Locke and French Enlightenment Histories of Philosophy

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Abstract: This paper examines Locke's place in French Enlightenment historiography. In particular, it is concerned with the manner in which Locke features in two important and influential histories of philosophy from the period, namely, Jean Le Rond d'Alembert's "Preliminary Discourse" of 1751 and Jean-Antoine-Nicolas Caritat, marquis de Condorcet's *The Sketch* of 1795. It argues that both histories accord Locke a crucial role in the emergence of a new approach to the study of the human mind and, for Condorcet, a new method for the sciences in general. Moreover, the connections that d'Alembert and Condorcet make between Locke and Descartes are shown to contrast with those made by Voltaire. The paper concludes with some reflections on the implications of d'Alembert's and Condorcet's histories for the historiography of eighteenth-century philosophy today.

Keywords: D'Alembert, Condorcet, Descartes, experimental philosophy, Voltaire.

This paper examines Locke's place in French Enlightenment historiography. In particular, it is concerned with the manner in which Locke features in two important and influential histories of philosophy from the period, namely, Jean Le Rond d'Alembert's "Preliminary Discourse" to the *Encyclopédie* of 1751 and Jean-Antoine-Nicolas Caritat, marquis de Condorcet's *The Sketch* of 1795[1]. These histories of philosophy are mature works by erudite and gifted philosophers in their own right. While their respective treatments of

[1] See J. Le Rond d'Alembert, *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia of Diderot*, trans. by R.N. Schwab, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1995, originally published as 'Discours préliminaire' in D. Diderot and J. Le Rond d'Alembert (eds.), *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, Paris 1751, vol. 1, pp. i-lii; Jean-Antoine-Nicolas Caritat, marquis de Condorcet, *The Sketch*, in *Condorcet: Political Writings*, ed. by S. Lukes and N. Urbinati, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2012, pp. 1-147. Originally published as *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain*, Paris 1795.

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Locke are only small constituents of much larger wholes, the importance that these works accord him suggest that they will repay careful study. Indeed, we might consider the "Preliminary Discourse" and *The Sketch* as providing the literary equivalent of a Canaletto canvas with two point perspective. The first 'vanishing point' is Locke's place in the Enlightenment historiography of early modern philosophy, and the second, the implications of these perspectives for Enlightenment historiography today[2].

The structure of this paper is as follows: section one discusses d'Alembert's treatment of Locke and his appropriation of Lockean ideas; section two provides a parallel treatment of Locke in Condorcet's *The Sketch*; and the concluding section three provides an assessment of the continuities between the two histories, and a contrast with Voltaire's treatment of Locke in *Letters Concerning the English Nation*. All of this is with a view to some reflections on the historiography of Enlightenment philosophy, then and now.

1. *Locke in the history of the "Preliminary Discourse"*

D'Alembert's "Preliminary Discourse" to the *Encyclopédie* sets out the rationale, methodology and philosophical underpinning of the entire encyclopaedic project. In its own day it was regarded as a singular work of genius, and it is still regarded as one of the seminal works of the French Enlightenment. Richard Schwab, the translator of the standard English edition, goes so far as to claim, "[i]t *is* the Enlightenment insofar as one can make such a claim for any single work"[3]. The discourse is divided into three parts, the second of which consists of a history of the arts and sciences since the Renaissance[4]. It comprises one third of the content of the whole discourse. D'Alembert structures this history around the progressive manifestation of the three cognitive faculties: memory, imagination and reason. According to d'Alembert, this is not the

[2] For surveys of Enlightenment historiography, see J.K. Wright, "Historical thought in the era of the Enlightenment", in *A Companion to Western Historical Thought*, ed. by L. Kramer and S. Maza, Wiley Blackwell, Oxford 2002, 123-42 and *A Companion to Enlightenment Historiography*, ed. by R.A. Sparling, Brill, Leiden 2013.

