

Nicholas Jolley, *Locke's Touchy Subjects. Materialism and Immortality*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2015, 160 pp.

One of the aims of *Studi lockiani* is to draw attention to the most relevant publications in the panorama of Locke studies that have recently appeared. Without a doubt, Jolley's book is one of these works. The author explores some of the most controversial aspects in Locke's thought, including his views on the materiality/ immateriality of the soul, the idea of substance, the thinking matter hypothesis, and personal identity. Here I shall mention some aspects of Jolley's treatment of these issues, which I believe may greatly enhance our understanding of Locke's philosophy.

There is a red thread running throughout Jolley's book, namely his conviction that Locke was sympathetic towards a non-reductionist form of materialism based on property dualism. Unlike Hobbes, Locke would not regard mental states as identical with brain states, but rather as irreducibly mental properties of the brain. Jolley's opinion agrees with the weak form of materialism Jonathan Bennett attributed to Locke in 1994, although it differs from it in some respects. As Jolley observes, materialism would help solve the problem of providing the mind in Locke with an essence, a question that is particularly troublesome given Locke's rejection of the Cartesian principle that thought is the essence of the mind. If thought is only an intermittent operation of the mind, as Locke maintains against Descartes, then it must be a property depending on its essence – its real essence, not the nominal essence that is subjectively construed, for the first seems to be what he has in mind when he discusses the essence of the mental. Jolley admits that Bennett's suggestion that this essence might be the brain with its physical microstructure, to which thought or consciousness is intermittently annexed, not only harmonizes with

the thinking matter hypothesis in *Essay* in IV.iii.6, but also looks philosophically more attractive than the alternative view – the idea of the mind as an immaterial substance that thinks intermittently, and has therefore no real essence at all. However, Jolley also notes that this opinion would not fit in nicely with a substance-mode ontology of the mind as the one to which Locke seems to be committed in the *Essay*. In addition, the kind of emergentism Bennett attributes to Locke, which makes thought a property of bodies caused by, but somehow independent of, a fit disposition of matter, seems to Jolley to be ruled out by Locke in *Essay* IV.x, where the existence of God is demonstrated. Here Locke maintains that rational and wise thinking cannot be produced by matter, which Bennett interprets as meaning that thought must have a teleological regularity. Jolley, however, disagrees with Bennett on the meaning of this regularity, and suggests that Locke's concern about emergentism centres on its inability to explain God's omniscience.

Jolley also disagrees with Mackie, who reads Locke's theory of personal identity without noticing his fundamental preoccupation with the issue of resurrection, and rejects any attempt to interpret Locke's stance on such "touchy subjects" as the immateriality of the soul regardless of contextual matters. Understanding the theological concern which animated Locke when writing on these topics is essential, in Jolley's view, to a full comprehension of his thought. The fundamental role Locke attributed to the Scripture when considering these matters should likewise not be forgotten. In answer to Udo Thiel, who claimed that Locke's rejection of original sin was motivated by his theory of moral responsibility, Jolley remarks that other reasons should be taken into account, including Locke's conviction that this doctrine was inconsistent with the Scriptural text.

One of the most interesting aspects of Jolley's book is, without a doubt, its bringing to the fore Locke's theological "reconciling project". Jolley shows that the weak form of materialism Locke endorses in the *Essay* and in his correspondence with Stillingfleet, which is consistent with property dualism, was aimed at showing the irrelevance of the immateriality of the soul for personal immortality and, more in general, for morality or the ends of religion. If personal immortality is a divine gift, which does not depend on the identity of a persisting immaterial substance, then the immateriality of the soul cannot be regarded as a necessary and sufficient condition of the resurrection of the same human being on the day of Judgment. This implies that a weak form of materialism is theologically admissible, according to Locke, and must not be conflated with atheism, setting it apart from Hobbes's reductionist materialism.

Jolley also highlights some important developments in Locke's "reconciling project" from the *Essay* to the *Reasonableness of Christianity* and the correspondence with Stillingfleet. At the time of writing the *Essay*, Locke's account of heaven and hell was symmetrical, and he seemed to believe both in the demonstrability of morality and the possibility of knowing by reason that we are immortal, but in the following years these convictions somehow changed. In the *Reasonableness*, hell becomes a temporary condition, and the past failures of unassisted reason to demonstrate the teachings of natural law cast doubts on the feasibility of this enterprise in the future. Finally, in the correspondence with Stillingfleet, personal immortality becomes an article of faith. Jolley insists that these developments should not mislead us, and that there are real constants in Locke's thought about these issues (especially his desire to get rid of the traditional connection between immateriality and immortality). However, he also observes that they are relevant to a more external problem concerning the issue of personal immortality. If natural law is to be a genuine law, it must have sanctions, but if these sanctions must be in the afterlife, as Locke affirms in *Essay* I.iii.12, then, since we cannot know a priori whether there is an afterlife – a consequence of the view on personal immortality in the *Reasonableness* –, we cannot know that the law of nature is a law. This, however, is the position adopted by Hobbes. Jolley concludes that the development of Locke's opinion on immortality suggests that he "was in spite of himself committed to a position on law whose Hobbesian affinities he perhaps did not appreciate" (p. 230). It would be interesting to know more about the consequences of this position on Locke's idea of moral motivation. Hopefully, Jolley will return to this topic in the future, to clarify this aspect of Locke's thought.

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