1995): pp. 59-103; see pp. 78-9.

cannot but differ from you; and perhaps I should have been able to prevail with you to omit all that part of your epistle. For besides that since you take notice yourself of the prejudice your former meddling with theological matters has done you, you can scarcely doubt, but that it has made many persons indisposed to put the best construction upon what you write; besides this, I say, I think you might have spared so much pains as you take in the former part of your letter, to show that Mr Greatrak's gift may be miraculous, since the latter part of it is employed to make out what he performs is by natural means...

But by what hitherto appears to me of Mr *Greatrak's* cures, I must take leave to think, that either they are not real miracles; or, if they have anything in them of a supernatural gift, it is far short of the gifts of our saviour Christ and his apostles...And...reflecting on the passage you cite, that *there are differences of administration, but the same Lord*, think it more fit to look upon this gift of Mr Greatraks as a distinct and inferior kind, than degrade the unquestionable miraculous gifts of the apostles, to depress them to the same level with his.

In looking at Boyle's reaction to the Greatrakes affair and his reply to Stubbe, his irenicism is unmistakeable. Michael Hunter has characterised Boyle's attitude to the Irish Healer and his miracle cures as "non-committal," and thus indicative of the Christian virtuoso's reluctance to commit to a particular position that threatened to spill over into religious and political disputes.³⁸⁶ According to Hunter, Boyle refused to subscribe, in public at least, to the notion the Greatrakes's cures were true miracles, though he was unwilling to rule out the possibility that they might proceed from the immediate hand of God. Whilst miracle cures by men such as Greatrakes were by no means unproblematic, either in a religious or political sense, it must be noted that Charles II had introduced again the treatment of patients of scrofula with the royal touch. Yet Boyle's cautious approach to Greatrakes as well as his ambivalent stance on miracles was entirely in keeping with his irenic programme.

³⁸⁶ M. Hunter, 'The Conscience of Robert Boyle: Functionalism, "Dysfunctionalism" and the Task of Historical Understanding', in M. Hunter, *Robert Boyle (1627-1691), Scrupulosity and Science* (Woodbridge, 2000), p. 64.

In his reply to Stubbe, it is clear that Boyle was anxious to show that he considered Greatrakes's cures to be understood in physico-mechanical terms, that they were not miraculous phenomena. Stubbe had based his entire explanation of Greatrakes's curative abilities "upon the Doctrine of Fermentation," maintaining that Greatrakes's body was composed of several particular ferments, the effluvia of which were transferred into the body of his patient by the physical contact of his touching or rubbing. These ferments then, according to Stubbe, acted upon the blood and spirits, invigorating and strengthening them, which enabled the body to dissipate the morbid matter by means of its own natural healing capacity.³⁸⁷

Whilst Stubbe's argument in terms of fermentation was carefully constructed, Boyle was highly critical of attempts to explain natural phenomena in terms of insufficiently proven theories. His own natural explanations for Greatrakes's abilities may not have been so different from Stubbe's – Boyle too stated that it was possible for "the sanative, and perhaps Anodine streames of his Body to be of such a Texture that they may both reinvigorate the Spirits & by appropriated Qualities, subdue the moribifick Matter or Ferment" thereby producing "a great, & therefore probably sometimes a lucky, commotion in the Blood & Spirits" which lead to a cure.³⁸⁸ Boyle also insisted upon the ongoing possibility of supernatural events, the existence of spiritual beings and witches, but he was circumspect in claiming that supernatural events of such a kind occurred in Greatrakes's case. The key point, however, here is that Boyle made sure he was more careful and irenic than Stubbe in refusing to claim that his account of Greatrake's touch was definitive or exhaustive, describing himself characteristically as "one that is almost as backward to acquiesce in the explications of strange things as to believe the Narratives," and at the close of his reply he was careful to explain

³⁸⁷ See Henry Stubbe, *The Miraculous Conformist* (London, 1666), p. 10-12.

³⁸⁸ Boyle to Stubbe, in *The Correspondence of Robert Boyle*, ed. Michael Hunter et al., vol. 3, p. 103.

how he was “very shy of admitting any thing as a Principle in matters purely Phisicall that I cannot well undertand and do not find proved.”³⁸⁹ Boyle offered only possible explanations for Greatrakes’s miraculous touch. In doing so, he demonstrated to Stubbe the proper manner in which experimental inquiry ought to be conducted: he presented his views courteously, in private correspondence, with careful attention to their circumstantial nature and the paramount importance of maintaining civility and piety.

So how did notions of habit and habitual dispositions operate within Boyle’s irenic programme of natural philosophy? In the *Christian Virtuoso* (1690), Boyle presented the experimental philosophy as a practice that required one to rectify the mind of errors, fallacies, and passions as well as a practice that could contribute to such a rectification. In other words, it could make up for man’s inherent weaknesses and permit the discovery of truth. Boyle emphasised the importance of an “Attentive and Penetrating Mind,” one that was “well-dispos’d,” as well as “docile, and inclinded to make pious applications of the Truths he discovers.”³⁹⁰

Furthermore, such a state of mind could only be achieved by cleansing and regulating one’s “Inferior Passions and Appetites,” “Prejudices,” “Vices,” “Sensuality” and “Lusts” from one’s mind.³⁹¹ As Sorana Corneanu has demonstrated, the regulation of assent implied by the experimental method could endow the natural philosopher with virtues that were both moral and intellectual.³⁹² Thus, through the application of the experimental method, the practitioner stood to gain moral-epistemological virtues such as “Probity and Ingenuity,” “Curiosity and Attention,” “diligent and skilful Scrutiny,” “sincere love of Truth,” “Serious and Setled application of Mind,” “docility” and “Modesty.”³⁹³

³⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 101, 106-7.

³⁹⁰ Boyle, *The Christian Virtuoso*, preface, p. 3.

³⁹¹ Ibid., p. 43, 7, 10.

³⁹² Corneanu *Regimens*, pp. 125-7.

³⁹³ Boyle, *Christian Virtuoso*, p. 7, 16, 21, 46, 48, 3, 103.

For Boyle, such qualities of mind were not only required for the experimental study of the natural world, but were also the potential benefits of it – and it was in reference to the latter that Boyle used to support the notion that the experimental philosophy “Dispos[ed] the Minds of its Cultivators” to “afford the Christian Religion.”³⁹⁴ The new philosophy, therefore, not only revealed the truths of God’s creation, but also promoted piety and particular virtues in its practitioners. One of the chief objectives of *The Christian Virtuoso* (1690) was to establish this in some detail: “that both the Temper of Mind, that makes a Man most proper to be a *Virtuoso*, and the Way of Philosophising, he chiefly employ's, conduce much to give him a sufficient, and yet well grounded and duly limited, Docility; which is a great Disposition to the Entertainment of Reveal'd Religion.”³⁹⁵ What’s more, Boyle was convinced that the experimental study of nature was capable of confirming belief in the divine creator. In describing the religious sentiments that the experimental philosophy could instil into the experimental, Boyle told his readers that:

...since Man is the noblest of God's visible Works; since very many of them seem made for his Use; since, even as an Animal, he is (as the Psalmist truly speaks) *wonderfully made*, and *curiously*, or artificially wrought; and since God has both given him a Rational Mind, and endow'd it with an Intellect, whereby he can Contemplate the Works of Nature, and by them acquire a Conviction of the Existence, and divers Attributes, of their supremely perfect Author; since God hath planted Notions and Principles in the Mind of Man, fit to make him sensible, that he ought to Adore God, as the most Perfect of Beings, the Supreme Lord and Governor of the World, the Author of his own Nature, and all his Enjoyments: Since all this, I say, is so, Natural Reason dictates to him, that he ought to express the Sentiments he has for this Divine Being, by Veneration of his Excellencies; by Gratitude for his Benefits; by Humiliation, in view of his Greatness, and Majesty; by an Awe of his Justice; by Reliance on his Power, and Goodness, when he duly endeavours to serve and please him; and, in short, by those several Acts of Natural Religion, that Reason shews to be Suitable, and therefore Due to those several Divine Attributes of his, which it has led us to the knowledge of.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., p.103.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 44-5.

It is interesting to note that Boyle refers to the religious virtues that were to be gained from the experimental philosophy as ‘sentiments,’ thus stressing their difference with other virtues. Thomas Dixon, for example, has suggested that the notion of ‘sentiments’ was employed to define those kind of virtues which exhibited a stronger cognitive constitution and were much more congenial with virtue than other categories, particularly within the realms of theological discourse.³⁹⁶ Furthermore, the ideal Boylean natural philosopher, the *Christian virtuoso*, had to first cultivate moral-intellectual virtues before gaining access to such religious ‘sentiments.’ According to Boyle, only a virtuoso who was “qualify’d in his Morals” was “thereby dispos’d to make use of the knowledge of the Creatures to confirm his Belief, and encrease his Veneration of the Creator.”³⁹⁷ Moreover, one’s “Inferior Passions and Appetites” also had to be regulated and kept in check in order to acquire the sentiments of religion.³⁹⁸ Consequently, “if a deep insight in Nature be acquir’d by a man of Probity and Ingenuity, or at least free from Prejudices and Vices that may dispose him to entertain and improve those Truths of Philosophy,” then, for Boyle, such knowledge “would naturally lead him to Sentiments of Religion.”³⁹⁹ In this reading, then, the experimental philosophy not only cultivated moral and intellectual virtues within its practitioners, it was also, as Peter Harrison has recently argued, a form of devotion unto the creator, assisting practitioners towards religious ‘sentiments’.⁴⁰⁰

Upon closer observation, it is clear that Boyle’s ‘sentiments’ served an epistemological purpose. One example is the virtue of “Humility” – a sentiment drawn from the Aristotelian-Stoic tradition. For Boyle, it was characterised as “Humiliation, in view of

³⁹⁶ See Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 3-17.

³⁹⁷ Boyle, *The Christian Virtuoso*, p. 43.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁴⁰⁰ See Peter Harrison, “Sentiments of Devotion and Experimental Philosophy in Seventeenth-Century England,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 44, no. 1 (2014): pp. 113-33.

his Greatness, and Majesty.”⁴⁰¹ The epistemological outcome of which instilled an awareness about the limits of his knowledge of God’s creation and thus worked to regulate his assent. Another similar sentiment was “Docility” which, according to Boyle, was a disposition of the mind which made “a man most proper to be a *Virtuoso*”.⁴⁰² A ‘docile’ virtuoso was only concerned with the observational facts of the nature and would “easily discern, that he needs further information, and therefore ought to seek for it where ‘tis the most likely to be had; and not only admit, but Welcome it.”⁴⁰³ He also did “not require Credulity” and did not indulge in the “Litigious Philosophy” of the Scholastic Schools which encouraged little better than “Dialectical or Probable Arguments.”⁴⁰⁴ For Boyle, the ideal virtuoso possessed only a “sincere Love of Truth” and that

a *Virtuoso*, that is wont in his Reasonings to attend to the Principles of Mathematicks, and sound Philosophy, and to the clear Testimonies of Sense, or well verifi'd Experiments, acquires a Habit of discerning the Cogency of an Argument, or way of Probation; and easily discerns, That Dialectical Subtilties, and School Tricks, cannot shift off its force, but finds more Satisfaction in Embracing a Demonstrated Truth, than in the vain Glory of Disputing subtilly against it.⁴⁰⁵

Such a habit was an essential quality of mind which was required for the experimental life and was, in effect, a governing principle. It dictated the mental operations of the virtuoso’s mind, affording him:

an Accustomance of endeavouring to give Clear Explications of the *Phaenomena* of Nature, and discover the weakness of those Solutions that Superficial Wits are wont to make and acquiesce in, does insensibly work in him a great and ingenuous *Modesty* of Mind.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰¹ Boyle, *The Christian Virtuoso*, p. 33.

⁴⁰² Ibid., pp. 44-5.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., p. 46.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 46, 109.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 47.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 103.

This ‘modesty of mind,’ according to Boyle, was an intellectual as well as a moral virtue and linked to the proper cultivation of assent; of avoiding the danger of hasty assents and only assenting to what could clearly be demonstrated by way of experimentation. Joseph Glanvill echoed a similar sentiment in his essay ‘The Usefulness of Real Philosophy to Religion’ when he observed that:

An intimate Commerce with *God's Works*, gives us to see the mighty *Difficulties* that are to be met in the *speculation* of them; and thereby Men are made less *confident* of their Sentiments about *Nature*, and by many Considerations and *Observations* of *this* kind, are at length brought to such an *habitual* Modesty, that they are afraid to pass bold Judgments.⁴⁰⁷

Glanvill’s reference to an ‘habitual modesty’ as well as Boyle’s notion of a ‘habit of discernment’ reflects the important connection between the discipline of judgement and virtues of the mind and knowledge making in the Royal Society’s experimental enterprise. For Boyle, the ideal experimental philosopher had to assent only to things that had been clearly and distinctly perceived. In *Things Above Reason* (1681), for example, Boyle wrote that “a sincere understanding is to give, or refuse its assent to propositions according as they are or are not true, not according as we could or could not wish they were so.”⁴⁰⁸ Boyle labelled this virtue as ‘impartiality.’ The Boylean experimenter, therefore, had to develop a habitual frame of mind for assessing the evidence and managing their assent to that evidence:

An assiduous Conversation with the exquisitely Fram'd, and admirably Manag'd, Works of God, brings a Skilful Considerer of them to discover from time to time, *so* many things to be Feazable, or to be True, which, whilst he argu'd but upon grounds of incompetently Inform'd Reason, he judg'd False or Unpracticable; *that* little by little he acquires a Habit of receiving some sorts of Opinions, and especially those that seem unfriendly to Religion, but as Probationers, with a disposition to Reform or Discard them upon further Information. And This, *as* he is resolv'd to Submit to, in case he meets with

⁴⁰⁷ Glanvill, *Essays on several important subjects in philosophy and religion* (1676), p. 24.

⁴⁰⁸ Robert Boyle, *A Discourse of Things above Reason* in *The Works of the Honourable Robert Boyle*, edited by Thomas Birch, 6 vols. (London, 1772), vol. 4, p. 411

it, so he is dispos'd to Receive, if not to Expect it, by having often found himself oblig'd, upon subsequent Information, to mend or lay aside his former Opinions, tho' very agreeable to the best Light he had to judge by, when he entertain'd them. As, tho' it seems a visible Truth, that the *Discus of Venus* is, in all respects to the Sun, totally Luminous; yet when the Telescope discovers her to have her Full and her Wane, like the Moon, he will believe this further Observation, against the first made with his Naked Eyes. And indeed, I have sometimes doubted, whether to be vers'd in Mathematicks, and other Demonstrative parts of Philosophy, bring a greater advantage to the Mind, by Accustoming and Assisting it to Examine Strictly Things propos'd for Truths, and to Evince Strongly the Truths a Man knows, to Others; than by Fitting him to Discern the force of a good Argument, and Submit willingly to Truths clearly evinc'd, how little soever he may have expected to find such Conclusions true.⁴⁰⁹

Boyle's experimenter had to form only tentative conclusions and to always remain open to new evidence, always ready and willing to discard their own opinions and inclinations on the basis of new "proofs."⁴¹⁰ They had to cultivate a habitual disposition of adopting the position best supported by empirical observation and evidence. The above cited passage also reveals Boyle's position on the training of the human mind and the best method for such training. Boyle compares the virtues of experimental philosophy not only with the scholastic approach but also with mathematics and "other Demonstrative parts of Philosophy." While demonstrations, according to Boyle, could bring the advantage of strict examination, they only dealt with "the Truths a Man knows."

Rose-Marie Sargent has argued that Boyle's experimental programme was based on a theological view of creation and on a related ontology of the "cosmic mechanism." Nature, for Boyle, was a divinely complex and theological text, and as a hermeneutic operation, his corpuscular philosophy aimed to discover the hidden mechanisms beyond "the determination of regularities." However, the complex interrelations that hold among the qualities of bodies

⁴⁰⁹ Boyle, *The Christian Virtuoso*, pp. 106-07.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

are not absolute self-evident principles, that the mind could grasp immediately by the light of reason, but are only known in relation to each other, as parts of the system, and therefore subject to “conditional propositions.” As a result, the investigation into nature could only deal in probabilities, or moral certainties, and therefore required a “diligent and devout reader,” rather than a superficial one, who could remain flexible and moderate in order to grasp the “concurrences of probabilities.”⁴¹¹ While God’s wisdom and knowledge in the creation could have been apparent to even “a superficial philosopher,” Boyle claimed that “how wise an agent he has in these works expressed himself to be, none but an experimental philosopher can well discern.” A key theme of his *Some consideration touching the Usefulness of Experimental Natural Philosophy* was that only an experimental philosopher had the capacity and regiment to discover “the more unobvious properties of things.”⁴¹² Thus, the attentive and pious inquiry into nature was an open-ended process of understanding as well as a procedure to transform the investigator’s own moral persona: “an experimental approach to nature can help eradicate... prejudices because it is the way by which one’s vision of the world can be expanded.”⁴¹³

The superiority of the new experimental philosophy, therefore, lay in its ability to cultivate the mental capacities of the experimenter, furnishing their mind with good habits of experimentation - “Fitting him to Discern the force of a good Argument, and Submit willingly to Truths clearly evinc’d, how little soever he may have expected to find such conclusions true.”⁴¹⁴ There are several points that can be extracted from Boyle’s statement; first, that the method of the experimental philosophy led to true discoveries and facts of nature; second, that once the practitioner had accustomed themselves to such a methodology,

⁴¹¹ Rose-Mary Sargent, *The Diffident Naturalist: Robert Boyle and the Philosophy of Experiment* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995), p. 98, 119-120.

⁴¹² Boyle, *Some consideration touching the Usefulness of Experimental Natural Philosophy*, p. 31, 117.

⁴¹³ Sargent, (1995), p. 124.

⁴¹⁴ Boyle, *The Christian Virtuoso*, p. 107.

then they would have the ability to see unexpected truths; third, that its practitioners would also develop a deep appreciation that their knowledge was only very small since “he has been accustom’d to be sensible of his Ignorance, or desire further Instruction...[and] will examine more strictly, than Ordinary Men are Wont or Able to do, the Proofs brought for this or that propos'd Revelation.”⁴¹⁵

For Boyle, the new experimental philosophy was a genuine religious activity: it “accustoms him to value and delight in abstracted truths” thus making him “more disposed to value divine truths.” Therefore, both “the temper of mind” and “the way of philosophising” that the experimental philosophy demanded and instilled within its practitioners, nurtured a greater understanding of the divine nature.⁴¹⁶ Hence, an experimental approach to the study of nature which cultivated the mind had the capability to confirm the virtuoso’s belief in the divine creator:

...from divers other *matters of fact*, which he heedfully observes, though he had no share in the effecting them; and on which he is dispos'd to make such Reflections, as may (unforcedly) be apply'd to confirm and encrease in him the Sentiments of *Natural Religion*, and facilitate his Submission and Adherence to the *Christian Religion*.⁴¹⁷

Moreover, for Boyle, the actual process of exercising feelings of admiration and awe towards the Creator and his creation assisted the virtuoso in arriving at a variety of conclusions regarding the natural world. The acknowledgement, for example, that the world was “a Machine so Immense, so Beautiful, so well contriv'd, and, in a word, so Admirable” led the virtuoso to the belief that it was not a product of “mere Chance” or the “Tumultuous Justlings and Fortuitous Concourse of Atoms” but that it must have been “produc'd by a Cause, exceedingly Powerful, Wise, and Beneficent” who “hath not Abandon'd a Masterpiece so

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., p. 108.

⁴¹⁶ Boyle, *The Christian Virtuoso*, pp. 44-5.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 52-3.

worthy of him, but does still Maintain and Preserve it.”⁴¹⁸ It was only after realising how “Admirable” the world is that the virtuoso is able to comprehend “the Truth of this Assertion, *That God governs the World he has made.*”⁴¹⁹ The study of nature, then, not only provided evidence of God’s existence, it was also in some sense a religious activity. Matthew Hale, whose emphasis upon habit in matters of religion was noted in the previous chapter, echoed a similar view to Boyle, writing in his *Contemplations Moral and Divine* how

...the knowledge of divers parts in Natural Philosophy, and the rules, motions, and variety of Qualities and Operations of divers Natural Objects, the connexion of Causes and Effects, the observation of the Order of things in Nature, are of singular use to carry the Mind up to the acknowledging and admiration of the Great Efficient and Governour of the World, of His Wisdom, Power, Goodness, Bounty, and consequently to raise up the Heart to veneration of Him, dutifulness and gratitude unto Him, dependance upon Him, and a deep impression of Natural Religion towards Him, and of all those consequents that arise in the Mind and Life from this habit of Religion.