[3] R.N. Schwab, "Introduction", in d'Alembert, *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia of Diderot*, p. ix. For its reception by d'Alembert's contemporaries, including Condorcet, see ibid., pp. ix-xi.

[4] For an overview and analysis of d'Alembert's history, see G. Piaia, "The history of philosophy in the *Encyclopédie*", in G. Piaia and G. Santinello (eds.), *Models of the History of Philosophy, Vol. III: The Second Enlightenment and the Kantian Age*, Springer, Dordrecht 2015, pp. 11-21.

normal order which the mind would naturally follow; rather it is the ordering that has happened to unfold in the era of the regeneration of ideas, that is, the Renaissance and beyond[5]. Thus, the application of reason came last, and reason remains the operative faculty of the era in which he is living, to which he has contributed, and about which he has most to say.

What makes d'Alembert's historical narrative distinctive then, is the fact that it diverges from the natural progression of his (and Diderot's) faculty psychology as explicated in Part I and later reflected in the grand scheme of the arts and sciences in Part III of the "Preliminary Discourse"; the normal order being a progression from memory to reason and finally to imagination: "[p]lacing reason ahead of imagination appears to us to be a well-founded arrangement and one which is in conformity with the natural progress of the operations of the mind"[6]. That the whole of Part II of the "Preliminary Discourse" diverges from this progression shows how intentional d'Alembert's artificial historical partitioning is[7]. And it is within this framework that the importance of Locke's contribution to philosophy is assessed.

Thus, there is a very specific sense in which d'Alembert is writing about the age of reason: it is the age of reason in contrast to the age of memory and the age of imagination. We might even gloss this as the age of the faculty of reason. This is not to say that it is the age of reason in contrast to emotion or sentiment, or that it is the age of rationality or rationalism. It is not as if the other two faculties of the mind are now inoperative or have ceased to impact the current age. It is just that gradually, since the early seventeenth century, as a result of the impact of the likes of Bacon and Descartes, reason has come to predominate and to bear fruit in a manner that was not possible in previous ages. In his later *Essai sur les élémens de philosophie* (1759) d'Alembert calls the current age "the century of philosophy *par excellence*"[8] and this is more-or-less equivalent to calling it the age of reason.

Yet there is another salient background theory to d'Alembert's history of the arts and sciences that complements his faculty psychology, and this is the theory of principles and its relation to the ordering of the sciences and arts. D'Alembert

5 D'Alembert, "Preliminary Discourse", cit., pp. 60-61.

6 Ibid., p. 51.

7 Ibid., p. 76: "[i]f we have not put reason after imagination as he [Bacon] did, it is because we have followed the metaphysical order of the operations of the mind in the encyclopedic system rather than the historical order of its progress since the renaissance of letters".

8 J. Le Rond d'Alembert, *Essai sur les élémens de philosophie*, ed. by R.N. Schwab, Olms, Hildesheim 1965, p. 9. See also, d'Alembert, "Preliminary Discourse", cit., p. 91.

is fully committed to what I call the neo-Aristotelian theory of knowledge acquisition, which has as its constituents a theory of principles, a theory of demonstration, and a theory of the sciences[9]. With regard to the theory of principles, d'Alembert is a strong advocate of Principle Minimalism, the view that the fewer principles on which a science is founded the more fecund those principles are, and he entertains the thought that there may even be one ultimate principle from which all the sciences can be derived[10]. As for the theory of the sciences, d'Alembert is committed to the view that all of the sciences are linked together in a kind of branching chain and there is a hierarchy of the sciences with metaphysics standing at the pinnacle[11]. And it is Locke's contribution to metaphysics that d'Alembert focuses on in his appraisal of the Englishman's contribution to the age of reason. Furthermore, like many of his contemporaries, d'Alembert believes that there are two forms of metaphysics: particular metaphysics which is concerned with the science of the soul, and general metaphysics or ontology, which is concerned with the nature of being[12].