As noted at the beginning of this section, Boyle believed not only that the new experimental philosophy provided evidence for the existence and wisdom of God, but also that it cultivated piety and particular virtues within its practitioners. The concept of ‘habit’ formed an important part of this cultivation. Virtuous habitual dispositions such as ‘docility,’ ‘modesty’ and ‘caution’ were crucial in order to secure proper epistemic practice because they ensured the regulation of the mind, preventing it from assenting to its own prejudices, and allowing the experimental practitioner to attain the truths of God’s creation. Boyle’s irenic programme of natural philosophy was informed, in part, by a process which habituated the human mind toward the experimental life: disciplining the practitioner to concentrate solely upon the ‘things themselves,’ to be ever open-minded and form only tentative conclusions. Such virtuous habitual dispositions were an important requirement for the experimental life since

⁴¹⁸ Ibid., 29-30.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., 31.

they shaped the practitioner's moral behaviour which, in turn, regulated their cognitive and intellectual endeavours, and permitting them to "make a great progress in Real Philosophy."⁴²⁰

In his *Occasional Reflections*, written around 1647-48 and appearing in print in 1665, Boyle also emphasised the importance of habit and acquiring habitual dispositions. The work itself developed a natural theology which constituted an early attempt at the 'physico-theological' arguments that Boyle would later formulate. It set out a scheme for the moral contemplation of objects and experiences, based on the assumption that an ordinary man could search for divine mysteries by looking into the Book of Nature, grounded on a voluntarist theology which saw God as directly involved in all of the universe's activity. In short, the *Occasional Reflections* functioned as a systematic manual of instruction in how to refashion one's inner life by cultivating an experimentalist orientation toward everyday experience and presented another strategy for the disciplined management of one's conscious life. Furthermore, Boyle's emphasis on the spontaneity of each meditation was similar to the immediacy of experience that Boyle presented in his natural philosophical writings: a rhetorical device he used in order to establish his experimental accounts as authoritative testimony.⁴²¹

By meditation, Boyle meant a carefully directed train of thought. In 'The Doctrine of Thinking', for example, he explained how he "set my Thoughts a work upon in those shreds of Time [...] to recall to mind any thing I have almost forgotten, or repeate any thing I desire to retaine more firmly in my Memory."⁴²² Boyle's emphasis on active review was also apparent in his 'Dayly Reflection', addressed to 'my Lady Ranalaugh', his sister. Here, Boyle

⁴²⁰ Ibid., p. 7.

⁴²¹ See Shapin, *Never Pure* (Baltimore, The John Hopkins University Press, 2010), p. 100, as well as Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985; repr. 1989), pp. 60–69.

⁴²² Robert Boyle, *Early Essays and Ethics of Robert Boyle, ed. and annotated and with an Introduction by John T. Harwood* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), p. 194.

advised that we should “recall orderly to mind, whatever new observables in any kind Knowledge, either your Study or Conversation has afforded or your owne Thoughts suggested yow, the foregoing Day.”⁴²³ This kind of regular, contemplative, and careful reflection, according to Boyle, helped to guard against “Intervening Fancys” and the proclivity of the mind to wander.⁴²⁴ Not only did Boyle describe and justify this mental regimen in *Occasional Reflections*, he also wrote about it in terms of a habit, a regimen that had to be learned, developed and practised by the individual.

Boyle informed his readers that such a meditative habit was not easy to attain, that one could only “purchase this habitude at the rate of a little difficulty.” However, despite such difficulty Boyle was convinced that the habit of occasional meditation was conducive to “the exercise and improvement of the divers of the faculties of the mind.”⁴²⁵ According to Boyle:

the habit, produced by the practice of Occasional meditating, should accustom a man to heed only such Objects as are like to suggest to him devout thoughts; yet, not to mention now that I shall advertise you anon, that there is no necessity of confining occasional meditations, to matters Devout, or Theological, I shall only represent, that, since we know not, before we have considered the particular Objects that occur to us, which of them will, and which of them will not, afford us the subject of an Occasional Reflection, the mind will, after a while, be engag'd to a general and habitual attention, relating to the Objects that present themselves to it. Besides, that though we should at first apply our heedfulness to circumstances of only some few sorts of Objects, yet the habit, being once acquir'd, would easily reach to others than those that first occasion'd it; as men, that by Learning to sing Anthems, are come to have critical ears, will be able to judge, much better than they could before, of the resemblances and differences of Tones in other Songs, and will take Notice of divers particularities in Voices, which would not be heeded by an unpractised Ear: And as we have made it appear, that the way of thinking

⁴²³ Ibid., p. 22.

⁴²⁴ Ibid., 200-1.

⁴²⁵ Boyle, *Occasional reflections upon several subiects, whereto is premis'd a discourse about such kind of thoughts* (1665), p. 27.

we would recommend, does very much dispose men to an attentive frame of mind; so, that such a frame or disposition is a great advantage in the whole course of a man's life.⁴²⁶

Boyle's strategy of "Persuading and Teaching men to Improve their Thoughts" was, in a way, a self-conscious attempt on his part to extend his interventions into nature to the improvement of other people: those who were engaged in meditation, in improving their mental capacities would learn how to "Husband their Time" rather than simply trying to "get ridd" of it. As in experimentalist practice, the demands of the work would habituate practitioners to the acquisition of skills necessary for success.⁴²⁷

Robert Hooke

In a lecture given at Gresham College in 1679 Robert Hooke also alluded to the significance of habit and habitual dispositions for the study of nature. According to Hooke: "without an acquired habitude and handiness by long practice and experience, nothing could be done to any certainty." Furthermore, Hooke, like Boyle, was adamant that the new experimental method could rectify the operations of the mind, understood as a distinctive kind of mental discipline. Hooke stressed the importance of "methodical proceedings in the making of experiments" and placed his natural philosophical programme within the larger context of the Fall and mankind's salvation, claiming boldly that new experimental philosophy would inevitably result in the "rectifying the operations of Sense, the Memory and Reason," thus restoring the mind to its prelapsarian state.⁴²⁸ While he insisted upon the advantage of using instruments like the microscope and the telescope to assist the senses since "everything is reduced to Regularity, Certainty, Number, Weight and Measure," he also, in the same vein as

⁴²⁶ Ibid., pp. 29-30.

⁴²⁷ Ibid., *preface*.

⁴²⁸ Robert Hooke's "A General Scheme, or Idea of the Present State of Natural Philosophy, and how its defects may be remedied by a methodical proceeding in the making experiments and collecting observations," posthumously published in 1705; *Micrographia* (1665), Preface.

Boyle, was adamant that the very methodology of the experimental philosophy provided a therapeutic value.⁴²⁹

Hooke developed a kind of philosophical algebra for rectifying the judgement of the experimental practitioner which he described as a “Method or Engine” which was to guide the practitioner’s observations and inquiries:

Some other Course therefore must be taken to promote the Search of Knowledge. Some other kind of Art for Inquiry than what hath been hitherto made use of, must be discovered; the intellect is not to be suffered to act without its Helps, but is continually to be assisted by some Method or Engine, which shall be as a Guide to regulate its actions, so as that it shall not be able to act amiss; Of this Engine, no Man except the incomparable Verluam, hath had any thoughts, and indeed hath promoted it to a very good pitch; but there is yet somewhat more to be added, which he seemed to want time to compleat. By this, as by that Art of Algebra in Geometry, ‘twill be very easy to proceed in any Natural Inquiry, regularly and certainly: and indeed it may not improperly be called a Philosophical Algebra, or an Art of directing the Mind in the search after Philosophical Truths, for as ‘tis very hard for the most acute Wit to find out any difficult Problem in Geomerty, without the help of Algebra to the quaesitum, and altogether as easy for the meanest Capacity acting by that Method to compleat and perfect it, so will be in the Inquiry after Natural Knowledge.⁴³⁰

According to Hooke, there were two different sorts of philosophic algebra: the first involved a “preparation of the mind” which was basically a moral investigation of the self: “An examination of the constitution and powers of the soul, or an attempt of disclosing the soul to itself, being an endeavour of discovering the perfections and imperfections of humane nature, and finding out ways and means for the attaining of the one, and of helping the other.”⁴³¹ The second, which Hooke never fully developed, involved rules of reasoning. Both were designed to work on what Hooke called “philosophical natural history” which

⁴²⁹ Hooke, ‘A General Scheme’ (1705), p. 34.

⁴³⁰ Ibid., p. 7

⁴³¹ Ibid.

functioned, in part, as a cultivation of the human mind.⁴³² Lotte Mulligan in a number of articles, for example, has shown how Hooke conceived of the compilation of natural histories as both the groundwork of philosophy and the best remedy for the faculty of the memory.⁴³³

In his *General Scheme*, Hooke stressed the importance of recording all aspects of the experimental methodology in the proper order, paying close attention to questions of selection and relevance. He did so since, for Hooke, the natural historian was not a collector, but an experimenter, thus the act of recording involved complex procedures of ratiocination. Natural History, therefore, was both an instrument for the production of natural knowledge and assumed an important therapeutic capacity. In Hooke's reading, then, one had to begin with the human mind: "the Intellect should first like a skilful Architect, understand what it designs to do."⁴³⁴

The point here is that Hooke's method for improving natural philosophy referred to the actual process of experimentalism: a set of instructions and direction for the mental conduct of the experimental practitioner in order to produce right observation, examination and judgement. Such a remedy was necessary since, according to Hooke, "every Man's own peculiar Structure Every Man has born with him, or contracted by some way or other, a Constitution of Body and Mind, that does or less dispose him to...[a] kind of Imagination or Phant'sy of things..."⁴³⁵ The experimental practitioner, therefore, was required to clear the mind before setting upon an exploration of nature, purging the intellect and tempering the passions - as Francis Bacon had proposed in his *Novum Organum* that "before we can get the

⁴³² Hooke, *The Posthumous Works of Robert Hooke...* (London, 1705), p. 18.

⁴³³ Lotte Mulligan, "Robert Hooke's 'Memoranda': Memory and Natural History." *Annals of Science* 49, no. 1 (1992): 47–61; "Self Scrutiny and the Study of Nature: Robert Hooke's Diary as Natural History." *Journal of British Studies* 35, no. 3 (1996): 311–42.

⁴³⁴ Hooke, *Posthumous Works*, p. 18.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

more distant and hidden aspects of nature, we are necessarily obliged to bring in means of bettering and perfecting the exercise and practice of the human mind and intellect.”⁴³⁶

Hooke advocated the importance of an experimental flexibility which required “finding out of what constitution one self is, and to what is either naturally or accidentally most inclin’d to believe, and accordingly by reasoning and comparing things together to consider what the things themselves hint, and what Imitation proceeds from ones own Constitution.”⁴³⁷ Such an habitual virtue guarded against the dangers of intransigency and narrow-mindedness and allowed the practitioner to develop a habit “not to receive any Notion for certain till thoroughly confirm’d by very Cogent Arguments and Ratiocinaton, and always suspect that which seems most consonant and pleasing to our Inclination.”⁴³⁸ Furthermore, he also recommended “an Hypotheical Scepticism” which was designed to regulate one’s assent and judgement which involved imposing upon:

our selves a Disbelief of every thing whatsoever, that we have already imbraced or taken in as a Truth: And in so doing, to throw out not only those things we may a little doubt of, but even all those things of which we are most confident, and those especially which our particular Constitutions seem most of all to incline us to believe, rejecting them all as Impostures and Fallacies, that have by some indirect means or other crept into our Understandings...”⁴³⁹

The ideal experimental natural philosopher or the archetypal “natural historian,” for Hooke, had to proceed “with the greatest Degree of Candor and Freedom from Prejudice, not to be byassed by this or that Opinion in making of Deduction, nor by the Pleasantness or Gainfulness of the Experiment, or any other Consideration that does not immediately look at the present Discovery he is searching after.”⁴⁴⁰ Cultivating such a strict experimental

⁴³⁶ Bacon *Novum Organum*, in *Works*, p. 87.

⁴³⁷ Hooke, *Posthumous Works*, p. 10.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

disposition and persona, however, was no easy task. John Wilkins, for example, emphasised the difficulty of attaining such an indifferent attitude: “Tis very difficult for any one, in the search of Truth, to find in himselfe such an indifferencie, as that his judgement is not all swayd by an overweening affection unto that which is proper unto himselfe.”⁴⁴¹ Hooke was well aware of this difficult and rigorous methodology but also mindful of its potential benefits, informing his readers that although “the Roots and Beginnings of Knowledge and Practice...[were] bitter and tedious,” the “Fruits are sweet and pleasant; and whoever attains the end, will never repent the time they spent in the beginning.”⁴⁴² One advantage to the experimental philosophy was that it improved the practitioner’s cognitive capacities, furnishing their mind with good habitual dispositions:

Now though this way of Demonstration and Reasoning may seem tedious and too long to detain the Mind and Attention in finding out the Properties of Quantities, yet ‘twas the way made use of by the Ancients. And ‘tis altogether necessary, especially in the beginning of this Study, to accustom the Mind to Attention and Circumspection, that it may receive nothing for Truth but what is seen clearly by the Reasons and Causes of it, that thereby the Mind may acquire a Habit of Intention, and of examining the whole Chain of Consequences from the first Principles to the Truth evidenced.⁴⁴³

The experimental approach instilled the practitioner with crucial virtuous habits of the mind, training the mind in the discipline of examination, for example, regulating it to resist premature conclusions as definitive and to carry out thorough evaluations at every stage of the inquiry or experimentation. Furthermore, such a habit of examination, according to Hooke, was an essential requirement for the proper investigation of nature since

Without [the habit] of Examination, we are too apt to run away with a thing, and think we know it and see it clearly before we are sure we do, and are impatient of Delay in examining and considering,

⁴⁴¹ John Wilkins, *A Discourse Concerning a New Planet* (London, 1640), p. 23.

⁴⁴² Hooke, *Posthumous Works*, pp. 69-70.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

whereas if the Mind be a little at first accustomed to this leisurely and strict way of reasoning, after it has got a habit it will make as much Dispatch in receiving things with sufficient Examination, as another shall without it.⁴⁴⁴

Moreover, Hooke distinguished between better trained minds whose senses “have been more cultivated than others, and brought to a much greater Perfection” than regular minds.⁴⁴⁵ Hooke was also by no means alone with his emphasis upon the importance of a ‘habit of examination’ for the rightful inquiry into nature. We also find similar resonances in the works of Boyle. In his *Usefulness of Experimental Natural Philosophy* (1664), for example, Boyle stressed the importance of “attention” in the context of the search for truth and that the acquisition of such truth could be carried out by an “Intelligent Spectator, who is able both to understand and to relish it” since “the Book of Nature is to an ordinary Gazer...like a rare Book of Hieroglyphicks to a Child.”⁴⁴⁶ Additionally, in the *Christian Virtuoso* Boyle also hinted at the existence of a hierarchy of examiners of nature which was based on their degree of attention as well as their mental discipline:

For some Men, that have but superficial, thô conspicuous, Wits, are not fitted to penetrate such Truths, as require a lasting and attentive Speculation; and divers, that want not Abilities, are so taken up by their Secular Affairs, and their Sensual Pleasures, that they neither have Disposition, nor will have Leisure, to discover those Truths, that require both an Attentive and Penetrating Mind. And more than of either of these sorts of Men there are, whom their Prejudices do so forestal, or their Interest byas, or their Appetites blind, or their Passions discompose, too much, to allow them a clear Discernment, and right Judgment, of Divine Things.⁴⁴⁷

Hooke too, like Boyle, stressed the importance of “Attention and Diligence in Making Observations and Experiments.”⁴⁴⁸ Joseph Glanvill also presented a similar approach when,

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 38.

⁴⁴⁶ Robert Boyle, *Some considerations...*, p. 4.

⁴⁴⁷ Boyle, *The Christian Virtuoso*, preface.

⁴⁴⁸ Hooke, *Posthumous Works*, p. 62.

in his *Vanity of Dogmatizing* (1661), he warned that the “treasures” of nature could not be discovered by the “careless inquirer.”⁴⁴⁹ For Glanvill, the virtue of the new experimental philosophy was to be found in its strict mental regimen – opinion was an easy and superficial gain while the acquisition of truth required real effort:

Verisimilitude and *Opinion* are an easie purchase; and these counterfeits are all the Vulgars treasure: But true Knowledge is as dear in acquisition, as rare in possession. Truth, like a *point* or *line*, requires an acuteness and intention to its discovery; while verisimilitude, like the expanded *superficies*, is an obvious sensible on either hand, and affords a large and easie field for loose enquiry.⁴⁵⁰

The emphasis on the development of a clear and acute mind that was fit for the investigation of nature reinforces Dana Jalobeanu’s notion of the “intelligent observer” - an individual trained in the discipline of experimentation with the capacity to make a range of sound judgements.⁴⁵¹ Hooke, for example, described an individual who had fortified “himself against...Prejudices, which are too apt to obtrude his Mind and prepossess him against a clear View and Observation,”⁴⁵² while Boyle compared the ‘intelligent observer’ to a skilled diver who could make his way to the very bottom of the sea and “fetch up Pearls, Corals, and other precious things, that in those Depths lye concealed from other men’s Sight and Reach.”⁴⁵³

In sum, Hooke believed that mankind’s inability to carry out rightful investigation of nature stemmed from “a deriv’d corruption, innate, and born with him” since the fall from Eden.⁴⁵⁴ Mankind, therefore, was “not indued with an intuitive Faculty, to see farther into the Nature at first, than the Superficies and out-sides, and so must go a long way about before he can be able to behold the Internal Nature of things.”⁴⁵⁵ Hooke’s remedy for this, as we have

⁴⁴⁹ Joseph Glanvill, *The Vanity of Dogmatizing* (1661), p. 64, 142.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁴⁵¹ Dana Jalobeanu, *The Art of Experimental Natural History: Francis Bacon on Context* (Zeta Books: Bucharest, 2015), p. 110.

⁴⁵² Hooke, *Posthumous Works*, p. 63.

⁴⁵³ Boyle, *The Christian Virtuoso*, p. 50.

⁴⁵⁴ Hooke, *Micrographia*, preface.

⁴⁵⁵ Hooke, *Posthumous Works*, p. 8.

seen, was in the same vein as Boyle's - an experimental inquiry that was largely habitual, intended to furnish the experimenter's mind with habitual dispositions and methods that would make them capable of making sense of the natural world.

Thomas Sprat's *History of the Royal Society*

In the third part of his *History of the Royal Society of London* (1667), Thomas Sprat described the benefits that were to be gained by the experimental philosopher when they followed the strict and arduous methodology of the new philosophy:

The satisfaction that he finds, is not *imaginary*, but *real*: It is drawn from things that are not out of the world, but in it: It does not carry him farther off, but brings him neerer to *Practice*. 'Tis true, that *Knowledge* which is only founded on thoughts and words, has seldom any other end, but the *breeding* and *increasing* of more thoughts and words: But that which is built on *Works* (as his will be) will naturally desire to discover, to augment, to apply, to communicate it self by more *Works*. Nor can it be thought, that his *mind* will be made to languish by this pleasure of *observation*, and to have any aversion from the difficulty and tediousness of human affairs; seeing his way of *observation* itself is so *laborious*. It is a good Precept, which is wont to be given, in respect of all sorts of *Exercises*, that they should be at least as hard and toilsom, as that *Art* which we strive to gain by them. And by this rule *Experiments* are an excellent preparation towards any habit or faculty of life whatsoever. For what thing, which can be effected by *mortal Industry*, can seem impossible to him who has been ingag'd in these *Studies*, which require such an indefatigable watchfulness? What can overcome his diligence, who has bin able to sustain with patience the *escapes*; the *delaies*, the *labyrinths* of *Nature*? whom the repetition of so many *labors*, so many failings, with which he meets, and so long attendance could not tire?⁴⁵⁶

What kind of 'habits' is Sprat referring to here? Sprat's account of the "Character of a True Philosopher," for example, emulated that of Boyle's habitual experimenter: an individual

⁴⁵⁶ Thomas Sprat, *History of the Royal Society* (1667), pp. 336-37.

“well practis’d in all the modest, humble, [and] friendly Vertues.”⁴⁵⁷ Furthermore, much like we have seen in the works of Boyle and Hooke, Sprat’s *History* treated the experimental investigation of nature as form of training and exercise of the mind. The third part of the *History*, for example, had a section dedicated to showing how the experimental approach was “usefull for the cure of mens minds.”⁴⁵⁸ The experimental approach increased the practitioner’s awareness of their own limits, making him “modest in his *judgement*.”⁴⁵⁹ It also shaped the practitioner’s moral virtues as well as guarded against the innate idols of the mind: in Sprat’s own words - “the *Real Philosophy* will supply our thoughts with excellent *Medicines*, against their own *Extravagances*, and will serve in some sort, for the same ends, which the *Moral* professes to accomplish.”⁴⁶⁰

Sprat also elaborated on the strict mental regimen of the experimental philosophy, stressing the importance of a clear and cultivated mind, noting how it was essential that the experimental practitioner “judge aright of himself; he must misdoubt the best of his own thoughts; he must be sensible of his own ignorance, if ever he will attempt to purge and renew his Reason.”⁴⁶¹ Such a strict and introspective regimen was necessary because the proper investigation of nature was not an easy process. The practitioner’s judgement, for example, was always in dangers of giving in to the fallacies of dogmatism and radical scepticism: “The first *Danger*,” Sprat explained, was “an *over-hasty*, and praecipitant concluding upon the *Causes*, before the *Effects* have been enough search’d into,” whilst “The second mischief” was an *eternal instability*, and *aversion* from assigning of any. This arises, from a violent, and imprudent hast to avoid the first.”⁴⁶² The solution to such flawed experimental behaviour,

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 33.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 341

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 335.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., p. 367.

⁴⁶² Ibid., p. 101, 106.

according to Sprat, was to pursue a delicate middle way between the two: “So easie is the passage from one extreme to another; and so *hard* it is, to stop in that little point, wherein the right does consist.”⁴⁶³ This epistemic *via media* fostered a mitigated sceptical approach which permitted “the advantage of probability to one Opinion, or Cause, above another” coupled with “a long forbearing of speculation...till the matters be ripe for it; and may not by madly rushing upon it in the very beginning.”⁴⁶⁴ Such a carefully regulated methodology produced better, less biased results, whilst also offering therapeutic effects of the experimenter. In Sprat’s view, then, the experimental philosophy was a kind of continuous discipline of the mind, instilling it with experimental habitual dispositions necessary for attaining truth.

John Hartcliffe’s Revision of the Aristotelian Virtues

This final section focuses on a text that reflects a set of issues to do with what I take to be the transformation, rather than demise of the traditional virtues of the intellect that have been examined throughout this chapter. The text in question is entitled *A Treatise of Moral and Intellectual Virtues*, published in 1691 by John Hartcliffe. Hartcliffe was a member of a group of Anglican ministers patronised by John Tillotson, all of whom were actively involved in the project of legitimising the Glorious Revolution. His *Treatise* was largely intended as a vindication of the moral righteousness made possible by the new regime.⁴⁶⁵ It also seems to have had some notoriety and was remembered in Thomas Birch’s *Life of Dr. John Tillotson* (1752) as “an excellent system of Ethics.”⁴⁶⁶

The interesting thing about this *Treatise* was its treatment of the intellectual virtues. Hartcliffe’s list included the traditional Aristotelian group of five: *ars, prudentia, intellectus,*

⁴⁶³ Ibid., p. 106.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 107

⁴⁶⁵ Tony Claydon, *William III and the Glorious Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 69.

⁴⁶⁶ Thomas Birch, *The Life of the Most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury* (London, 1752), p. 260.

scientia and sapientia. On the traditional conception, the first two – art and prudence – were the virtues of the practical and productive intellect, whereas the other three – intellect (or understanding), science and wisdom – were the virtues of the contemplative or speculative intellect.⁴⁶⁷ What Hartcliffe did was to take over the names of these virtues while completely changing their content. He did this by plundering Thomas Sprat's *History of the Royal Society* for the most relevant parts in his description of the virtues of the intellect.

As far as *art* was concerned, he adopted the polemical dichotomy found in English experimental works between the value of practical pursuits involved in the production of useful things and set the uselessness of metaphysical speculations.⁴⁶⁸ He therefore placed the arts and manufactures in contrast with:

the abstracted Ideas of Science, and the airey Notions of Metaphysicks; which are like the curious Argumetations, concerning quantity and motion in natural Philosophy; if they only hover aloof and are not squared to particular Matters, they may give an empty satisfaction, but no benefit, and rather serve to swell, than fill the Mind.⁴⁶⁹

In order to make a further point, that art cured idleness, Hartcliffe then takes over a whole passage from Sprat's *History* that elaborated on the way that experiments were "useful for the cure of mens minds." According to Sprat, experimenting was an industrious art that kept the mind busy with wholesome impressions, which is a sure way of ridding it of the bad impressions of the passions, all of which were ultimately due to the vice of idleness:

If we shall cast an eye on all the *Tempests*, which arise within our Breasts, and consider the causes, and remedies of all the violent *desires*, malicious *envies*, intemperate *joyes*, and irregular *griefs*, by which the lives of most men become *miserable*, or *guilty*: we shall find, that they are chiefly produc'd by

⁴⁶⁷ See Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Translated by David Ross and edited by Lesley Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), Book VI.

⁴⁶⁸ See Peter Anstey, "Experimental versus Speculative Natural Philosophy," in Peter R. Anstey and John A. Schuster (eds.), *The Science of Nature in the Seventeenth-Century: Patterns of Change in Early Modern Natural Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), pp. 215-242.

⁴⁶⁹ John Hartcliffe, *A Treatise of Moral and Intellectual Virtues* (London, 1691), p. 247.

Idleness, and may be most naturally cur'd by *diversion*. Whatever *Art* shall be able to busy the *minds* of men, with a constant cours of *innocent Works*, or to fill them with as vigorous, and pleasant Images, as those ill *impressions*, by which they are deluded; it will certainly have a surer effect on the composing, and purifying of their thoughts, than all the rigid praecepts of the Stoical, of the empty distinctions of the *Peripatetic Moralists*.⁴⁷⁰

Hartcliffe reproduced this passage quasi-verbatim (with the exception of 'Business' instead of 'diversion'), as he does the immediately following paragraph: "Now then it is required in that *Study*, which shall attempt according to the force of Nature, to cure the Diseases of the Mind; that it keep it from *idleness* by full and earnest Employments, and that it possess it with innocent, various, lasting, and even sensible Delights."⁴⁷¹

The notion that learning in general was an industrious activity able to cure sloth and to order, strengthen and refine all the capacities of the mind also features in Isaac Barrow's *Of Industry* (1693), in the chapter "Of Industry in our Particular Calling, as Scholars": the calling of a scholar, the most accomplished model of which is the biblical king Solomon, accords with "the general end of our being," which is "the perfection of our nature in its endowments, and the fruition of it in its best operations." It employed us in

those angelical operations of the soul, the contemplation of truth, and attainment of wisdom; which are the worthiest exercises of our reason, and sweetest entertainments of our mind; the most pretious wealth, and most beautifull ornaments of our soul; whereby our faculties are improved, are polished and refined, are enlarged in their power and use by habitual accessions: the which are conducive to our own greatest profit and benefit, as serving to rectify our wills, to compose our affections, to guide our lives in the ways of virtue, to bring us unto felicity.⁴⁷²

Here, too, as we have seen in Sprat and Hooke, and even Boyle, study was invested with the power of rectifying the mind's faculties, including the will and affections, and thus of

⁴⁷⁰ Thomas Sprat, *History of the Royal Society*, pp. 341-42.

⁴⁷¹ John Hartcliffe, *Treatise of Moral and Intellectual Virtues*, p. 254.

⁴⁷² Isaac Barrow, *Of Industry in Five Discourses* (London, 1693), pp. 162-63.

bringing the whole mind to a state of well-being which also accounted for its intellectual accomplishments.

In his discussion of *prudence*, Hartcliffe borrowed from Sprat a passage that followed the same line of contrasting the experimental life with that of the speculative philosophers, as well as with that of the empirics; this is the substance of Sprat's famous comparison between "the prudent," "the formal" and "the crafty":

Experimental Philosophy will prevent mens spending the strength of their thoughts about *Disputes*, by turning them to *Works*. [...] And indeed of the usual titles by which men of business are wont to be distinguish'd, the *Crafty*, the *Formal*, and the *Prudent*; The *Crafty* may answer to the *Empyric* in *Philosophy*; that is, he is such a one who has a great collection of particular *Experiences*, but knows not how to use them but to base and low ends. The *Formal* may be compar'd to the meer *Speculative Philosopher*: For he vainly reduces every thing to rave and solemn general *Rules*, without discretion, or mature deliberation. And lastly, the *Prudent* man is like him who proceeds on a constant and solid cours of *Experiments*.⁴⁷³

Again, Hartcliffe reproduced this passage quasi-verbatim, yet modified the first quoted sentence so that it spoke directly about the virtue of prudence: "*Prudence* will teach Men not to spend their thoughts about empty Contemplations, by turning them to the practices of a virtuous and an *useful life*."⁴⁷⁴ In his further clarifications of the other virtues, Hartcliffe's comments on *science* (*scientia*) is particularly noteworthy. For him, since science was a limited thing, and reason's role was to fairly assess these limits and not to presume to go beyond them, then modesty as to the prospects of science had to be coupled with knowledge of ourselves, which was the "best Science" that one could hope for. Here, again, Hartcliffe felt that there was no one who could speak better about such matters than Sprat. In the relevant passage, Sprat extolled both self-knowledge and the "modest, humble, friendly Vertues," as

⁴⁷³ Thomas Sprat, *History of the Royal Society*, p. 341.

⁴⁷⁴ Hartcliffe, *Treatise of Moral and Intellectual Virtues*, pp. 283-84.

well as one's capacity to be taught and to submit oneself to the judgement of others, as the virtues of a "True Philosopher" – again, in contrast with the vicious "Temper of mind" of the dogmatists.⁴⁷⁵ And *wisdom* had to be pitted against the same arch-enemy (the "system and models" of speculative philosophers) and was defined as the virtue of being directed to the "true End of Eternal Blessedness."⁴⁷⁶

In sum, Hartcliffe formally retained the traditional Aristotelian names of the virtues of the intellect but redefined them in keeping with material about the moral value of experimental inquiry taken over mainly from Sprat. Hartcliffe's unabashed borrowing, however, is not the point here. Rather, for the purposes of the arguments that have been put forward in this chapter, the interest here is that Hartcliffe felt that Sprat's reflections on the moral value of experimental inquiry could be understood in terms of the virtues of the intellect. The main features of these virtues as Hartcliffe saw them were: first, they rested on a valorisation of the practical and productive over the speculative; as a consequence; second, they were subsumed under the virtue of prudence; and third, that they were correlated with a governed mind; one that reason could govern both itself and the affections.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown how habit was a key part of several discourses of the new experimental philosophy that flourished in England during the second half of the seventeenth-century. It has attempted to contribute to recent scholarship in the cultural and intellectual history of science by demonstrating how the epistemological approaches and endeavours of the early Royal Society were, in part, pre-occupied with notions of habit, habitual

⁴⁷⁵ Sprat, *History of the Royal Society*, p. 34; Hartcliffe, *Treatise of Moral and Intellectual Virtues*, pp. 300-01.

⁴⁷⁶ Hartcliffe, *Treatise of Moral and Intellectual Virtues*, p. 303.

dispositions, as well as cultivating good experimental habitual behaviour – notions that exhibited both an epistemic and a moral dimension.

I have primarily drawn on recent work by Sorana Corneanu which has emphasised how the new emerging experimental philosophy was a vehicle for managing the passions, cleansing the faculties of error and of building moral, intellectual and religious virtue. What this chapter has shown, and what Corneanu's work does not give adequate coverage to, is that 'habit' and the process of 'habituation' were also crucial features of this mental rehabilitation and cultivation of virtue. Habits, properly cultivated, secured proper epistemic functioning and had therapeutic effects. They kept speculation in check and revealed the limitations of one's explanations. They functioned as a 'guardian' for the mind, keeping it in a constant 'regulation,' and only focused on the 'things themselves.' The experimental natural philosopher was required to possess them in order to carry out a proper investigation of nature and attain truth.

I have also suggested that the professed anti-dogmatic methodology of the early Royal Society – which was rooted in a mitigated sceptical approach to knowledge claims, as well as a commitment to the matters of fact – was informed by an early modern tradition of thought which was rooted in a regimen approach to the human mind. That approach was constructed, in part, upon a process of habituation – instilling good habits of experimentation that would guide the virtuous inquirer of nature. In many ways, the arguments that have been presented here support Corneanu's suggestion that the methodology of the Royal Society operated as a "method-as-internal-regimen" rather than a "method-as-formalized-procedure." They learned and lived, rather than followed, the rules for conducting experimental enquiry that were rooted in a conception of the virtues of the mind. Experimental inquiry was thus an "education of the mind" whereby the natural philosopher's investigation of nature was disciplined by

habitual dispositions: the habit of rightful examination and observation, the habit of regulating one's assent, and the habit of right judgement.⁴⁷⁷

It has also been shown, in the case of Robert Boyle, at least, that religion played a part in fashioning the persona of the experimental natural philosopher. A careful analysis of Boyle's *Christian Virtuoso* reveals how the "Sentiments of *Natural Religion*" or 'religious virtues' that were thought to be attained from the study of nature actually assumed an important epistemological relevance. One such example was the 'religious virtue' of 'humility' towards God which was analogous to the virtue of epistemic modesty since it made man acknowledge the limits of his knowledge of God's creation and thus regulated his assent.⁴⁷⁸ In this reading, then, we can see how religion could provide the natural philosopher with appropriate epistemological behaviour.

Above all else, it is clear that the new experimental philosophy was a complex and practical discipline. It must be understood not only as an epistemological category but also as a regimen of self-discipline. Such a regimen, as was noted in the beginning of this chapter, carried with it a paradoxical claim since is it not always clear from the literature whether it was the cultivation of the mind which made possible a reformed natural philosophy, or whether it was the practices of the experimental philosophy that constituted the cultivation of the mind. The answer perhaps lies somewhere between them. What is clear, however, is that the experimental philosophy was essentially a "devotional practice" which contributed to the moral and religious formation of the natural philosopher, placing them in a better position to not only attain the truths of nature, but also to receive Divine grace. Such an understanding was the standard position in the works of Robert Boyle, Robert Hooke and Thomas Sprat.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁷ Corneanu, *Regimens of the Mind*, p. 227, 229.

⁴⁷⁸ Boyle, *Christian Virtuoso*, p. 53.

⁴⁷⁹ Harrison, "Sentiments of Devotion...", p. 114.

More generally, we have also briefly seen how Sprat's talk of the "modest, humble, friendly Virtues," in other words the mental habits relevant to natural knowledge, made their way into Hartcliffe's *Treatise of Moral and Intellectual Virtues*.⁴⁸⁰ Such an occurrence was not the fruit of Hartcliffe's idiosyncrasies but rather the natural result of an early modern process of redefinition whereby the traditional intellectual virtues were replaced by a new, albeit less systematic and more diffusive, set of virtues of the mind relevant to the experimental pursuit of natural knowledge.

In the broader sense of the major intellectual themes that this thesis has unpacked thus far, we can now see how the experimental philosophy, as a discipline and as a regimen, fitted into a broader intellectual culture that focused on acquired habitual dispositions as way to neutralise the potential threats of not only the Fallen mind, but also civil strife that could be brought upon by faulty reasoning, poor judgement as well as disagreement. In chapter 1, we observed how John Wilkins attempted to solve the problem of right reason and the process of reasoning correctly with acquired habitual dispositions that would allow the individual to make right judgements, reason properly, and behave in accordance to God's natural laws. In a similar vein, chapter 2 showed how a group of moderate divines shared a comparable approach in matters of religion. They emphasised the importance of habitual dispositions that could strengthen the faith of the individual, enabling them to carry out their religious duties, apprehend religious truths, as well as understand the true end of faith. Likewise, this chapter has also demonstrated a similar theme, albeit in the context of the new experimental philosophy. We have seen that experimental natural philosophers such as Boyle and Hooke shared a parallel preoccupation with habit, and they drew upon the notion of acquired habitual dispositions in order to secure the experimental life. They were adamant that such habitual dispositions, once inculcated within the human mind, could moderate the epistemic behaviour

⁴⁸⁰ Sprat, *History of the Royal Society*, p. 33.

of the investigator. Habit thus formed a part of their rhetoric of modesty, communication of epistemological authority as well as securing assent. The next chapter will now show how John Locke essentially consolidated these several intellectual strands into a coherent programme of education and discipline.

Chapter 4

John Locke, Education, and Habitual Scepticism

By 1706, with the publication of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, and *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, John Locke had challenged the traditional philosophical view of custom as a wellspring of unthinking habit and had founded a novel epistemology on the idea of making habit's inherent educative power the object of social strategy, of disciplinary and moral cultures. This new approach of constructing and moulding subjects was, in effect, an attack on the conscience as too radical and too submissive and an effort to inculcate habitual dispositions that would replace the conscience and guide conduct.⁴⁸¹ Locke viewed habit not only as a site for the strategic, rather than chance reproduction of human understanding but also as a possible opportunity for cultivating improvement on a national scale – especially in children.

The purpose of this chapter is to present a re-reading of John Locke's work on education and his idea of the individual in light of the genealogy of habit that has been sketched out in the preceding three chapters. Although John Locke's educational curriculum has traditionally been viewed as aiming to create free citizens capable of independent thought, the centrality of habituation to his pedagogy has recently raised concerns that his educational curriculum was nothing more than indoctrination for compliant subjects. This chapter argues that by re-examining habituation in light of Locke's epistemology as well as the genealogy of habit detailed in this thesis, we find that Locke's education did aim at freedom, but that this freedom required a strong will and a cultivated habitual scepticism. It will be shown how

⁴⁸¹ See James Tully, *An Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), ch. 6.

the habits that Locke asked parents to instil were aimed not at programming specific behaviour, beliefs or opinions, like the approach of John Wilkins in chapter 2, the moderate divines in chapter 2, or the experimental philosophers in chapter 3, but rather at training children to cross their desires to strengthen their wills against the impositions of nature, custom, and fashion, which Locke argued posed a far more serious threat to independent thought than parental discipline. In other words, Locke's education aimed to cultivate a sceptical habitual disposition that permitted the individual to resist other sources of habit and to continually question and revise their own convictions.

Recent Lockean scholarship has also indicated that a reassessment of liberalism is underway which owes much to a concerted recovery of Locke's writings on education. This reading proposes that liberalism should no longer be seen to revolve exclusively around the atomistic, rights-bearing subject of a social-contract theory but also perceived to develop a nuanced account of a socially embedded subject, the product of early training in the family. However, the shift from what one scholar has called the "Teflon" subject of earlier understandings of liberalism to the "sticky" or socially embedded subject has largely served to reinforce earlier critiques of liberal autonomy as a fundamentally flawed ideal.⁴⁸² Since the Lockean subject, several scholars have contended, developed as a consequence of unreflective habits instilled by parents and educators in early childhood, its freedom was highly circumscribed and mostly took the form of consent to established parental-communal models of virtue.⁴⁸³ Whilst Locke separated political and paternal power in his political writings, paternal power, in these readings, remained essential to his vision of the liberal

⁴⁸² John Baltes, "Locke's Inverted Quarantine: Discipline, Panopticism, and the Making of the Liberal Subject," *Review of Politics* 75 (2013): p. 189, 191.

⁴⁸³ In addition to Baltes, see Joseph Carrig, "Liberal Impediments to Liberal Education: The Assent to Locke," *Review of Politics* 63, no. 1 (2001): pp. 41–76; David C. Durst, "The Limits of Toleration in John Locke's Liberal Thought," *Res Publica* 7 (2001): pp. 39–55; Robert Sumser, "John Locke and the Unbearable Lightness of Modern Education," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 26, no. 2 (October 1994): pp. 1–15; and Uday Singh Mehta, *The Anxiety of Freedom: Imagination and Individuality in Locke's Political Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

polity: it oversaw the creation of a subject allowed considerable latitude in the public sphere because their education, in the private sphere, ensured a predictable pattern of assent. This chapter proposes a modified interpretation of Locke's educational writings – within which I include not only *Some Thoughts concerning Education* (1693), the focus of recent commentary, but also the posthumously published *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* (1706) – and their implication for discipline, habituation, and liberal autonomy.⁴⁸⁴ In short, the main point that I want to stress is that the question that must be posed of Locke's educational writings is not why habits matter but which habits matter and whether these are as autonomy-friendly as Locke takes them to be. The arguments made in this chapter also supplement the recent powerful argument put forward by Timothy Stanton who, in what he has termed as “the fable of liberalism,” has examined the ways in which Locke was claimed by liberalism and refashioned in its image. Stanton's main conclusion that Locke was not a liberal or that his liberalism is not the same as modern secular liberalism suggests a different way of thinking about Locke.⁴⁸⁵ This chapter endeavours to do the same.

In the first part of this chapter, then, I summarise recent and past scholarship on Locke's educational writings, paying particular attention to the Foucauldian-disciplinarian reading of Locke, as well as explaining how the arguments presented in this chapter align with this substantial body of work. In the next part I show that early habituation in the *Education* primarily consisted of the experience of crossing one's desires which demonstrated

⁴⁸⁴ John Locke, *Some Thoughts concerning Education* and *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, ed. Ruth W. Grant and Nathan Tarcov (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1996). I will cite these separately as *STCE* and *CU*. Written in 1697, *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* was intended as an addition to (and the longest chapter of) a revised edition of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*. On the relationship of the educational writings to the *Essay*, see especially James L. Axtell's introduction to *The Educational Writings of John Locke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968); and Peter A. Schouls, *Reasoned Freedom: John Locke and Enlightenment* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 183–84. Ruth W. Grant and Benjamin R. Hertzberg also contend that it is important to consider the *Thoughts* in relation to the *Conduct*, and both works in relation to the *Essay*. See “Locke on Education,” in Matthew Stuart (ed.), *A Companion to Locke* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2016), 448–65.

⁴⁸⁵ See Timothy Stanton, “John Locke and the Fable of Liberalism,” *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 61, 3 (2018), pp. 597–622, p. 600, 621.

to young children the difference between their desires and their wills as well as the possibility of controlling the former with the latter. I then examine the role of parental authority in later childhood and adolescence, when the family was fortified to guard against the dangerous habituating influence of custom and fashion. I then trace the basis of these concepts in the *Essay*, where a strong will that was capable of suspending desire was an important prerequisite for the difficult task of reasoning. Finally, I then connect the sceptical disposition that Locke aimed at in the *Education* to the possibilities for adult intellectual freedom in a society governed by opinion and custom. The relationship between the *Education* and Locke's political theory that I hope will emerge from this re-examination of Lockean habituation is neither the Foucauldian-disciplinarian view that the *Education* supplied predictable, disciplined subjects for the liberal project, nor quite the traditional view that the *Education* was designed to instil the positive behaviours and beliefs necessary to sustain a limited government. Instead, it was limited government that permitted the *Education's* epistemic ends. While Lockean education supported the liberal order, the freedom at which it aimed went beyond the political liberty of the *Second Treatise* to the epistemic autonomy of the *Essay*. Epistemic autonomy was essentially individual rather than civic; in its most developed form, it allowed the individual to understand, invent, and discover ideas. The means to it was a childhood spent in an inward-oriented and even isolated family and an adult commitment to examining prevailing custom and fashion. The pedagogy in the *Education* did not reach as far as guaranteeing such an outcome, but it established the foundations of such liberty by cultivating a will capable of suspending desire and opening the door to reason. Locke's ultimate aim was to arm the child's mind with the discipline, scepticism, and modesty necessary to think clearly in the face of the hostile forces arranged against such thought.

Locke Scholars and Disciplinary Liberalism

For many years, the scholarly reading of Locke's writing on education emphasised its basic compatibility with the liberal political theory espoused in the *Two Treatises*. The need for education was implicit in Locke's deferral of liberty for children, who were not "born in" a state of equality but rather "born to it."⁴⁸⁶ Locke's pedagogical emphasis on habituation was noticed, but not thought to undermine Lockean liberty. Rather, scholars such as James Axtell, Peter Gay, and John Yolton compared it favourably with the prevailing methods against which Locke set out his advice – teaching good conduct by rules and subjects by rote.⁴⁸⁷ Co-opting children's wills by teaching them through games and adapting the curriculum to their understandings and inclinations was, not unreasonably, thought a more liberal experience than beating Latin grammar into them. Alex Neil reconciled the tension between habituation and liberty by arguing that, "A good education fosters autonomy and virtue through habituating the child...to reason."⁴⁸⁸ Moreover, as Nathan Tarcov pointed out, the *Education* filled a gap left in the *Two Treatises*, that allowed the family's private authority to inculcate virtue, a task necessary for the Lockean state but one neglected by its limited government.⁴⁸⁹

Recently, however, a growing number of scholars, especially those influenced, directly or indirectly, by Michel Foucault's account of the rise of modern disciplinary society in *Discipline and Punish*, have suggested that the liberty of the *Second Treatise* can only be properly understood in light of the pedagogy of the *Some Thoughts concerning Education*. Uday Mehta, Joseph Carrig, and John Baltes, for example, have argued that the non-coercive

⁴⁸⁶ John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, Peter Laslett, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), ch. VI

⁴⁸⁷⁴⁸⁷ See James Axtell, *The Educational Writings of John Locke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968); Peter Gay, *John Locke on Education* (New York, Teacher's College Bureau of Publications 1964); John Yolton, *John Locke and Education* (New York: Random House, 1971).

⁴⁸⁸ Alex Neil, "Locke on Habituation, Autonomy, and Education," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 27,. No. 2 (1989): pp. 236.

⁴⁸⁹ Nathan Tarcov, *Locke's Education for Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 182-3, 209.

politics of the first presupposes “the disciplinary subject” of the second, a subject whose education governs their demands and consent. According to Baltes, Locke’s educational prescriptions mobilised the insight that limited government required liberal subjects who “are made rather than found, constructed from the ground up by discipline.”⁴⁹⁰ As a result, Locke the educationist “entangles his subjects in an architecture of power of which they become bearers, a system of surveillance and power forming and norming those in its sway.”⁴⁹¹ Furthermore, Uday Mehta has argued that “while forging individuality, Locke simultaneously truncates its reach, its singularity, its independence,” and Joseph Carrig has concluded that “The implication to be drawn from Locke’s *Education* is...that liberalism is no less authoritarian than any other system.”⁴⁹² In fact, Carrig goes as far as to argue that the degree of authoritarianism and psychological manipulation demanded by Locke so thoroughly conditioned children through habituation by their parents and tutors that it amounted to “nothing more than indoctrination”:

Through the enforced repetition of desired behaviour and the constant association of this behaviour and its undesired counterpart with rewards and punishments, a ‘natural’ connection is established between the desire/will of the child and thoughts and actions determined by the father to be good.⁴⁹³

These interpretations of Locke, as Hina Nazar has recently commented, can be referred to as the “disciplinary reading of Locke, or the reading of Locke by the disciplinarians.” Those who interpret the ideal Lockean subject as being shaped by distinctively modern techniques of power, “relying less on the rod than on the subtle, often invisible, manipulation of infantile

⁴⁹⁰ See John Baltes, “Locke’s Inverted Quarantine: Discipline, Panopticism, and Making of the Liberal Subject,” *The Review of Politics* Vol. 75, No. 2 (March 2013): p. 191.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

⁴⁹² Uday Mehta, *Anxiety of Freedom: Imagination and Individuality in Locke’s Political Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 124; Joseph Carrig, “Liberal Impediments to Liberal Education: The Assent to Locke,” *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (Winter, 2001), p. 76.

⁴⁹³ Joseph Carrig, “Liberal Impediments,” p. 43, 52.

will and desire.”⁴⁹⁴ This disciplinary reading has replaced communitarianism as the most important criticism of liberalism at the present, and it has the potential to be far more damaging because it does not presuppose a straw-man version of the liberal subject: it, in fact, concedes to liberalism a more nuanced account of selfhood and subjectivity than did communitarianism. John Baltes, for example, has written that, “There are no ‘Teflon’ subjects here [in Lockean liberalism], detached from the background of discipline, autonomously choosing as they slide effortlessly past their entanglements.”⁴⁹⁵ Rather, the aim of Locke’s educative programme was “the construction of a ‘sticky subject’ who would govern desire with a virtuous character inculcated by his parents and tutors.” The subject is sticky because their education has instilled indelible habits in them from the onset of subjectivity. Instructed and moulded before rational choice is available, these habits place the child in a network of parental and communal values, of which they become the unwitting bearer. Their immersion is then reinforced, the disciplinarian reading argues, by Locke’s emphasis on early obedience to parental and paternal will, and by the importance they attach to reputational concerns as an instrument of education. On these readings, Locke’s crucial advice is that the educator should replace rewards and beatings with public reputation and shame as new cornerstones of education as they seek to ensure that the child adopts their community’s virtues – as Uday Mehta has described it: “Locke’s ostensibly liberal and compassionate program is counterbalanced by the demand that the child internalize the standards—the anguishing standards—of shame, guilt, and responsibility.”⁴⁹⁶ As a result, the Lockean child’s will, Joseph Carrig suggests, is not their own but is actually “directed by ‘other People’s Reason,’ a ‘public’ reason ‘communicated’ to him by the ‘paternal’ power.”⁴⁹⁷ Baltes does, however,

⁴⁹⁴ Hina Nazar, “Locke, Education, and “Disciplinary Liberalism,”” *Review of Politics*, Vol. 79, (2017), p. 218. It’s worth pointing out that Nazar borrows the term “disciplinary liberalism” from Baltes.

⁴⁹⁵ Baltes, “Locke’s Inverted Quarantine,” p. 191.

⁴⁹⁶ Uday Mehta, *Anxiety of Freedom*, p. 142.

⁴⁹⁷ Carrig, “Liberal Impediments,” p. 71.

concede a minimal degree of liberty to the Lockean subject in his reading, but is keen to stress that this subject is “free” only in the sense that as an agent, he chooses to follow the model of virtue promoted by the parent. Baltes inevitably comes to the conclusion that we must relinquish autonomy as “the gold standard of liberalism.”⁴⁹⁸

Hina Nazir has recently criticised the disciplinarian reading – whilst she concedes that there are elements in *Some Thought concerning Education* that are tinged with authoritarianism, she argues that the disciplinarians are wrong to view such elements as necessary entailments of Locke’s liberalism. Against the contention that Locke’s liberalism was built on an illiberal foundation, she has proposed that the *Thoughts* is “a divided text, torn between two understandings of education, with different implications for freedom as the goal of education.”⁴⁹⁹ These divisions, according to Nazir, are derived on the extent to which Locke viewed education as a child-responsive project, shaped by the reason of the pupil, as well as by an understanding of childhood as a distinct phase of human life. A child-responsive approach is widely taken to constitute Locke’s principal educational innovation: both Locke’s defenders and critics interpret him as marking a radical shift from the earlier Augustinian paradigm of childhood, which placed children on-par with unreformed adults, and interpreted education as a forcible weeding out of sin. Nevertheless, vestiges of earlier approaches, such as those transmuted by Puritanism and Protestantism, continued to populate *Some Thoughts concerning Education*.⁵⁰⁰ Hugh Cunningham’s review of the Protestant literature on childhood, for example, in his *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500* (1995) sounds very much like a summary of the aspects of Locke’s *Thoughts*. The model Protestant child, Cunningham observes, was the product of

⁴⁹⁸ Bales, “Locke’s Inverted Quarantine,” p. 191.

⁴⁹⁹ Hina Nazir, “Locke, Education, and Disciplinary Liberalism,” p. 219.

⁵⁰⁰ See C. John Sommerville, *The Discovery of Childhood in Puritan England* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1992); Ann Scott Macleod, “Reappraising the Puritan Past,” *Children’s Literature*, Vol. 21, 1993, pp. 179-184.

training by parents from an early age in good habits. The analogies and metaphors, which pervade [Protestant] books are not ones of natural growth, but of horticulture, of preparing good soil, of rooting out weeds, of training young shoots in the direction you want them to go; or they are of the instilling of obedience into puppies or colts. Left to themselves, children will turn out bad. Their wills must be broken...So far as possible this training should be done rationally and calmly, but there might be occasion for inflicting corporal punishment; if so, it must not be too severe, and it must not be administered in anger.⁵⁰¹

Likewise, W. M. Spellman has emphasised Locke's indebtedness to the Puritan belief in natural depravity.⁵⁰² Such elements are implicit in Locke's periodic anxiety about children's "unruly and disordered appetites," which must be "silenced" as early as possible, and in his argument, early on in the *Thoughts*, that the child's will must be brought to conform near-automatically to parental will. Children, according to Locke, had to be taught to "deny their appetites...by the custom of having their inclinations in subjection." They had to be accustomed "early to silence their desires" and to learn "the art of stifling their desires as soon as they rise up in them."⁵⁰³ The interconnection between silencing desire and obeying parents originated from Locke's belief, espoused in the *Thoughts* and *Essay*, that children lacked the reason to reflect upon desire or control it, and it was only in obedience to their educators that they could, in effect, practise the adult virtue of self-command. Hina Nazir has described this nexus in Locke's thought as the "adult-imitative paradigm of education" – an inheritance from Augustinian/Protestant writings in which Locke effectively blurred the line between childhood and adulthood by identifying adult self-command as an appropriate goal of early

⁵⁰¹ Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 47.

⁵⁰² See W. M. Spellman, *John Locke and the Problem of Depravity* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988).

⁵⁰³ John Locke, *STCE*, p. 39, 118, 120.

childhood education and the child's will as the primary focus of education. This had to be bent into adult shape in the hope that such self-command became a lifelong habit.⁵⁰⁴

Unsurprisingly, then, habituation is a key theme of the *Essay*, as it is of the *Conduct* and the *Thoughts*. In the *Essay*, Locke focused on the bad mental habits that prohibited individuals from thinking clearly and independently, especially the erroneous association of ideas that had no connection:

some independent *Ideas*, of no alliance to one another, are by Education, Custom, and the constant din of their Party, so coupled in [men's] Minds, that they appear there together. ...This gives Sence to *Jargon*, Demonstration to Absurdities, and Consistency to Nonsense, and is the foundation of the greatest, I had almost said, of all the Errors in the World.⁵⁰⁵

If the *Essay* focused on bad habits, then the educational writings presented the good ones. The importance that Locke attributed to education was derived from his sense that it had the potential to cultivate “autonomy-friendly” habits.⁵⁰⁶ Without the right kind of education, Locke believed that habits would still be formed but that they would be formed heteronomously – without due regard to the duty to exercise one's power of freedom. Recent studies have focused on this aspect of Locke's thought, identifying him as a pragmatist who looked to education to reinvent custom and habituation in an autonomy-friendly direction. Mark E. Button, for example, has argued that Locke's response “to the conditions of habits and custom is not an inquiry into how these extrarational features might be extirpated from the calculus of social and political order but, more pragmatically, how these necessary characteristics of political society might be given a different structure and different purpose.”⁵⁰⁷ Furthermore, Jad Smith has suggested that for Locke, “the relentless occurrence

⁵⁰⁴ Hina Nazar, “Locke, Education, and Disciplinary Liberalism,” p. 220.

⁵⁰⁵ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 2.33.18. Cited from here on as *ECHU*.

⁵⁰⁶ Hina Nazar, “Locke, Education, and Disciplinary Liberalism,” p. 225.

⁵⁰⁷ Mark E. Button, *Contract, Culture, and Citizenship: Transformative Liberalism from Hobbes to Rawls* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), p. 164.

of social reproduction – whether delivered of necessity, desire, dependence, indifference, or reason – always bears with it moral and social consequences. In an attempt to shape these consequences, Locke undertakes the transvaluation of custom.”⁵⁰⁸ Ruth Grant has observed that Locke astutely recognised that “there is no escape from custom’s power...The only possibility for improvement is to enlist custom’s power in the service of reason’s authority.”⁵⁰⁹

Such scholarship offers a valuable counterpoint to the disciplinary reading of Locke which views habituation as fundamental by contradictory to Locke’s liberal project. However, it is worth noting that Grant, Smith and Button do not consider in detail the habits that matter to Locke as an educationist. In the two most extended discussions of these issues, Alex Neil and Peter Schouls have suggested that Lockean education sought to habituate children to reason and self-mastery.⁵¹⁰ Neil argued that Locke was especially interested in training children’s understandings, since only through such training can the individual exercise self-mastery. Such training, according to Neill, was not opposed to autonomy since Locke believed that the mind had to be influenced by the outside world, including by other people, in order for reason to develop. Schouls also interpreted the influence of the educator to be fundamentally benign, arguing that it was parental reason rather than parental will which directed the child: “Since it is the parents’ reason that forces the child to the freedom of rational action, it is, in effect, reason that is the child’s teacher.”⁵¹¹ In this reading, parental reason must ensure, above all else, that the child developed the habit of moderating pressing desires: “At the age when children are still incapable of rational examination, they can be

⁵⁰⁸ Jad Smith, “Custom, Association, and the Mixed Mode: Locke’s Early Theory of Cultural Reproduction,” *ELH* 73, no. 4 (2006): pp. 831-853, p. 832, 845.

⁵⁰⁹ Ruth Grant, “John Locke on Custom’s Power and Reason’s Authority,” *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 74, No. 4 (Fall 2012): pp. 607-629, p. 621.

⁵¹⁰ Peter Schouls, *Reasoned Freedom: John Locke and Enlightenment* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992); Alex Neil, “Locke on Habituation, Autonomy, and Education,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 27, No. 2 (1989): pp. 225-45.

⁵¹¹ Schouls, *Reasoned Freedom*, p. 217.

conditioned to suspend action on desire through the process of denying them immediate gratification.”⁵¹²

Locke's Programme of Education

The general aim of Locke's programme of education, as we have seen with many of his contemporaries in previous chapters, was to seek the health of both body and mind. While the health of the body occupied a generous introductory portion of *Some Thoughts concerning Education*, where medical and moral considerations combined to support prescriptions towards the achievement of bodily temperance and strength, the majority of the work, together with most of Locke's *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, were devoted to the health and virtue of the mind. Excellence of both character and intellect was a matter of “set[ting] the *Mind* right, that on all Occasions it may be disposed to consent to nothing, but what may be suitable to the Dignity and Excellence of a rational Creature.”⁵¹³ The process of education involved both desires and judgement as well as cultivation of the human faculties, which could bring “the powers of the mind to perfection.”⁵¹⁴

The main methodology that Locke proposed to that end was the gradual habituation of the mind toward self-mastery and right reasoning by means of constant, initially tutored but gradually self-assumed, practice.⁵¹⁵ Furthermore, an important part of that habituation was a steady orientation of the mind which was achieved by means of the development of a ‘love’ or ‘relish’ for truth and moral virtue.⁵¹⁶ The great secret of education, according to Locke, was to harmonise discipline and freedom, or the mastery over one's immediate

⁵¹² Ibid., p.211.

⁵¹³ John Locke, *STCE*, p. 32

⁵¹⁴ John Locke, *CU*, p. 158.

⁵¹⁵ See Alex Neil, “Locke on Habituation, Autonomy and Education”, *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. xxvii (1989), pp. 225-45; Paul Schuurman, “Locke's Way of Ideas as Context for his Theory of Education in *Of The Conduct of the Understanding*”, *History of European Ideas*, vol. xxvii (2001): pp. 45-59.

⁵¹⁶ For more information on this, see Tully, *An Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Contexts*, ch. 6.

appetites and the keeping of a “Child’s Spirit, easy active and free.”⁵¹⁷ Against two of the most frequent, yet terribly corrupting, parental methods of his time (beating and flattering), Locke proposed the employment of “Esteem and Disgrace” as a guide and an incentive to the child’s education into a love of virtue.⁵¹⁸ The middle ground between discipline and freedom was expressed in the development of an “inward civility,” which was a habitual disposition of the mind built by means of “Credit and Commendation.”⁵¹⁹

The focus of the *Thoughts* was on early childhood education and rested on the fundamental insight of Locke’s epistemology that the key to proper education was about paying close attention to how one learns rather than the content of what one studies. The emphasis in the *Thoughts* is on learning through experience and development of habits encouraging rational self-control of one’s appetitive desires. Locke presented the establishment of these mental habits in youth as both a preventative measure to avoid the unfounded association of ideas in error and prejudice, and as originally relatively unreflective practices that would hopefully develop over time into the basis for rational, unconscious activity. Locke opened the *Thoughts* with the admission that his collected reflections on education were not originally intended “for public view,” but had become convinced to publish them only once he became convinced that they “might be of some use if made more public.”⁵²⁰ From the private correspondence with his friend Edward Clarke, in which he proposed an educational regime for that gentleman’s son, Locke concluded that the “method here proposed” had much more general application than that for which it was initially designed. One of the most prominent features about Locke’s method from the outset is the extent to which it emphasised the deep underlying connection between physical and mental

⁵¹⁷ John Locke, *STCE*, p. 112.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 125-6.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, “Dedication,” p.7.

education: “A sound mind in a sound body is a short but full description of a happy state in this world.”⁵²¹

The solid foundation of a sound body trained to endure physical hardship provided support for Locke’s later recommendation for a general method of education. However, whereas the key for physical development was to avoid corrupting customs that encouraged delicate sensibilities, Locke indicated that the most important, and potentially dangerous, issue in mental development related to proper punishments and rewards. Use of incorrect rewards and punishment would undermine any system of education, much like proper rewards and punishments were the irreplaceable instruments for correct socialisation. The reason behind Locke’s effort to direct early education toward proper socialisation involved replacing the ubiquitous practice of corporal punishment with a new system of incentives based on esteem and disgrace. In short, Locke rejected the “rough discipline of the rod,” which was the “ordinary way of education” on the grounds that it provided no positive reinforcement for good conduct and the inculcation of good habits and habitual dispositions.⁵²²

The *Thoughts* also contained Locke’s most complete account of human development, especially the development of the will, which detailed the importance of the intervention of a single, coherent, and personal authority to direct the will at the beginning in order for the will to be self-directing afterwards. Furthermore, the intervention of parents in the development of the child’s will was especially important for taming his “love of dominion” and ensuring a correct approach to habituation. Although Locke had gone to great lengths to diminish the power of parents over children in the *Second Treatise*, the *Education* reversed the parental position, extending them “absolute power” and instructing that “children, when little, should look upon their parents as their lords, their absolute governors; and, as such,

⁵²¹ Ibid., p. 1.

⁵²² Ibid., p. 74.

stand in awe of them.”⁵²³ The reason for Locke’s abrupt reversal was two-fold: first, that personal authority in childhood was necessary for independence of mind in adulthood; second, that the personal authority of parents in particular was required to shield against all the competing authorities to which children were exposed. The *Thoughts* was, therefore, in a sense as much an education for adults as it was for children – requiring parents to reform their own conduct in order to attain the elusive but momentous authority that was to be their only source of influence with their children.

Many scholars have assumed that Locke’s idea of habituation was that the child was to be made to practise a predetermined set of ‘liberal’ behaviours and opinions until their own natural predilections was overcome, and they took their habituation for their own nature, emerging from their education with a kind of “liberal gentlemanly automation.”⁵²⁴ Furthermore, such scholars tend to differ in their ideas of the kind of freedom which they claim that Locke denied. Baltes, for example, argues that Lockean education permitted “liberty,” since the pupil observes norms voluntarily instead of by coercion, but not “autonomy,” since their compliance is pre-determined by habituation.⁵²⁵ For Mehta, Locke foreclosed the freedom of unbounded imagination and “self-expression:”

The attempt to regiment [the imagination], to prescribe and standardise its content, to make it submit to conventional authority...In Locke’s rationality and the means for its inculcation, such as his pedagogy, function to close off forms of individual self-expression, to raise barriers against the eccentric; they are deployed to construct, consolidate, and impose a norm of ‘normality.’⁵²⁶

⁵²³ Ibid., 39, 41.

⁵²⁴ Rita Koganzon, “Fathers and Sovereigns: The Uses of Paternal Authority in Early Modern Thought,” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2016), p. 178.

⁵²⁵ Baltes, “Locke’s Inverted Quarantine,” p. 179, 190-191.

⁵²⁶ Mehta, *Anxiety of Freedom*, pp. 10-11.

Carrig has argued that “the free mind is one that is purified of external influence,” but given Locke’s empiricism, such insulation from the external world is impossible and all but the most rudimentary sensations require external influence.⁵²⁷

However, upon a close examination of the first sections of the *Education*, it is clear that Lockean habituation was not as straightforward a matter as the use of adult authority to praise children for whatever was considered good behaviour and punish them for waywardness until they reflexively demonstrated desirable behaviour. Locke’s estimation of habit was very much profoundly ambivalent. In the *Conduct of the Understanding*, which was written initially to be appended to the *Essay* as a guide to overcoming intellectual errors, Locke warned that:

Many men firmly embrace falsehood for truth; not only because they never thought otherwise; but also because, thus blinded as they have been from the beginning, they never could think otherwise; at least without a vigour of mind able to contest the empire of habit, and look into its own principles.⁵²⁸

Habit, according to Locke, was plainly the enemy of freedom and the tension running through Locke’s educational and epistemological writings was that the vigour of mind necessary to “contest the empire of habit” was itself developed by means of habit. Furthermore, it is also worth noting that both Baltes and Carrig draw on this passage to claim that Lockean education aimed to “construct an ‘empire of habit’ governing conduct,” an odd conclusion given that the above passage seems to show that Locke exhorted the opposite.⁵²⁹ The highest form of freedom that Locke sought to establish was what Alex Neil has usefully described as “epistemic freedom,” which required a will strong enough to resist both the importunities of

⁵²⁷ Carrig, “Liberal Impediments,” pp. 65-67.

⁵²⁸ John Locke, *CU*, p. 41.

⁵²⁹ Baltes, “Locke’s Inverted Quarantine,” p. 176; Carrig, “Liberal Impediments,” p. 49.

nature and those of society.⁵³⁰ The development of such a will was, in a sense, the main aim of Lockean education.⁵³¹

Further investigation of the habits and habitual dispositions which Locke recommended in the *Education*, soon reveals that they are actually counter habits and dispositions – intended to undo those habits which nature and fashion had instilled on their own. The goal of early habituation, therefore, was not to programme desirable and foreclose future undesirable behaviour, much like the approach of leading intellectuals in previous chapters, but rather to inculcate physical and mental flexibility – a combination of scepticism and humility necessary to overcome the countervailing forces of self-love and “obstinacy” and to permit the individual to continually question and revise their own opinions.⁵³² Such an intellectual disposition was a habit in a certain sense, but one which obstructed predictability rather than dictating it.

Lockean habits, consequently, were neither as substantive or as subjugating as the Foucauldian-disciplinarians have alleged, but were rather aimed at the paradoxical habit, or habitual disposition, of having no habits. What habituation primarily consisted of, then, was the repeated experience of crossing one’s desires, which would demonstrate to the child the difference between their desires and their wills, and the possibility of controlling the former with the latter.⁵³³

Habit and Habituation in the *Education*

The first sections of the *Education* dealt primarily with the instruction of the body and marked Locke’s first engagement with the place of nature in human development. In these sections,

⁵³⁰ See Alex Neill, “Locke on Habituation, Autonomy, and Education,” esp. pp. 227-245.

⁵³¹ See Koganzon, “Fathers and Sovereigns: The Uses of Paternal Authority in Early Modern Thought,” p. 548.

⁵³² Tarcov, *Locke’s Education for Liberty*, p. 85.

⁵³³ See Koganzon, “Fathers and Sovereigns: The Uses of Paternal Authority in Early Modern Thought,” p. 548.

Locke suggested that the child could be made maximally flexible by habitual exposure to discomfort: “Our bodies will endure anything, that from the beginning they are accustomed to.”⁵³⁴ Children were to go out with wet feet in winter, subsist on the plainest food and to have no regular meal times.⁵³⁵ Whilst this regimen was aimed at accustoming the child to pain and discomfort, Locke recommended two other forms of physical habituation in these sections that would enhance the child’s comfort – a regular sleeping schedule and regular bowel movements to prevent constipation.⁵³⁶ What all these varied recommendations had in common is that they ran contrary to the habits that a child naturally developed if left to their own devices to pursue pleasures and avoid pains.

Children naturally seek warmth and dryness, tasty and ample food, and they habituate themselves to enjoying them. In order to counteract this, Locke directed parents to pre-empt and break the habits that formed from these natural pleasures. By contrast bowel movements and bedtimes are things that children do not naturally make habitual on their own. They prefer to remain awake for “the unhealthy and unsafe hours of debauchery, which are those of the evenings” and, “being usually intent on their play and very heedless of anything else, often let pass those motions of natures, when she calls them but gently.”⁵³⁷ When it came to useful but unpleasant activities that children naturally avoided, Locke demanded that parents regularised “motions that were not perfectly voluntary,” as he tactfully described them.⁵³⁸ Where habit implied itself naturally, Locke directed parents to break it, but where it did not, he instructed them to introduce it. In both cases, this kind of calculated habit opposed what the child desired. Read in this light, Locke’s habituation comes across actually as counter-habitation since uninstructed nature instilled its own habits.

⁵³⁴ John Locke, *STE*, p. 5.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8, 13-16.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-23.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 21, 27.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

What is striking about Locke's idea of habituation is that he did not ask parents to inculcate any particular opinion or lifelong behaviour in children by means of habit. Rather than being habituated into a specific profession, political conviction, or doctrinal confession, Locke's pupil was offered the rudiments of a wide range of ideas, opinions, and occupations. They were taught skills otherwise beneath their class like carpentry and gardening, as well as others like bookkeeping and law that were more suitable for gentleman.⁵³⁹ The pupil, perhaps surprisingly, was to come away with few particular political opinions. The *Education* itself was silent on contemporary political polemics, recommending only that the child be made familiar with ancient literature, ancient and modern natural law, and English law.⁵⁴⁰ Locke elsewhere recommended political texts, but in a letter to a 36-year old man rather than a child. There, he included his own *Two Treatises*, along with Greek and Roman philosophers, modern natural lawyers, Whig histories, and the sermons of broad churchmen. This was a notable contrast to Hobbes's recommendation that students absorb primarily the principles of his *Leviathan*, a strategy that was perhaps closer to an indoctrinating education than Locke's suggestions.⁵⁴¹

Even in religion, Locke, in the same vein as the moderate divines, avoided doctrine. He recommended that the child be taught a simple axiom about God's existence and power:

There ought very early to be imprinted on his mind a true notion of God as of the independent supreme Being, Author, and Maker of all things, from whom we receive all our good, who loves us, and gives us all things: and, consequent to this, instil into him a love and reverence of this supreme Being. This is enough to begin with, without going to explain matter any farther.”⁵⁴²

⁵³⁹ Ibid., p. 187, 202-205, 210-211.

⁵⁴⁰ For more information, see John Locke, “Some Thoughts Concerning Reading and Study for a Gentleman” in James Axtell, *Educational Writings*, pp. 397-404.

⁵⁴¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 31, 41.

⁵⁴² John Locke, *STCE*, p. 136.

In order to ensure that this teaching directed the child towards Christianity, Locke also added that the pupil “should learn perfectly by heart...the Lord’s prayer, the creed, and ten commandments,” but they should not be asked to read the Bible itself or any theology, which will only confuse them.⁵⁴³ It could be argued that failing to habituate a child to religious practice and doctrine early on was itself a way of inculcating indifference or even irreligion, but Locke’s caution with respect to religion arose from his efforts to balance the necessity against the danger of habituation precisely to “prevent the undue connexion of ideas in the minds of young people.”⁵⁴⁴

The danger of early exposure to theology was that children’s “yet tender minds should receive early impressions of goblins, spectres, and apparitions.”⁵⁴⁵ Once such fears were inspired in a child, they would then develop a chain of habitual associations among spirits, the dark, and danger that would eventually harden into phobias that were nearly impossible to extirpate, even for those who eventually came to understand, as most people did, that there were no goblins lying in wait for them at night.⁵⁴⁶ It is worth noting that this example also appeared in the *Essay* in a chapter (2.33.10) that Uday Mehta has taken to be exemplary of Locke’s equation of individuality with “madness” and thus his desire to suppress such aberrant thought processes. What Mehta has missed here is that Locke was in fact arguing that such irrational associations were not marks of individuality, but rather acquired mental habits, which had themselves been “normalized.”⁵⁴⁷

Thus, to become an individual driven by occult fears was a kind of habit, but the kind that Locke wanted to avoid precisely because it was particular and concrete – it was based on a false chain of mental associations that prevented individuals from thinking clearly and

⁵⁴³ Ibid., p. 157.

⁵⁴⁴ John Locke, *ECHU*, 2.33.10

⁵⁴⁵ John Locke, *STCE*, p. 191.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 138, 191.

⁵⁴⁷ Mehta, *Anxiety of Freedom*, pp. 104-118.

associating ideas logically.⁵⁴⁸ At the same time, Locke was worried that without any introduction to the ideas of God and salvation, the child would reflexively lapse into materialism since “matter being a thing that all our senses are constantly conversant with, it is so apt to possess the mind, and exclude all other beings but matter.” Furthermore, this “prejudice...often leaves no room for the admittance of spirits, or the allowing any such things as immaterial being...when yet it is evident, that by mere matter and motion, none of the great phaenomena of nature can be resolved.”⁵⁴⁹ In sum, if teaching a child religion in too much detail formed the foundation for their future fear of the dark and if on the other hand teaching them too little turned them into an unthinking materialist – then they will have been habituated in exactly the way that Locke’s education tried so much to avoid. Again, Locke here was taking a similar approach to that of the moderate divines: he was far more interested in the kinds of habitual dispositions that would strengthen religion and one’s faith, rather than getting entangled in the intricacies of them that could potentially be divisive.

In a sense, this comes across as paradoxical: that habituation was the basic method that underlined Lockean education, but its subject was not habituated to do or believe anything in particular. The subject was taught to be flexible, civil, and accommodating of others, but few ways of life or opinions were actually foreclosed to them. The reason for this was because Locke did not enjoin habituation in the straightforward sense of inculcating fixed conduct for life. It was never his aim to raise a subject who never stayed up past dark or enjoyed wine or company. Rather, the habits he prescribed for children were only to be practised only during childhood; it was their intellectual residue that Locke hoped would remain with the adult.

⁵⁴⁸ John Locke, *ECHU*, 2.33.7-10.

⁵⁴⁹ John Locke, *STCE*, p. 191.

The principle governing early habituation, then, was that every habit, whether it countered a natural desire or a natural aversion, contributed to the development of the child's capacity for "self-denial," which Locke described as itself a "habit" that is "contrary to unguided nature" but was "the true foundation of future ability and happiness...to be wrought into the mind, as early as may be, even from the first dawnings of any knowledge or apprehension in children."⁵⁵⁰ Self-denial was not inculcated for its own sake, or for the neo-stoic goal of minimising desires, but because the experience of having their desires denied was foundationally educative for the child: it taught them to distinguish between their desires and their will by showing them that none of their spontaneous desires were strictly necessary, at least not in the sense of requiring immediate gratification. Locke's detailed regimen for regulating bowel movements, strange as it may seem, demonstrates just how important it was not to assume the necessity of even our most basic physical desires since even these may be amenable to control by the will.⁵⁵¹ Thus, the child who was permitted to follow their earliest and apparently most 'natural' desires and aversions missed precisely that experience of feeling their will as a faculty separable from their desire, and so risked mistaking every mere desire for a natural necessity. Furthermore, Locke did not deny that natural necessity existed, "but yet, the more children can be inured to hardships of this kind, by a wise care to make stronger in body and mind, the better it will be for them...Parents being but too apt of themselves to incline, more than they should, to the softer side."

In other words, for Locke, the experience of habituation acquainted the child with the possible strength of their wills and the lack of necessity in their desires - the child's spontaneous development was not especially bestial or in need of suppression.⁵⁵² However, spontaneous development usually failed to disclose the child to equally natural but higher

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 45, 33; see also 36, 38, 75.

⁵⁵¹ For example, see *ibid.*, p. 18, 33, 107.

⁵⁵² Ibid., p. 63, 107.

possibilities in themselves – particularly the capacity of their wills to suppress their desires – while the experience of being habituated and forced to cross their desires revealed them. One important error in the Foucauldian reading of Lockean education is that it has presumed that the spontaneous nature of a child is free, and habituation itself is “denaturing.”⁵⁵³ Yet Locke thought that habits that obstructed our liberty crept in as much from spontaneous nature as from conventional sources, and that such habits made one’s desires appear as compulsions more effectively than the conventional habits that one’s parents tried to instil into them, or that they try to instil in themselves. Natural habits slipped in unnoticed, whilst learning conventional habits was always a painful process. In this sense, Locke’s retort about costiveness that “people are very loose, have seldom strong thoughts” was not entirely in jest.⁵⁵⁴ The strength of will necessary to control one’s bowels was not altogether unlike that necessary to resist the power of fashion and custom and direct one’s thoughts according to reason instead.

Authority and Rebellion in the *Education*

The basic experience of dissonance between will and desire forced the child to wonder what they should desire, and it was this puzzle, Locke believed, that motivated the development of reason. At first, such dissonance required straightforward imposition by parents in order to demonstrate that desires could be crossed. But as children aged, Locke encouraged parents to relax their “absolute” authority into “friendship.” The early imposition of parental authority was required to make flexibility possible in the child but the gradual relaxation of this authority was as necessary as its initial imposition. This was due to the fact that the primary threat to the will later in childhood was no longer natural inclination mistaken for necessity, but “the law of fashion and reputation” by which “the greatest part” of mankind “govern

⁵⁵³ See Mehta, *Anxiety of Freedom*, pp. 161-164.

⁵⁵⁴ John Locke, *STCE*, p. 23.

themselves chiefly, if not solely...and so they do that, which keeps them in Reputation with their Company, little regarding the Laws of God, or the Magistrate.”⁵⁵⁵

In order to protect children against the danger of early submission to fashion and custom, Locke encouraged an intensely inward-oriented and even socially isolated family life grounded in mutual affection between parents and children. Such a family, Locke hoped, discouraged the child from seeking esteem elsewhere and created a family culture that stood in contrast to the fashions and customs of broader society. When the child eventually entered society, the familial education they had received would act as another source of dissonance for them, demonstrating that there were alternatives to fashion and the prevailing opinions of society, forcing them to weigh their relative merits. Even though Locke used parental authority in childhood to counteract competing authorities, first those of nature and then of fashion – that threatened to habituate the child, he also took advantage of children’s natural dislike of being ruled to soften parental authority from command into advice, producing an adult who ordered their desires according to their own understanding.⁵⁵⁶

That Locke expected children to rebel against their parents may come across as a shock considering his strong statement about the “absolute” authority which he expected parents to wield, and the “fear and awe” in which children should regard them.⁵⁵⁷ However, Locke also added that: “Fear and awe ought to give you the first power over their minds, and love and friendship in riper years to hold it: for the time must come, when they will be past the rod and correction.”⁵⁵⁸ Since Locke’s aim was a strong will that was capable of suspending its desires, he was careful not to prescribe pedagogical measures that weakened the will, no matter how useful such measures might have been for promoting docility.

⁵⁵⁵ John Locke, *ECHU*, 2.28.12.

⁵⁵⁶ See Rita Kogazon, “Fathers and Sovereigns: The Uses of Paternal Authority in Early Modern Thought,” p. 550.

⁵⁵⁷ John Locke, *STCE*, pp. 41-2.

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

Locke warned that frequent beatings, “chidings,” and humiliations would result in “dejection,” as well as a sense that one’s will was entirely ineffectual in carrying out desires, and a subsequent loss of desire itself.⁵⁵⁹ The dejected child would appear to be master of themselves to adults, since with their “unnatural sobriety he may please silly people, who commend tame inactive children,” but this would’ve been because they had mistaken their desire that children be inactive for the child’s own desire to be so.⁵⁶⁰ Consequently, the task of paternal authority in middle childhood was no longer to turn the will, or the child’s conduct, against their desires, but rather to co-opt the most potent of their desires, their love of self-esteem, before anyone else could: “Esteem and disgrace are, of all others, the most powerful incentives to the mind...which I took on as the great secret of education.”⁵⁶¹

The difficulty was that nearly anyone in a position to bestow esteem could effectively exercise authority over a child, and “servants, and other ill-ordered children” posed a particularly “great danger.”⁵⁶² Their authority was either irresponsible or malicious: servants were not held to account for children’s educations, and other children, who lacked understanding of their own, were simply vectors for the transmission of fashion. The danger with placing children under such conditions was so great that Locke warned against schools because the sheer preponderance of the young undermined adult authority and replaced it with the tyranny of other children, whose “misbecoming and disingenuous ways of shifting in the world must be unlearned.”⁵⁶³ In order to prevent a child being misruled by such potential distempers of esteem and disgrace, authority was to be exclusive to parents and extended only at their discretion to those deemed acceptable influences. Locke flattered parents by implying that they were better suited to govern their children than anyone else, but

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 46-7.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 51.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid., p. 56.

⁵⁶² Ibid., p. 19, 59, 68-70, 76, 89, 107, 138.

⁵⁶³ Ibid., p. 70.

he did not assume that his readers would be more reasonable than servants or children, or less susceptible to the delusions of popular opinion. The demands of his education were therefore themselves correctives for wayward parents. Locke, for example, demanded that children respect their parents, but he also demanded the reverse: “He that will have his son have a respect for him and his orders, must himself have a great reverence for his son...You must do nothing before him, which you would not have him imitate.”⁵⁶⁴ Parents could therefore become authoritative sources of esteem and disgrace for their children only by being admirable to them, and that called on adults to develop self-mastery as much as their children. Parenting, for Locke, thus turned out to be one of the best ways for “grown men” to “enlarge their understandings,” which was otherwise “seldom done.”⁵⁶⁵

It was also necessary “to make [children] in love with the company of their parents,” but this required that parents enjoyed the company of their children, since if Locke’s instructions were to be followed, parents would have to spend a great deal of time with them.⁵⁶⁶ Everything in Locke’s pedagogical programme, from his prohibition against swaddling, which immobilised infants precisely so that adults could ignore them, to his encouragement of home education and the employment of fathers as tutors demanded that parents attended more closely to their children than was expected and what his readers would have desired. If the prevailing fashion of late seventeenth-century English society was to be “indulgent and familiar [with children] when they were little, but severe to them, and [to] keep them at a distance, when were grown up,” Locke reversed these imperatives by demanded early strictness and increasing warmth and familiarity as the child grew.⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 71.

⁵⁶⁵ Locke, *CU*, p. 6.

⁵⁶⁶ John Locke, *STCE*, pp. 70.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 40-1.

The sheer amount of time that parents would have had to spend with their children to the exclusion of most other company and the demands that Locke placed on parents to study their children's unique constitutions and adapt their childrearing to them inclined the family to form its own opinions and judgements against those of society at large.⁵⁶⁸ This ensured that education did not simply recapitulate prevailing fashions and customs. Ruth Grant, for example, has pointed out that the experience of raising children according to Locke's pedagogy helped adults "develop the ability to resist, when necessary, this need for social approval which provides the foundational support for the dominion of custom or 'fashion.'"⁵⁶⁹ Indeed, Locke recommended his book for parents "so irregularly bold, that they dare venture to consult their own reason, in the education of their children, rather than wholly to rely upon old custom."⁵⁷⁰

Likewise, children themselves were partial authors of this family culture, in part, because of such insular conditions in which they were brought up, but also because they engaged in frequent conversations with their parents conducted as if between equals, with a father "advis[ing] only as a friend of more experience," particularly about matters concerning family life such as the management of the familial estate.⁵⁷¹ The obedience imposed in early childhood became the "reasoning with children" of middle childhood.⁵⁷² This admitted the possibility of objection and compromise: "You must not expect his inclinations should be just as yours...youth must have some liberty, some outleaps."⁵⁷³ Locke also added that consulting an older child in family questions would "not at all lessen your authority, but increase his

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 66.

⁵⁶⁹ Grant, "Custom's Power," p. 614.

⁵⁷⁰ John Locke, *STCE*, p. 216.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 96-7.

⁵⁷² Ibid., p. 81.

⁵⁷³ Ibid., p. 97.

love and esteem of you.”⁵⁷⁴ All of this, in turn, fostered a distinct family culture that diverged from the main current of fashion of public opinion.⁵⁷⁵

Nonetheless, the *Education* did not aim at a society of permanently isolated families living in eccentric worlds of their own, disconnected from broader civil society. Locke admitted that even “the milder sort of government” which he enjoined on older children was likely to become ineffectual in adolescence, “that boiling boisterous part of life” when boys chafed under even the best parents’ rule “think[ing] themselves too much men to be governed by others, and yet hav[ing] not prudence and experience enough to govern themselves.”⁵⁷⁶ This was the point at which children became most susceptible to fashion because they were most sceptical of the familial judgements that had up to that point shielded them:

What can be hoped from even the most careful and discreet governor, when neither he has power to compel, nor his pupil a disposition to be persuaded; but, on the contrary, has the advice of warm blood, and prevailing fashion, to hearken to the temptations of his companions, just as wise as himself, rather than to the persuasion of his tutor, who is now looked on as the enemy to his freedom?⁵⁷⁷

In order to counter the ill effects of this stage, Locke advised delaying the customary period of travel until the age when “reason and foresight begin a little to take place” so that children were not exposed to “greatest dangers of their whole life” abroad amongst strangers, but he nonetheless implied that even at home, adolescents would choose “the temptations of [their] companions” over the judgements of their parents and tutors.⁵⁷⁸

It seems puzzling, then, that for all of Locke’s emphasis on familial authority, he would then concede its unravelling in adolescence. Yet, far from conceiving parental

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁵ See, for example, Su Fang Ng, *Literature and the Politics of Family in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 43, p. 212.

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 212.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid.

authority to be total or even very effective, Locke was realistic about the rebelliousness of children. He established authority early but also acknowledged that there would come a point when the child would prefer their “companions” to their parents and that they must be permitted some “outleaps.”⁵⁷⁹ By keeping them out of school and away from the influence of servants, however, Locke delayed the child’s exposure to fashion and custom, supplying them first with a family education that would act as a source of dissonance when they finally entered the broader society. Locke was willing to give children some space during adolescence to diverge from their family so that by the time they reached adulthood, they would have both obeyed and resisted, and parental authority was far from absolute. The final element of education – travel –was to be delayed until they could undertake it alone, under the guidance of their own reason for the first time, which they would put into the service of comparing not their family’s customs to those of their countrymen, but rather their country’s customs to those of foreigners: “Being thoroughly acquainted with the laws and fashions, the natural and moral advantages and defects of his own country, he has something to exchange with those abroad, from whose conversation he hoped to reap any knowledge.”⁵⁸⁰

At each stage of development, Lockean pedagogy attempted to insert dissonance into the child’s experience in order to obstruct conventional habituation and preserve the will’s flexibility in the face of desires that threatened to cement their conduct and beliefs before they had had a chance to weigh and reflect upon them. In their first years, their parents substituted their wills for theirs and crossed their inclinations. Then the parents had to make themselves sufficiently admirable to the child so then they would prefer to do that which would win their approbation instead of following the alluring example of servants or other children. In adolescence, the family’s coercive power receded while its opinions and customs stood as an

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

alternative to the fashions of civil society. Then, as the child entered adulthood, they had to confront the hallmark of sceptical argument – the diversity of customs – on their own. The main aim of education was the move from being mastered by authority to partial self-mastery guided by the love of authority, to full control of the desires by one’s own strengthened will. Not unlike John Wilkins’s conception of right reason as a habitual disposition that guided conduct and ensured conformity of the will in a Fallen world. Familial authority, then, for Locke, was a necessary counterweight to the habits that arose from submitting to nature and fashion, and its role was to consciously preserve the child from easy acquiescence to such pleasures.

It is also worth considering for a moment that Locke’s claims about filial obedience and the naturalisation of parental power and familial authority are amongst the Foucauldian-disciplinarian scholars’ principal targets, exposed especially forcefully by Joseph Carrig. Carrig has contended that the goal of Lockean education was less virtue than obedience, and it accomplished this goal by making “the will of the father appear to the child as his own.”⁵⁸¹ The child’s liberty, Carrig has suggested, was entirely incidental to Locke’s project, invoked only as a means to the end of cementing parental authority: “This new method makes the exercise of power ‘invisible,’ or unnoticed, and it is precisely this characteristic that gives paternal power its perpetual effect.”⁵⁸² Thus, according to Carrig, whereas in the *Second Treatise*, Locke advocated that paternal power was legitimate only temporarily, the *Education* endorsed its permanence: “Perpetual respect for paternal authority is the principal goal of Locke’s education system.”⁵⁸³

⁵⁸¹ Carrig, “Liberal Impediments,” p. 50.

⁵⁸² Ibid., p. 52.

⁵⁸³ Ibid., p. 48. Locke’s precise argument in the *Second Treatise* is that fathers, even though they cannot prescribe actions to their grown sons, can expect to enjoy “a perpetual right to respect, reverence, support and compliance too, more or less, as the Father’s care, cost and kindness in his Education, has been more or less” (Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988], p. 312).

Such a reading would be more convincing, however, if Locke did not complicate his own claims about the reach and import of parental authority. If, on the one hand, Locke suggested that the goal of education was to habituate the child to self-command – and to do so, in the first instance, by dissolving the gap between the child’s will and the adult will – on the other hand, he also argued that the child’s will should not be bent into adult shape, in the service of an adult goal. A child-responsive approach to education emerges in the *Education* because most of Locke’s pedagogical prescriptions flowed out of the insight that childhood and adulthood were distinct stages of human life, with different needs and capabilities, and that adult freedom could not be the goal of early childhood education.⁵⁸⁴ While children are born dependent and hence reliant upon adult reason, the child’s will still mattered as an entity distinct from the adult will. Rather than forcing it to conform to parental reason, Locke believed that educators had to give it considerable leeway – to be determined by the individual child’s age and temperament – and focus their efforts on encouraging habits of desiring and reasoning that would enable a future autonomy.⁵⁸⁵

Locke foregrounded three ways in which the child’s particular will became a force in early habituation, constraining the exercise of parental power. First, he argued that parents had to recognise that the child’s will was the will of a child and even suggested that could not be subjected to adult standards of virtue. Children had to be allowed to be children rather than expected to behave like little adults: “Never trouble yourself about those faults in them which you know age will cure.”; “They must be permitted...the foolish and childish action suitable to their years without taking notice of them.”: their “gamesome humour, which is wisely adapted by nature to their age and temper, should rather be encouraged to keep up their spirits

⁵⁸⁴ See Hina Nazir, “Locke, Education, and “Disciplinary Liberalism,”” p. 220.

⁵⁸⁵ On the ways in which education was rendered responsive to the child, see Lee Ward, *John Locke and the Modern Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), esp. Ch. 5.

and improve their strength and health than curbed or restrained.”⁵⁸⁶ Second, Locke called upon educators to respect the innate talents and temperament of the pupil, and tailor their pedagogy (and authority) accordingly: “God has stamped certain characters upon men’s minds, which, like their shapes, may perhaps be a little mended but can hardly be totally altered and transformed into the contrary.”⁵⁸⁷ The educator could also not expect to “make the gay pensive and grave, nor the melancholy sportive, without spoiling them.”⁵⁸⁸ Instead, they had to constantly ask if the goals that they were setting for the child, and the methods they were using to accomplish them, were “suited to the child’s natural genius and constitution.”⁵⁸⁹

Finally, Locke enjoined that even the recipient reason children manifested early in life should be a factor consulted by parents as they exercised power over children. For example, “even children discern when we do things in passion” and “that has most weight with them that appears sedately to come from their parents’ reason, and they are not without this distinction.”⁵⁹⁰ While parents were right to demand obedience of their offspring, parental commands had to be increasingly capable of rational justification rather than insinuated into children’s “unwary Understandings,” to borrow from the *Essay*’s formulation.⁵⁹¹ Indeed, “there is no virtue they [children] should be excited to nor fault they should be kept from which I do not think they may be convinced of, but it must be by such *reasons* as they age and understanding are capable of and those proposed always in very *few and plain words*.”⁵⁹²

Locke’s suggestion that the child’s will mattered as an entity distinct from parental will diminished the value of self-command as a goal of early childhood education since the child was incapable of self-command. It also identified the parent-child relation as marked

⁵⁸⁶ John Locke, *STCE*, p. 43, 57, 39.

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁵⁹¹ Locke *ECHU*, 4:20:10.

⁵⁹² Locke, *STCE*, p. 58.

by much greater reciprocity than has been suggested by the disciplinarians' regime of invisible parental power. In other words, parental authority provided the framework for an education that focused less on bending the child's will to adult reason than on encouraging habits that would permit the child's own reason and desire to shape its will in a future freedom.

Desire and Will in the *Essay*

In order to fully understand the relationship between Lockean education and 'habituation,' it is also important to examine the relationship between his account of freedom and liberty and his pedagogical emphasis on experiencing a distinction between will and desire and choosing among competing desires. The education of desire was the most important aspect of education as described in the *Education* since the book's focus was childhood, and desire, according to Locke, addressed the child's will before reason.

In the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke presented a definition of liberty that was far more individuated, self-contained, and cognitive than the more well-known political definitions from the *Two Treatises*. Liberty in the *Essay* did not depend directly on the rights or limits of the law, but rather on the will's "power to suspend the execution and satisfaction of any of its desires":

There being in us a great many uneasiness always soliciting, and ready to determine the will to the next action; and so it does for the most part, but not always. For the mind having in most cases...a power to suspend the execution and satisfaction of any of its desires...is at liberty to consider the objects of them, examine them on all sides, and weigh them with others. In this lies the liberty man has; and from the not using of it right comes all that variety of mistakes, errors, and faults which we run into in the conduct of our lives, and our endeavours after happiness...To prevent this, we have a power to suspend

the prosecution of this or that desire, as every one daily may experiment in himself. This seems to me the source of all liberty.⁵⁹³

This definition of liberty relied on a stark distinction between the faculties of will and desire, but a distinction which posed two difficulties. First, it was not logically demonstrable and was denied by the competing Hobbesian account of the will. Second, it did not actually operate in most people, whose weak will gave way to their stronger desires. The process of education, which consisted in forcing the child to “daily experiment in himself,” was central to demonstrating – experimentally rather than logically – that these faculties really were distinct and that one might be strengthened to control the other. Without the will’s ability to suspend desires, an ability acquired by habituation, reason would have been rendered impotent, and the individual would submit to the desires inculcated in them by nature, fashion, and custom.

Locke’s account, as Douglas Casson and Steven Forde have argued, was a challenge to Hobbes’s conception of the will: “the last appetite, or aversion, immediately adhering to the action, or to the omission thereof.”⁵⁹⁴ In Hobbes’s account, there was no more than a semantic distinction between will and desire, since the will was only that desire which immediately preceded action. Locke, on the other hand, insisted that will was not merely another term for desire, but rather the distinction between will and desire could not be demonstrated, only experienced. Language failed to convey it, so the only way to ascertain it was to examine one’s own mind:

Such is the difficulty of explaining and giving clear notions of internal actions by sounds, that I must here warn my reader that ordering, directing, choosing, preferring, & c, which I have made use of, will not distinctly enough express violation, unless he will reflect on what he himself does when he

⁵⁹³ Locke, *ECHU*, 2.21.47.

⁵⁹⁴ See Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Ch. 6. See also Douglas John Casson, *Liberating Judgement: Fanatics, Skeptics, and John Locke’s Politics of Probability* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011), pp. 162-5; Steven Forde, *Locke, Science, and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 118-23.

will...whosoever desires to understand what it is, will better find it by reflecting on his own mind, and observing what it does when it wills.⁵⁹⁵

“Reflecting on his own mind” was, as we have seen, exactly what Lockean habituation forced the child to do by pitting their desire against first the wills of their parents and then their own will.⁵⁹⁶ Although, in principle, anyone could suspend and reflect on their desires, “we see men abandon themselves to the most brutish, vile, irrational, exorbitant actions, during the whole current of a wild or dissolute life without any check or the least appearance of any reflection,” and this was due to the omission of precisely the kind of education that Locke required. Such dissolute individuals were those who

From their cradles...were never accustomed to reflect but by a constant indulging of their passions have been all along given up to the conduct and swing of their inconsiderate desires, and so have by a contrary habit lost the use and exercise of reflection.⁵⁹⁷

The point here that Locke was trying to reinforce was that the power of the will to suspend and examine the desires had to be demonstrated to the child early on if it was to be effective.

Desire, according to Hobbes, was endless, the result of the “general inclination of all mankind” towards “perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death.”⁵⁹⁸ Indeed, Locke advanced a version of this Hobbesian premise in the *Essay*, where he defined desire as the “uneasiness of the Mind for want of some absent good,” which determines the Will to the successive voluntary actions whereof the greatest part of our Lives is made up.⁵⁹⁹ Uneasiness, Locke wrote, was “the chief, if not only spur to human territory and action,” and so was similar to Hobbesian desire: perpetual and restless.⁶⁰⁰ Desire began

⁵⁹⁵ Locke, *ECHU*, 2.21.15, 30.

⁵⁹⁶ Locke, *STCE*, p. 58.

⁵⁹⁷ John Locke, “Additions to the Essay,” Peter King (ed.), *The Life and Letters of John Locke* (London: Henry Bohn, 1858), p. 359.

⁵⁹⁸ See Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Ch. 6.

⁵⁹⁹ Locke, *ECHU*, 2.21.31-3.

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.20.6.

in the basic sensations of the body, our “ordinary necessities,” and most of life’s activity was in turn driven by a

...fantastical uneasiness (as itch after Honour, Power, or Riches, etc.) which acquir’d habits by Fashion, Example, and Education have settled in us, and a thousand other irregular desires, which custom has made natural to us, 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.⁶⁰¹

All our activity, according to Locke, was in the pursuit of some desire, but most of the desires that we pursue were not natural but acquired – either from the identifiable sources like the people who please us or we seek to please, but at least as equally often from the more amorphous forces of custom or fashion. Although the passions were innate, the specific objects to which they were attached was potentially limitless and as Ruth Grant has recently shown, Locke believed that this depended largely on the custom of one’s own country.⁶⁰²

The difficulty with this account, as James Tully has pointed out, is its determinism.⁶⁰³ In other words, if the individual was constantly beset by desires which determined their conduct, and they surrendered to whichever desire eased the greatest immediate pain, then reflection would be rendered meaningless, because the individual could only reflect on which of their pains was the most pressing and no further. The will, according to Locke, was determined not by “the greater good in view; but some (and for the most part the most pressing) uneasiness a man is at present under.”⁶⁰⁴ Thus, to act according to custom or from a desire for affirmation was still to act voluntarily, but if the greatest part of mankind “govern[ed] themselves, chiefly if not solely, by this Law of Fashion,” as Locke put it, and if this was really the most powerful determinant of one’s conduct, and the anxiety of being out

⁶⁰¹ Ibid., 2.21.44-5.

⁶⁰² See Ruth Grant, “John Locke on Custom’s Power and Reason’s Authority.”

⁶⁰³ See James Tully, *Locke in Contexts* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.216-9.

⁶⁰⁴ Locke, *ECHU*, 2.21.31.

of step with one's companions was the source of one's most immediate pain, then one's will could only be directed at the alleviation of it.⁶⁰⁵ This was hardly different from Hobbes's definition of the will as "the last appetite," which precluded the individual from carrying out any long-term endeavours.⁶⁰⁶ Locke himself argued that there were many "greater good[s] in view" that nevertheless pinched us less than the "present pains" of the body or of being out of favour with one's companions, yet the pursuit of such greater goods would seem to have been foreclosed by this account of will and desire.⁶⁰⁷

Locke was not a reductive hedonist, however, and insisted that not all pleasures resulted in happiness, and that mankind was capable of directing its conduct over the long term and pursuing distant goods determined by reason rather than habit, custom, or fashion. Simply understanding a greater good was insufficient, as Locke demonstrated by the example of the drunkard who *understands* perfectly well how drinking ruined their life. He sees that "his Health decays, his Estate wastes; Discredit and Diseases, and the want of all things, even of his beloved Drink, attends him in the course he follows" but "the habitual thirst after his Cups, at the usual time, drives him to the Tavern...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."⁶⁰⁸ At one point, Locke suggested that desire could be "raised proportionably" by means of straightforward conditioning: "It is in a man's power to change the pleasantness, and unpleasantness, that accompanies any sort of action" so that the individual might, by repetition, take pleasure in what he has judged good for themselves and displeasure in what they determined to be bad.⁶⁰⁹ However, Locke's sensitivity to the strength of individual dispositions casts doubt on this belief that a "relish" for anything could

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid., 2.28.12. See also Ruth Grant, "John Locke on Custom's Power and Reason's Authority," pp. 610-6.

⁶⁰⁶ See Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 6.

⁶⁰⁷ See Koganzon, "Fathers and Sovereigns: The Uses of Paternal Authority in Early Modern Thought," p. 128.

⁶⁰⁸ Locke, *ECHU*, 2.21.35.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid., 2.12.69.

be conditioned into anyone, especially without them having “apprehended” the good of it themselves.⁶¹⁰

There is, nevertheless, another way to understand how education could orient our desires to better ends that does not point to conditioning. James Tully has suggested that the aim of Locke’s pedagogy was to “develop an educational practice that would form mental ‘inclinations’ or ‘relish’ to examine and assent in accordance with the probable proofs.”⁶¹¹ This was the goal for adults, but it was too abstract for children, who were unlikely to desire or even understand rigorous probabilistic inquiry. What they could learn was to question their desires by crossing them, and through the ‘reasoning’ of the *Education*, eventually to question their parents’ desires as well.

Now, much of what Locke had to say about reason’s education in the *Education* involved drawing children into a rational conversation, pitched at their particular rational capacities. Indeed, education and conversation emerge as coterminous developments.⁶¹² Hence, a trusted tutor became necessary as soon as the child began to talk: “I would from their first beginning to talk have some discreet, sober, nay, wise person about children.”⁶¹³ A key quality of the tutor had to be “the skill to carry himself with gravity, ease, and kindness in a constant conversation with his pupils.”⁶¹⁴ Nor were children perceived to be the only gainers from such an exchange: “The native and untaught suggestions of inquisitive children do often offer things that may set a considering man’s thoughts on work.”⁶¹⁵ Children’s

⁶¹⁰ Locke, *STCE*, p. 66, 94.

⁶¹¹ Tully, “Governing Conduct,” in *An Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Contexts*, p. 200. See also Ruth Grant, *John Locke’s Liberalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 44-48.

⁶¹² Richard Yeo has argued that conversation figured prominently in Locke’s “life-long concern about the proper grounds of assent and belief” (Richard Yeo, “John Locke on Conversation with Friends and Strangers,” *Parergon* 26, no. 2 [2009]: pp. 11-37, p. 12.

⁶¹³ Locke, *STCE*, p. 63.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

relatively unprejudiced viewpoints, then, could be engaged productively even by their rational betters, in order to better question the legitimacy of custom.

Locke's argument that one of the best means of educating a child's reason was engaging them in rational conversation opened up another understanding of - to borrow Joseph Carrig's phrase - "other people's reason" than the conventional wisdom highlighted by the disciplinary reading of Locke.⁶¹⁶ Other people's reason, it appeared, took the form not only of reputational standards that a child, hungry for the esteem of the rational adults in their life, brought to bear on their actions, but also the more critical form of other people's rational arguments, in dialogue with the child then realised their own powers of reasoning. The claim that debate and dialogue sharpened one's critical faculties was a principal line connecting the *Education* and the *Conduct*. In the latter work, Locke observed that:

We are all short sighted, and very often see but one side of a matter; our views are not extended to all that has a connection with it...This might instruct the proudest esteemer of his own parts, how useful it is to talk and consult with others, even such as come short of him in capacity, quickness and penetration.⁶¹⁷

Engaging others was important, then, not only in the service of a liberal many-sidedness, but was fundamentally so because, as Locke elaborated, most of our knowledge – including our knowledge of the principles grounding our actions – was to do with probabilities rather than certainties. Moreover “in probabilities...it is not enough to trace one argument to its source, and observe its strength and weakness, but all the arguments, after having been so examined on both sides, must be laid in balance one against another, and upon the whole the understanding determine its assent.”⁶¹⁸ In other words, informed assent to principles presupposed taking into account the perspectives of others. Locke summarised: “To prejudice

⁶¹⁶ Joseph Carrig, “Liberal Impediments to Liberal Education: The Assent to Locke,” p. 59.

⁶¹⁷ Locke, *CU*, p. 169.

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

other men's notions before we have looked into them is not to show their darkness, but to put out our own eyes."⁶¹⁹

Together, the *Conduct* and the *Education* indicated a complex role of "other people's reason" in Lockean education.⁶²⁰ While children engaged other people's reason, to begin with, as a standard, against which they could measure their own actions and arguments, they had to engage it more critically as their own reason strengthened. They would have the tools to do so because, as Locke put it in the *Conduct*, "every man carries about him a touchstone...which is natural reason."⁶²¹ This inner resource suffered attrition at the hands of custom and traditional education but an education in autonomy-friendly habits could restore its strength. Again, this is very much reminiscent of Wilkins's approach to the problem of right reason – an emphasis upon the inculcation of habitual dispositions that allowed the mind to reason properly and function efficiently. One of these habits, for Locke, that was relevant to both children and adults, was the habit of discoursing rationally with others. "Other people's reason" offered a diversity of viewpoints that reflective adults and the child themselves could consult in order to sharpen their own reason; an entity that guaranteed mental servitude and an ever-expanding body of rational argumentation, without which no critical thinking or freedom was possible at all.

As an entailment of consulting 'other people's reason, Locke's subject was, in short, to be made sceptical of themselves and eventually of the authorities and conventions around them. Scepticism in the form of doubt that one's convictions are true because they are one's own and an openness to correction is a more basic disposition than the more advanced practice of weighing all "probable proofs."⁶²² By the term 'scepticism' here, I take to mean what

⁶¹⁹ Ibid., p. 171.

⁶²⁰ Joseph Carrig, "Liberal Impediments to Liberal Education: The Assent to Locke," p. 59.

⁶²¹ Ibid., p. 171.

⁶²² Locke, *CU*, p. 33.

Douglas Casson has described in Locke's thinking as a flexible, self-questioning disposition and an eventual commitment to impartiality in judgment.⁶²³ This is not to identify Locke, however, with Montaigne or the ancient sceptical tradition. Indeed, Locke flirted with but eventually rejected such scepticism.⁶²⁴

Insofar as such a disposition became a regular mental practice for the child, it could be called a habitual disposition that supported reason, following Locke's warning that "habits [work] more constantly and with greater facility, than reason; which, when we have most need of it, is seldom fairly consulted, and more rarely obeyed."⁶²⁵ Nonetheless, it was an exceptional habitual disposition, one that could ward off conventional habits and the kind of behavioural conditioning of which previous readers have accused Locke. The mature, impartial understanding which Locke exhorted readers to cultivate in the *Essay* and the *Conduct* was, in fact, based on the extended cultivation of the sceptical disposition which culminated in the *Education*.

Habitual Scepticism

Scepticism – more specifically, habitual scepticism – was the primary safeguard that Locke offered against the power of habits that arose both from natural pleasures and pains, as well as from those forms of "fanastical uneasiness...which custom has made natural to us." Such scepticism was, paradoxically, a habit of having no totally fixed habits, of being radically willing to admit error in oneself and deny authority to others, "to judge himself, and judge unbiasedly of all that he receives from others...Reverence or prejudice must not be suffered to give beauty or deformity to any of their opinions."⁶²⁶

⁶²³ See Douglas Casson, *Liberating Judgement: Fanatics, Sceptics, and John Locke's Politics of Probability* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), chaps 2-3.

⁶²⁴ For a great overview, see G.A.J. Rogers, "John Locke and the Sceptics" in G. Paganini (ed.), *The Return of Scepticism: From Hobbes and Descartes to Bayle* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2003).

⁶²⁵ Locke, *STCE*, p. 110.

⁶²⁶ Locke, *CU*, p. 3.

In the absence of such commitment, the individual would contract their opinions from those whose approbation they desired and then hold fast to them, making it “a hard Matter, to persuade any one, that the Words which his Father or Schoolmaster, the Parson of the Parish, of such a Reverend Doctor used, signified nothing that really existed in Nature: Which, perhaps is none of the least Causes, that Men are so hardly drawn to quit their Mistakes.”⁶²⁷ Self-love led to “obstinacy,” “stiffness of mind,” and “pride” – the most universal sort of mental error, and the one which Locke’s education tried above all to preempt.⁶²⁸ A general scepticism towards the validity and goodness of one’s desires and opinions could override one’s self-regarding tendency to cling to one’s mistaken judgements in the face of overwhelming contrary evidence.⁶²⁹ It is here that we can see clear resonances, for example, of Boyle’s and Hooke’s approach in natural philosophy. Their emphasis upon habitual dispositions that directed the investigator towards caution, impartiality, and modesty, dispositions that were so crucial for the experimental life, also occupied a central part of Locke’s notion of habitual scepticism.

The pedagogy of Locke’s *Education* sought to train the will to suspend its desires and invited the understanding to examine them. It inclined the mind toward habitual scepticism and modesty, flexibility and civility, but it could not guarantee that its product would always judge well amongst the options. The inclusion of the work of Hugo Grotius, Samuel Pufendorf as well as the English legal system into the curriculum of the *Education* worked to introduce the child to the natural and civil law disciplines which were essential prerequisites for Lockean citizenship, though one could only “presume” that the individual knew and understood these laws by the age of majority.⁶³⁰ Locke’s education project, however, did not

⁶²⁷ Locke, *ECHU*, 3.10.16.

⁶²⁸ Locke, *STCE*, pp. 78-80; *CU*, p. 26, 34; *ECHU*, 3.11.5.

⁶²⁹ Locke, *ECHU*, 4.16.3, 4.20.10.

⁶³⁰ Locke, *STCE*, pp. 185-86, *ST*, p. 59.

end by satisfying the modest formal requirements of citizenship. A more expansive form of epistemic liberty was possible for those who applied the scepticism inculcated by the *Education* to the practices of logical association and probabilistic reasoning that was described in the *Conduct* and the *Essay*. As Paul Schuurman has argued, the *Conduct*, though often read in conjunction with the *Education*, was in fact a guide for adult mental training.⁶³¹ In it, Locke suggested that partiality or bias was the primary intellectual scourge of intelligent and rational individuals, and the only antidote continued to be scepticism in thought and modesty in character – “The proudest esteemer of his own parts,” according to Locke, had to be shown the limits of their understanding so that they might attain “indifferency” with respect to truth.⁶³² In order to avoid “stiffness of mind,” the individual had to constantly engage in a mental battle against calcification, exposing themselves to novelty and variety:

I think [mankind] should be made to look into all sorts of knowledge, and exercise their understandings in so wide a variety and stock of knowledge. But I do not propose it as a variety and stock of knowledge, but a variety and freedom of thinking, as an increase of the powers and activity of the mind, not as an enlargement of its possessions.⁶³³

Here again is evidence of the Lockean strategy of utilising habit to develop mental faculties that would be capable of undermining any fixed habits. Study was not, for the most part, intended to result in expertise, but rather in mental agility.⁶³⁴ To that same end, Locke recommended seeking out variety in conversation, which the city offered to a greater degree than the country, and appropriated even the New Testament to support his scepticism: “Try all things, hold fast to that which is good.”⁶³⁵ In doing so, the *Conduct*’s emphasis upon exposure to variety began where the *Education* left off. The child’s social life had to be

⁶³¹ Paul Schuurman, “Locke’s way of idea as context for this theory of education in *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*,” *History of European Ideas* 27 (2001), p. 45-59.

⁶³² Locke, *CU*, p. 3, 11, 34.

⁶³³ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁶³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁶³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

restricted to protect them from fashion, and by doing so they would be consequently insulated from variety in people and opinions beyond that which they could find in books. But the *Education* ended with travel, an undertaking that, in introducing the variety of customs and people, marked the beginning of adulthood.

The *Conduct* and the *Education* both operated on the assumption that their reader had left the isolation of childhood and now had to constantly contend with the customs, popular opinions, and fashions of civil society. Moreover, it has been suggested by Mark E. Button and others that Locke intended his education writings to alter the intellectual conditions of society, just as he hoped that his *Two Treatises* would lead to a new political regime.⁶³⁶ While Locke clearly thought that the particular custom, public opinion, and our own desires could change, there is no evidence that he thought that such influences could be extirpated or replaced by universal reasonableness.⁶³⁷ His epistemological works did not propose a general mental reformation of society, but rather were meant to act as a guide, instructing the individual in the means to retain their intellectual independence within a society that was inevitably governed by custom and fashion as well as showing them how to understand such forces and use them to their advantage. The Foucauldian reading, then, is in this sense correct to call attention to Locke's many positive appeals to the use of reputation and fashion in the *Education*. He repeatedly exhorted parents to instil in children the very "love of credit" that threatened their freedom from fashion as adults, and to use this love in order to manipulate them.⁶³⁸ The difficulty was that if parents failed to carry out this, then the result would not be

⁶³⁶ See Mark E. Button, *Contract, Culture, and Citizenship: Transformative Liberalism from Hobbes to Rawls* (Pennsylvania State University Press: University Park, PA, 2008). See also, Ruth Grant, *John Locke's Liberalism* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987); S. J. Savonius-Wroth, "Education and its Role in Civil Society" in S.J. Savonius-Wroth, P. Schuurman, and J. Walmsley, *The Continuum Companion to Locke* (London: Continuum Press, 2010).

⁶³⁷ See John Dunn, "Bright Enough for All Our Purposes": John Locke's Conception of a Civilised Society," *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, 43 (1989): pp. 13-153, p. 146; Hannah Dawson, *Locke, Language and Early Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁶³⁸ Locke, *STCE*, p. 56.

a child immune to the pull of esteem, but rather a child either wholly incapable of the social life or one that was wedded to the esteem of people whose purposes in manipulating the child were less salutary than those of Lockean parents.

The simultaneous potential of language to expand one's understanding and to compromise it also demonstrated, for Locke, how fundamentally dependent on opinion even the wisest individuals were. The purest instance of epistemic freedom came from one's intuition and definition of "simple ideas" – perceptions like hot/cold or colour – could not be defined or perceived on another's behalf. Such freedom, however, was minimal in practice – the individual would be limited to only a paltry grasp of the world if they relied entirely on the simple ideas they received through their own senses and since ideas are particular, then each blade of grass would be a new and interesting species to them. Nevertheless, Locke was adamant that it was "beyond the power of human capacity to frame and retain distinct ideas of all the particular things we meet with" which meant that it was essential to generalise and abstract, entangling ourselves in the distortion that acquiring a pre-existing language imposed.⁶³⁹ Thus, by entering the world of complex ideas, the individual subjected themselves to the collective definitional authority of custom or opinion, yet because such authority had no identifiable locus, or king to behead, for example, and was instead established "by a secret and tacit consent" of all its subjects, the individual was then complicit in their subjection in a manner that was not entirely unlike that of the Lockean citizen to their legislature.⁶⁴⁰ The parallel between political and epistemic autonomy in Locke could be pushed further, however: just as benefits accrued to the individual from renouncing their "private judgement" in order to join civil society, the benefit to the individual understanding of giving up the impossibly daunting task of naming every impression that one experiences

⁶³⁹ Locke, *ECHU*, 2.11.9, 3.3.2-3. See also Dawon, *Locke, Language and Early Modern Philosophy* pp. 295-298.

⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.28.10.

and instead abiding by socially derived definitions was access to a vast trove of existing and potential knowledge about the world.⁶⁴¹ Yet the mind that was attached to a will that suspended its desires and an understanding that stepped back and examined their judiciousness was also less susceptible to having its thoughts determined by the potentially stupefying effects of language. Suspension and examination preserved the basic freedom of intuiting and defining simple ideas, and therefore shielded the individual from the impositions of authority.

It was precisely in this realm of epistemic autonomy that it becomes clear why Locke's education demanded such intense self-discipline: to persuade others of the reality and usefulness of one's new and redefined ideas by argumentation required the sustained and laborious work of producing a true and compelling logical demonstration. One had to engage without distraction or bias in a "chain of reasonings" on the model of mathematical proofs, a capacity acquired by "using the mind to a long train of consequences."⁶⁴² Such reasoning faced the possibility of error at every step, especially when it was not mathematics that was being reasoned about, but "divinity, ethicks, law, and politicks."⁶⁴³ In such fields, truth had to be determined by the internal logical agreement of constituent simple ideas. Even the most strenuous application of the mind to such pursuits only resulted in attenuated progress:

All that the greatest part of men are capable of doing, in regulating their opinions and judgements once with care and fairness sift[ing] the matter as far as they could; and that they have searched into all the particulars, that they could imagine to give any light to the question: and with the best of their skill cast[ing] up the account upon the whole evidence, and thus having once found on which side the probability appeared to them, after as full and exact an enquiry as they can make, they lay up the conclusion in their memories.⁶⁴⁴

⁶⁴¹ Ibid., 3.2.7.

⁶⁴² Ibid., 3.12.7-8, *CU*, pp. 6-7.

⁶⁴³ Locke, *ECHU*, 1.22.12.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid., 4.16.1-2.

All of this was only the effort required in order to accept a probable opinion and such dispiriting passages were a part of Locke's rhetorical effort, particularly in Book IV of the *Essay*, to inculcate modesty in the inquirer as well as in inquiry itself by emphasising the limits of human understanding and discouraging "the proudest esteemer of his own parts" from seeking eminence and prestige in inquiry:

If we look a little into the dark, and take a view of our ignorance: which, being infinitely larger than our knowledge, may serve much to the quieting of disputes, and improvement of useful knowledge; if discovering how far we have clear and distinct ideas, we confine our thoughts within the contemplation of those things that are within the reach of our understandings, and launch not out into that abyss of darkness...out of a presumption, that nothing is beyond our comprehension...He that knows any thing, knows this in the first place, that he need not seek long for instances of his ignorance. The meanest and most obvious things that come in our way, have dark sides, that the quickest sight cannot penetrate into.⁶⁴⁵

Such modesty against the "presumption that nothing is beyond our comprehension" was, for Locke, the counterpart of scepticism about the tendency of our own opinions to be correct because they are our own.⁶⁴⁶ It was the provision that defended against those who pursued inquiry for the sake of power, a motive that Locke frequently attributed to the scholastic:

Those who have fairly and truly examined, and are thereby got past doubt in all the doctrines they profess and govern themselves by, and would have a just pretence to require others to follow them: but these are so few in number, and find so little reason to be magisterial in their opinions, that nothing insolent and imperious is to be expected from them; and there is reason to think, that if men were better instructed themselves, they would be less imposing on others.⁶⁴⁷

Locke's Foucauldian critics have charged that aspects of his epistemology – the rigorous imposition of discipline, for example – actually foreclosed liberty because it narrowed the

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid., 4.3.22.

⁶⁴⁶ For more information, see Forde, *Locke, Science, and Politics*, p. 45.

⁶⁴⁷ Locke, *ECHU*, 4.16.4.

imagination and proscribed spontaneous “individuality” by classing it as “madness.”⁶⁴⁸ Locke’s difficulty with ‘mad’ imaginings, however, was that they were devoid of judgement and even volition, and thus had to be defined as ‘unfree.’ They could not be redirected or even silenced, no less systemically conveyed to others either. It was the individual that was capable of understanding complex ideas, re-defining them where a new definition was more illuminating, and potentially persuading others to accept their definitions who could recapture in society some of the freedom that they ceded to it by adopting its language. Joseph Carrig has noted this potential for recovering liberty through language when he remarked that, “[in Locke’s view] he is most free who has the power...to arrange circumstances in such a way that others agree to his usage of terms,” but at the same time has asserted that this itself subjugates those who accept that individual’s definitions.⁶⁴⁹ Steven Forde has gone even further, arguing that “Locke exhorts us to free ourselves from mental ‘enslavement’ to received ideas, but in reality he wishes only to make us *his* slaves.”⁶⁵⁰

Lockean education, then, consequently directed pupils to both negative and positive liberty. By inculcating a flexible will and sceptical disposition, it promised to most pupils the freedom from being intellectually ruled by their own unconsidered passions and by others, and by extension, fashion and custom. This was, at least, in a political sense important because ideas, including the law, could not be fully understood second-hand, but rather had to be intuited anew by each individual.⁶⁵¹ Lockean education, therefore, orientated all pupils away from deferring to authority and towards independent reflection. Such liberty would only be of interest to a minority, the sort of individual who had “a mind to carry his studies farther”

⁶⁴⁸ See, for example, Mehta, *Anxiety of Freedom*, pp. 21-24.

⁶⁴⁹ Joseph Carrig, “Liberal Impediments,” p. 71.

⁶⁵⁰ Steven Forde, *Locke, Science, and Politics*, pp. 89-90.

⁶⁵¹ Locke, *ECHU*, 4.18.3.

and who was able to “penetrate deeper...by his own genius and industry” into those subjects which the *Education* introduced, but it was nonetheless one at which Locke aimed.

Conclusion (Locke’s Habituated Subject)

Locke’s educational writings suggest that the Foucauldian-disciplinarian reading is right to find a ‘sticky’ subject at the heart of Lockean liberalism but this chapter has shown that perhaps this subject is more complicated a subject than the disciplinarians have indicated because Locke was unsure about the degree to which education should be a child-responsive project. Education, for Locke, occurred in the context of the “uneasiness” of the mind, a condition of perpetual dissatisfaction from which it reflexively sought relief from wherever it could find it. It found it more often in “hot pursuit of pleasure, or constant drudgery in business” than “serious thought,” and pleasure and drudgery were far more effective sources of habituation than education.⁶⁵² The career of Locke’s own pupil, the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, for example, who developed a theory of the passions that was critical of Locke’s, should stand as an illuminating example of how little substantive agreement between teacher and student Lockean education had to produce to remain effective.⁶⁵³ It was not then the thoroughgoing effectiveness of education that carried emphasis – the capacity to “indoctrinate” the child or to reliably turn out the “productive subject and good citizen that the liberal order demands” – but rather the relative impotence of education relative to the nature and social forces that were simultaneously necessary for and destructive to the understanding.⁶⁵⁴

The habits that Locke would have instilled in children directed them to first feel and then fight their natural desires which subjected them to an early and frequent experience of

⁶⁵² Locke, *ECHU*, 4.20.6.

⁶⁵³ For more information, see Jason Aronson, “Shaftesbury on Locke,” *American Political Science Review* 53 (1959): pp. 1101-4.

⁶⁵⁴ Baltes, “Locke’s Inverted Quarantine,” p. 176.

dissonance between will and desire. The experience of this dissonance led them to question their own desires rather than presuming that because they appeared spontaneous and organic, they were necessary. If the child was not habituated to be sceptically and modestly reflective, they would instead habituate themselves to be unreflective. A certain kind of habituation was thus a crucial prerequisite for freedom, but it was not a habituation into any particular belief, conduct, or behaviour, as we have seen with John Wilkins's notion of habitual right reason, the moderate divines's emphasis upon a religion of acquired habitual dispositions, or Robert Boyle's idea of the habitual experimental natural philosopher. It was instead habituation against the too-easy surrender of the will. The child had to learn not only to resist the temptation to heed parental and pedagogical authority, which the disciplinarian scholars have incorrectly taken to be the main threat to their freedom, but also the charms of nature, the customs of their country, and the fashions of their company. They had to acquire a strong capacity for self-control to guide the understanding past the dangers of distraction, illogic, laziness, and bias into which all minds were prone to fall. Although everyone was obligated to undertake at least some degree of mental cultivation since "no man is so wholly taken up with the attendance on the means of living as to have no spare time at all to think of his soul" – and the habitual scepticism and modesty which Lockean education instilled were useful for the civil and political life, the highest form of freedom that such education unlocked would only be pursued by some.⁶⁵⁵

Lockean education is thus more profitably read neither as the introduction of a form of panoptic control over the child that Foucauldian-disciplinarian scholars take it to be, nor as the straightforward programme of civic education which earlier generations of scholars saw in it, but rather as an individualistic training of the mind, a safeguard against all the other sources of habituation to which the child would inevitably be subjected. Furthermore, John

⁶⁵⁵ Locke, *ECHU*, 4.20.3.

Dunn has suggested that Locke's epistemological and education writings treated their audience

not as a class...but as a set of individuals who might (or might not) genuinely wish to enhance their understanding...The sense in which the candle, which is set in us, shines bright enough for all purposes was not that all human beings can now see clearly by its light or that all could ever readily be enabled to do so. It was simply that any human being who cared enough about the goal and took sufficient trouble could reconstruct themselves to do so.⁶⁵⁶

In its individualism, then, Locke's education was orientated towards what we have come to call the private sphere.⁶⁵⁷ This can be seen most clearly in Locke's positioning of the family at the centre of education and the ways in which his pedagogy itself intensified nuclear family ties at the expense of civic unity. The sceptical and modest disposition which his education cultivated, and the epistemic autonomy at which it aimed was quite compatible with the regime of the *Second Treatise*, grounded as it was in individual consent. Yet, Locke's education was not primarily designed to form citizens for the regime, but rather to compensate for the dangerous intellectual conditions which characterised all societies, and in particular for those aspects of his own liberal politics which exacerbated some of those dangers.⁶⁵⁸

In a broader sense, then, the older reading of Lockean pedagogy as an "education for liberty" was right, but it ignored the individualistic epistemic nature of such liberty. This result might never satisfy the most thoroughgoing disciple of Foucault, who would insist that even a mental discipline intended to combat the normalising forces of nature and society is, after all, still a kind of discipline, a habit of rational self-control is still a habit, and rationality itself is a construction. Yet even if this is all conceded, it is inaccurate to accuse Locke of using education to subvert the liberty that he himself held out in the *Two Treatises* and the

⁶⁵⁶ John Dunn, 'Bright Enough for All Our Purposes,' p. 143.

⁶⁵⁷ See, for example, Craig Martin, *Masking Hegemony, A Genealogy of Liberalism, Religion and the Private Sphere* (London: Routledge, 2010).

⁶⁵⁸ See Hina Nazar, "Locke, Education, and Disciplinary Liberalism," pp. 236-8.

Essay. Both major scholarly approaches to the *Education* have understood it as a kind of blueprint for creating the subjects required by the commonwealth of the *Second Treatise*, with the private education of the family reproducing the customs and opinions of society at large.⁶⁵⁹

The obstacles, however, to a particularly intellectual kind of freedom that arose from the power of fashion and opinion appeared not in the *Second Treatise* but instead in the *Conduct* and *Essay*, where it turned out that “he is certainly the most subjected, the most enslaved, who is so in his understanding.”⁶⁶⁰ It was these obstacles, which were not created by Lockean politics but exacerbated by them, that Locke’s pedagogy ultimately addressed. Lockean education, therefore, can be better understood as a corrective for the excesses of liberalism than as an assembly line for the compliant subject. Locke’s strong focus on the urgent and vital goal of self-control was, for him, at least, easily reconcilable with liberal citizenship.

In sum, the liberalism that emerges from a re-examination of Locke’s educational writings is, of course, not without its problems: once we accept that autonomy was a contingency of education and habituation, a whole variety of thorny issues arise that Locke treated inconsistently. Thus, to return briefly to Timothy Stanton’s recent work on the ‘fable of liberalism:’ when considering Locke and liberalism, we must pay close attention to the “conventional stories to which it implicitly appeals, its persuasive ambitions, and its artfulness” not just the ideology, or history, or genealogies of liberalism.⁶⁶¹ In that same vein, I have engaged with certain readings of Locke’s educational programme that have been put forward by a variety of modern commentators, and proposed an alternative to those readings.

⁶⁵⁹ Uday Mehta, *The Anxiety of Freedom*, p. 170; Tarcov, *Locke’s Education for Liberty*, pp. 104-5.

⁶⁶⁰ Locke, *ECHU*, p. 4.20.6.

⁶⁶¹ Stanton, “John Locke and the Fable of Liberalism,” p. 600.

Unlike the Foucauldian-disciplinarians, Locke refused to posit a binary opposition between freedom and social influence, and he delineated a frequently compelling picture of what the freedom of the socialised subject looked like. In a sense, the implication of Lockean education was not a liberal autonomy that presumed a radical disengagement that communitarians attributed to it, nor one that was simply a meaningless concept because the subject of Lockean education, as the disciplinarians have observed, is a sticky subject. Rather, Locke's subject was to be habituated during childhood to cross their desires and to strengthen their will and were then expected to habituate themselves to look both within and outside themselves in order to find the resources to live a life of considerable critical independence and sceptical modesty. What's more, the Lockean subject would delight at such a process, since their education would inspire them to love the "dignity and excellency of a rational creature."⁶⁶² The urgent goal of self-control at which Locke's education aimed, and which has also perhaps been the pervading theme of the previous three chapters, culminated in an individualistic training of the mind, a safeguard against all the other sources of habituation to which the child would inevitably be subjected. An inculcated habitual disposition of having no fixed habits; a disposition of habitual scepticism.

⁶⁶² Locke, *STCE*, p. 25.

Conclusion

This thesis has argued that notions of habit and habitual dispositions formed an important part of late early modern English intellectual thought which have been largely hitherto missed by scholarship. I hope to have offered a vision of English intellectual life that not only demonstrates the prevalence of a deep seated preoccupation with the importance of habitual dispositions, but also their centrality in several strands of English intellectual thought. It has not attempted to offer a history of individuals, nor of social norms, nor yet of doctrines. Rather, it has been about concepts – ‘habit’ and ‘habitual dispositions’ and more specifically how late early modern English intellectuals were preoccupied with them. The common themes across all four chapters have been about the emphasis that English intellectuals placed on instilling and inculcating the mind with habitual dispositions; habits of good judgement, of self-control, of epistemic modesty, and of scepticism, to name just a few.

The immediate context was a Protestant culture that emphasised the depths of human depravity as well as a society still living in the long shadow of the civil war and the disruption of the Interregnum. Consequently, the period that this thesis has surveyed was haunted by the spectre of religious violence and civil disagreement as well as a lack of confidence in the ability of humankind to reason properly, understand religious truths, control their passions, and conduct themselves accordingly in civil society. The beginning of the Restoration period right up to the close of the century, then, was faced with a broad set of religious, epistemological, and civil problems as well as a whole host of important questions around the nature of human reason, conformity to religious truths in a Fallen world and how to best moderate unruly behaviour and passions. I have argued that the response to these problems and questions was a new-found emphasis upon habitual dispositions and the result was an emerging ‘culture of habit’: a preoccupation with acquired habitual dispositions that were

thought to hold the key to not only neutralising religious strife and ensuring conformity, but also reaching epistemic agreement as well as constructing sceptical and reasonable subjects.

The task of analysing this ‘culture of habit’ is to illuminate a deep-seated, but coherent genealogy of habit in late Early Modern English thought. In doing so, I have attempted to make a decisive contribution to scholarly investigation in several areas. In chapter 1, I presented a new reading of the concept of ‘right reason,’ through a close examination of its usage in the works of Henry More and John Wilkins. I demonstrated that, despite much excellent scholarly work on right reason, particularly by Lotte Mulligan, historians had overlooked the existence of different formulations of the concept and that a juxtaposition as well as a fine-grained analysis of More’s and Wilkins’s work reveals this. Whilst their intentions were to explain how mankind came to know and apprehend the highest moral virtues; to judge truth from falsity, right from wrong, good from evil, and virtue from vice, both men formulated the operation of right reason in different ways. For More, ‘right reason’ was an innate law, an inner principle that could be accessed through a process of spiritual reformation. For Wilkins, on the other hand, it was a habitual disposition that once carefully developed, would not only help guide the individual onto the virtuous life, but also ensure conformity to religious truths. Wilkins came to this conclusion due to his empirical epistemology that emphasised the importance of ‘experience’ and evidence drawn from the senses, but also because English society could not be trusted to use their own innate intellection to right reason properly. Thus, the only practical solution was for the human mind to be inculcated with governing habitual dispositions. Ultimately, this analysis demonstrated how the concept of ‘habit’ fitted into the broader problem of deciding what human reason was as well as how it operated, as a consequence of living in a fallen world. In short, since most people could not grasp the dictates of reason, the dictates of reason therefore had to be internalised through habituation.

Having given a re-reading of right reason, chapter 2 then expanded upon the relationship between habit, religion, and reason by examining the notion of habitual dispositions in Restoration religion, focusing on how a group of loosely connected moderate divines attempted to fashion a religion that was founded on habitually acquired moral beliefs and dispositions. The moderate divines believed that habit was a possible solution to religious disagreement and civil strife because habitual dispositions, properly inculcated in the mind, they stressed, could provide a safeguard against uncivil behaviour, a lack of knowledge of religious duties and could lead to a well-exercised and grounded faith. A major aim of this chapter was to add a new dimension to the scholarship that has examined the changing nature of religion throughout the latter half of the seventeenth-century. Much excellent work has been done by Blair Worden, Mark Knight, Naomi Talback, and Isabel Rivers, that has demonstrated how religion became a civilising force rather than a saving force, how grace became synonymous with virtue: in short, how conduct and ethics came to slowly outweigh soteriology.⁶⁶³ What had not been fully explored was the actual underpinning operation of this process. In order to remedy this gap in the scholarship, I showed how by conduct, the moderate divines meant habitually acquired patterns of behaviour and dispositions. They meant a process of habituation as a pathway to living virtuously and apprehending religious truths. Again, their approach echoed Wilkins's conception of right reason as we saw in chapter 1: that habitual dispositions could govern the human mind, allowing the individual to reason properly in order to make good judgements, understand their religious duty, and behave properly. All of which was in the pursuit of salvation. However, this did not mean that they were somehow less religious – they simply chose to deal less with the intricacies of faith than with the cultivation of those habitual dispositions that would strengthen it.

⁶⁶³ See Worden, "The Question of Secularisation,"; Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*; Mark Knight, "'Meer religion' and the church-state of Restoration England,"; Talback, "A Mission to Reform Manners."

Another aim of chapter 2 was to supplement recent work by Ethan Shagan on how the rhetoric of moderation could carry an authoritarian meaning and ultimately be coercive, by examining an area of English intellectual thought that Shagan's work overlooks: habit. I argued that whilst the moderate divines did not necessarily believe in compelling individuals to true beliefs and virtuous action through the threats of coercive penalties, they were adamant that most of society had to be habituated to adopt moral norms and ensure a peaceful coexistence. Therefore, whilst chapter 2's reading of Restoration religion comes across as a discourse of peace, equanimity, reason and irenicism, it is also important to note that there existed a degree of coercion within the language of habituation and habitual dispositions that was recommended by the moderate divines.

Chapter 3 then shifted the focus to the context of the new experimental philosophy that was practised by the early Royal Society. Recent work by Sorana Corneanu, for example, has demonstrated how the virtuosi of the early Royal Society regarded the community of investigators not just as a tool for the validation of scientific results, but also as a site for the government of individual selves. Thus, in Corneanu's reading, the virtuosi saw their enterprise as an exercise that would improve the whole mind, making it fit for a range of judgements about both epistemological and moral matters. Rather than seeking to depersonalise knowledge in order to make assent possible, the virtuosi placed the cultivation of individual minds at the centre of their programme. Drawing upon Corneanu's original work, while also addressing areas that it overlooks, chapter 3 showed how habit and notions of habitual dispositions also formed a key part of the experimental life. I argued that experimental philosophers such as Robert Boyle and Robert Hooke were preoccupied with cultivating good experimental habitual behaviour – the habit of rightful examination and observation, the habit of regulating one's assent, the habit of right judgement – habitual behaviour that exhibited both an epistemic and a moral dimension. Accordingly, this

demonstrated how the moderate epistemological methodology of the early Royal Society was shaped by an appreciation of the importance of habituating the mind toward mental self-control. Thus, the mitigated scepticism and emphasis on the probability of knowledge advocated by its fellows such as Boyle, Hooke, and Sprat, was informed, in part, by self-fashioning mental exercises that disciplined the intellectual activity of the mind. Furthermore, through a fine-grained reading of Robert Boyle's *Christian Virtuoso*, I showed how 'religious virtues' that were thought to be attained from the study of nature actually assumed an important epistemological relevance. One such example was the 'religious virtue' of 'humility' towards God which was analogous to the virtue of epistemic modesty since it made the investigator acknowledge the limits of their knowledge of God's creation and thus regulated their assent.⁶⁶⁴ Such a reading also allows us to consider a different way to understand the complex relationship between English religion and English natural philosophy during this period. In this reading, for example, we can see how religion could provide the natural philosopher with appropriate epistemological behaviour. For Boyle, they assumed a cognitive component and, therefore, constituted an important requirement for pursuing the experimental method.

Finally, we then switched to looking at the construction of the subject rather than the instruction of the subject with an examination of Locke's educational writings. Chapter 4, in light of the genealogy of habit that had been teased out in the preceding chapters, attempted to show how John Locke consolidated these several intellectual strands into a coherent programme of education and discipline. Whilst Locke scholars have predominantly read Lockean education as either the introduction of a form of panoptic control over the child as the Foucauldian-disciplinarians take it to be, or as the straightforward programme of civic education as earlier scholars have done, I argued that it is perhaps best read as an

⁶⁶⁴ Boyle, *Christian Virtuoso*, p. 53.

individualistic training of the mind, a safeguard against all the other sources of habituation to which the child would inevitably be subjected. In other words, Lockean education actually aimed at the habit of having no fixed habits – an habitual scepticism that not only, in Locke’s view, made his liberal society possible, but also consolidated a preoccupation with habitual dispositions that had been ongoing since the mid seventeenth-century.

To make a rather obvious point, the common trend across all four chapters has been about how acquired habitual disposition could exercise a profound influence over the individual’s patterns of thought and behaviour. It should be noted, however, that there are important distinctions to be made here, ones that we have already encountered on several occasions and ones that I have tried to draw attention to in each chapter: different languages of habit. In the first instance, for example, we can identify what can broadly be described as *the habit of thinking*: John Wilkins’s formulation of right reason as a habit fits neatly into this category. We saw in chapter 1 how Wilkins recommended the cultivation of habitual moral virtues as a way to correct ‘right reasoning’ that would afford the individual the ability to govern their passion as well as to think and reason properly. The moderate divines mirrored his approach. As we saw in chapter 2, Isaac Barrow, for example, emphasised how it was crucial that the proper Christian developed “An habitual skill or faculty of judging aright about matters of practice, and chusing according to that right judgment, and conforming the actions to such good choice.”⁶⁶⁵ The inculcation of habitual dispositions that could govern reason and hold sovereign power over the mind made the religious life possible because, like Wilkins’s habitual right reason, they permitted the individual to comprehend transcendental values, allowing them to grasp a divinely sanctioned, eternally present morality that was the bind of all society.

⁶⁶⁵ The First Sermon, p. 1.

Similarly, chapter 3 revealed how Robert Boyle emphasised the importance of acquiring a “habit of receiving some sorts of Opinions, and especially those that seem unfriendly to Religion, but as Probationers, with a disposition to Reform or Discard them upon further Information.”⁶⁶⁶ Likewise, Robert Hooke stressed the need to “acquire a Habit of Intention, and of examining the whole Chain of Consequences from the first Principles to the Truth evidenced.”⁶⁶⁷ Here too, in the same vein as Wilkins, we can see Boyle and Hooke underlining the importance of habitual dispositions as a way to discipline the thinking of the experimental philosopher: to regulate their mind to resist premature conclusions as definitive, to form only tentative conclusions whilst always remaining open to new conclusions, and to carry out thorough evaluations at every stage of inquiry. Furthermore, Locke’s safeguard, the habit of having no fixed habits, was, to some degree, a habit of thinking properly. It was a habit that enabled the individual to admit error in oneself and deny authority to others, “to judge himself, and judge unbiasedly of all that he receives from others...Reverence or prejudice must not be suffered to give beauty or deformity to any of their opinions.”⁶⁶⁸ The Lockean subject, when inculcated with this habitual scepticism, would have the capacity of independent reflection and the mental agility that would avoid that “stiffness of mind”.⁶⁶⁹ They would also have been instilled with the required scepticism to facilitate the constant mental battle against inflexibility as well as the modesty to discard of mistaken judgements in the face of overwhelming contrary evidence.⁶⁷⁰

Another clear language of habit was *the habit of religion*. We saw this most clearly in chapter 2 which examined how a group of moderate divines emphasised the importance of acquired moral beliefs and dispositions as a key component of religious life. Matthew Hale,

⁶⁶⁶ Boyle, *The Christian Virtuoso*, pp. 106-07.

⁶⁶⁷ Hooke, *Posthumous Works*, p. 70.

⁶⁶⁸ Locke, *CU*, p. 3.

⁶⁶⁹ Locke, *CU*, p. 153.

⁶⁷⁰ Locke, *ECHU*, 4.16.3, 4.20.10.

for example, wrote about the “habit of religion,” a disposition that once acquired had the ability to govern the Christian, directing them towards virtuous action that would strengthen their faith. *The habit of religion*, then, directed the individual to the good Christian life. It was also a state of mind as John Wilkins argued: “*An habitual frame of mind*, whereby we are fitted for vertuous actions, and more especially for the Duties of Religion.”⁶⁷¹ Again, Matthew Hale also echoed something similar: “*The Habit* [of religion] it self: it is a frame and temper of Mind arising from the Love of God, to give every Man his due, according to the Will of God.”⁶⁷² Lastly, the moderate divines also believed that the Christianity best suited to civil peace and improvement was one that inculcated moral virtue. Thus, *the habit of religion* also had an important moral dimension and once properly inculcated, it raised the moral stock of the individual: as Isaac Barrow explained: it was “the habit that qualifies and denominates a man such or such in any kind or degree of morality.”⁶⁷³

One final language of habit that is worth briefly commenting on, one that has permeated this entire analysis was *the habit of self-control*. We first encountered this with John Wilkin’s habitual right reason which used habit as an effective solution to fix faulty chains of reasons in to order to guide the mind in making right judgements and setting the individual’s conduct on a rightful path. Thus, *the habit of self-control* was an effective way of not only correcting an individual’s ability to reason effectively, but also to replace reason with habitually acquired mental dispositions and patterns of behaviour.

As we observed in chapter 2, it was also a recurrent disposition throughout the work of the moderate divines. A very good example is Richard Baxter’s understanding of habit as a controlling faculty, which was remarkably similar to Wilkin’s conception of right reason.

⁶⁷¹ Wilkins, *Essay Towards a Real Character*, p. 204.

⁶⁷² Cited in A. Cromartie, *Sir Matthew Hale*, p. 173.

⁶⁷³ Ibid.

According to Baxter, it was essential for every Christian to cultivate “a sincere, habitual intention well laid at first in the heart, will serve to the right use of many particular means.”⁶⁷⁴ This ‘habitual intention,’ for Baxter, acted as a governing disposition, effectively replacing faulty reasoning, which could guide the actions of the individuals and offered a potential solution to misconduct and immorality. Joseph Glanvil demonstrated a similar approach in the context of the experimental philosophy when he stressed the importance of “an habitual modesty, that they are afraid to pass bold Judgments.”⁶⁷⁵ The experimental philosopher, according to Glanvill, had to develop a habitual frame of mind for assessing the evidence and managing their assent to that evidence. Self-control was crucial in these matters. Robert Boyle, as have seen, was in full agreement with Glanvill when he emphasised that cultivating “a great and ingenuous *Modesty of Mind*” was essential for the experimental life and the knowledge making process.⁶⁷⁶

However, it was in Locke’s work on education that *the habit of self-control* was to be fully consolidated. Locke’s educational programme aimed at the most extreme mental self-control: an habitual scepticism; the habit of having no fixed habits. Such a disposition if inculcated correctly, for Locke, effectively disciplined the mind against a variety of dangers and setbacks. It provided a safeguard not only against faulty reasoning and uncivil behaviour, but also against poor assent and the inability to discern the truths of religion. It demanded at all times that the individual “judge himself, and judge unbiasedly of all that he receives from others...Reverence or prejudice must not be suffered to give beauty or deformity to any of their opinions.”⁶⁷⁷

⁶⁷⁴ Baxter, *Christian Ethics*, in *The Practical Works of The Reverend Richard Baxter*, 23 vols., ed. Willim Orme (London, 1830), vol. 3, pp. 101-2.

⁶⁷⁵ Glanvill, *Essays on several important subjects in philosophy and religion* (1676), p. 24.

⁶⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁶⁷⁷ Locke, *CU*, p. 3.

The habit of thinking, the habit of religion, and the habit of self-control, are just a few examples of some of the habits that we have examined throughout this thesis. There is likely many more, but the brief task of teasing some out is to show, I hope, how the culture of habit crossed disciplinary boundaries and allows us to chart cultural connections as well as speak of, and highlight commonalities and overlaps. It also reveals a late early modern English intellectual culture that was rich, varied, and essentially transdisciplinary. Was the language of habit and notions of habitual dispositions just a convenient way for the moderate divines to advance Protestant apologetic or for the experimental philosopher to simply profess their impartiality? Or was ‘habit’ and ‘habitual dispositions’ a vital conceptual tool that helped generate and even make more truthful the practices of the English Church or the Early Royal Society? The answer, I think, lies somewhere in the middle. We have seen in chapter 2, for example, that the relationship between religion and habit was complex – it could be read as both an irenic discourse of peace and harmony as well as one that was essentially coercive and acted as a means of authorisation, self-restraint, and discipline. Likewise, chapter 3 demonstrated that habitual dispositions could be just as important in the moral production of knowledge as well as serving an important apologetic and legitimising function.

The central point, then, that I have tried to stress is that habit- in the form of habitually acquired dispositions or beliefs – made its way into the broader intellectual culture of late early modern England. I have shown how assertions of habitual dispositions were presented as a means to not only correct faulty right reasoning, but also to make the religious life, or the experimental life, or Lockean liberal society possible. All of which shared the common aim to bridle the excesses to which human beings were inevitably prone.⁶⁷⁸ This thesis thus offers two core conclusions. First, that late early modern English intellectuals were preoccupied with how habitual dispositions could solve problems of reason, religion, consensus in

⁶⁷⁸ See Shagan, *Rule of Moderation*; Tilmouth, *Passion's Triumph over Reason*; Schodel, *Excess and the Mean*.

experimental philosophy as well as unsociable individuals. At the heart of this preoccupation lay a deep-seated urgency to create methods of regulation to keep the unruly mind in check and unruly subjects in line. Second, that once we acknowledge the existence of this deep-seated genealogy of habit, we can then re-read John Locke's education programme and see how Locke was drawing from, and consolidating this genealogy to construct disciplined and self-controlled citizens that could make his vision of liberal society come true. The result of this analysis is not a new understanding of late Early Modern English intellectual thought but perhaps a new way of thinking about how late Early Modern English intellectuals addressed the problems of reason, religion, epistemic assent, and disobedient subjects and how they believed that habitual dispositions could shape the very psychology of reason, belief, assent, and self-control.

Ideally, an even broader perspective could investigate the extent to which a specifically English version of what Foucault called 'government of one's self and others' emerged in the seventeenth-century, establishing habitual dispositions as a basis of self-control and restraint. We might call this, *pace* Norbert Elias, the habituation process. Elias attributed the 'civilising process' through which early modern Europeans overcame endemic interpersonal violence of the middle ages to the psychosocial development of moderation based upon Weberian rationalism: as states monopolised legitimate force and economies were differentiated to the point that individuals relied upon networks of strangers for their survival, self-control thus became vital for social success.⁶⁷⁹ The present thesis does not dispute this argument, but rather suggests that there is parallel story to told, in England at least, about the emergence of a culture of habit which held that most individuals governed their behaviour

⁶⁷⁹ See Norbert Elias, *The Civilising Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, revised edition, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Maldon, Mass., 1994).

primarily through habitually-acquired mental dispositions rather than through conscientious internal motivations.

This ‘culture of habit,’ I would suggest, existed in many forms. Max Weber, for example, in his response to the criticisms levelled by the historian Felix Rachfaul, was challenged to explain the means by which the Protestant *Ethic*, drawn from Puritan theology, gave rise to the productive and disciplined individual, primed for capitalist society. He responded thus:

from their religious life, out of their religiously conditioned family traditions and from the religiously influenced life-style of their environment, there emerged a “habitus” among individuals which prepared them in specific ways to live up to the specific demands of early modern capitalism.⁶⁸⁰

Weber died soon after penning this response, but his reference to a ‘habitus,’ should give us pause for thought. There seems to be much scope for future study into how the notion ‘habitus’ and habitual dispositions were a driving force behind the cultural, social and economic changes of the early modern period, which has been hitherto left undeveloped. Such an examination may also reveal how the Protestant faith gave its believers a specific language of habit and discipline to draw upon. The evidence presented in this thesis would suggest that this is the case, but further investigations need to be done to argue this concretely. Taking this into consideration, then, there seems to be much mileage in Ethan Shagan’s recent claim that the “Reformation rather than the Enlightenment was the organising principle” of modernity.⁶⁸¹ In this reading, just as Shagan’s work allows us to understand how the central agonism of English modernity, the contradiction between liberty and authority, developed in its uniquely English form around the ideal of moderation, we may be able to more fully understand how a distinctively English ‘culture of habit,’ centred on the development of

⁶⁸⁰ See Wallace M. Davis, ““Anticritical Last Word in The Spirit of Capitalism,” by Max Weber,” *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 83, No. 5 (Mar., 1978), pp. 1105-1131.

⁶⁸¹ Shagan, *The Rule of Moderation*, p. 340.

habitual moral dispositions and behaviour, drawn from a Protestant theology of discipline, comparable to what Foucault called “government of one’s self and others,” emerged in the sixteenth and seventeenth century and was an essential feature of the transformation of late early modern England.

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