With this background in mind, we can now turn to d'Alembert's treatment of Locke in his history of the arts and sciences. I have reproduced the entire extract here together with the preceding paragraph on Newton and metaphysics. It will be immediately clear that the paragraph on Locke cannot be understood without the segue provided by the paragraph that precedes it.

It appears that Newton had not entirely neglected metaphysics. He was too great a philosopher not to be aware that it constitutes the basis of our knowledge and that clear and exact notions about everything must be sought in metaphysics alone. Indeed, the works of this profound geometer make it apparent that he had succeeded in constructing such notions for himself concerning the

[9] See P.R. Anstey, "Principles in early modern philosophy and science", in D. Jalobeanu and C. Wolfe (eds.), *Springer Encyclopedia of Early Modern Philosophy and the Sciences*, 2020.

[10] See J. Le Rond d'Alembert, and J.-B. de La Chappelle, 'Elémens des sciences', in *Encyclopédie*, cit., vol. 5, ed. by D. Diderot and J. Le Rond d'Alembert, Paris 1755, pp. 491-97; see also P.R. Anstey, "The Principled Enlightenment: Condillac, d'Alembert and Principle Minimalism", in G. Boucher and H.M. Lloyd (eds.), *Rethinking the Enlightenment: Between History, Philosophy, and Politics*, Lexington, Lanham 2018, pp. 131-50.

[11] See d'Alembert, "Preliminary Discourse", cit., p. 5 and especially J. Le Rond d'Alembert and J.-B. de La Chappelle, 'Elémens des sciences', p. 491: "if we were able to perceive without interruption the invisible chain that links all the objects of our knowledge, the elements of all the sciences might be reduced to a unique principle, of which the principal consequences would be the elements of each particular science".

[12] See, for example, E. Bonnot de Condillac, *Essay on the Origin of Knowledge*, ed. by H. Aasleff, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2001, p. 3: "[w]e must distinguish two sorts of metaphysics".

principal objects that occupied him. However, he abstained almost totally from discussing his metaphysics in his best known writings, and we can hardly learn what he thought concerning the different objects of that discipline, except in the works of his followers. This may have been because he himself was somewhat dissatisfied with the progress he had made in metaphysics, or because he believed it difficult to give mankind sufficiently satisfactory and extensive enlightenment on a discipline too often uncertain and disputed. Or finally, it may have been because he feared that in the shadow of his authority people might abuse his metaphysics as they had abused Descartes', in order to support dangerous or erroneous opinions. Therefore, since he has not caused any revolution here, we will abstain from considering him from the standpoint of this subject.

Locke undertook and successfully carried through what Newton had not dared to do, or perhaps would have found impossible. It can be said that he created metaphysics, almost as Newton had created physics. He understood that the abstractions and ridiculous questions which had been debated up to that time and which had seemed to constitute the substance of philosophy were the very part most necessary to proscribe. He sought the principal causes of our errors in those abstractions and in the abuse of signs, and that is where he found them. In order to know our soul, its ideas, and its affections, he did not study books, because they would only have instructed him badly; he was content with probing deeply into himself, and after having contemplated himself, so to speak, for a long time, he did nothing more in his treatise, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, than to present mankind with the mirror in which he had looked at himself. In a word, he reduced metaphysics to what it really ought to be: the experimental natural philosophy [*physique*] of the soul—a very different kind of natural philosophy [*physique*] from that of bodies, not only in its object, but in its way of viewing that object. In the latter study we can, and often do, discover unknown phenomena. In the former, facts as ancient as the world exist equally in all men; so much the worse for whoever believes he is seeing something new. Reasonable metaphysics can only consist, as does experimental natural philosophy [*physique expérimentale*], in the careful assembling of all these facts, in reducing them to a corpus of information, in explaining some by others, and in distinguishing those which ought to hold the first rank and serve as the foundation. In brief, the principles of metaphysics, which are as simple as axioms, are the same for the philosophers as for the general run of people. But the meager progress that this science has made for such a long time shows how rarely these principles are applied felicitously, whether because of the difficulty that surrounds such an application, or perhaps also

because of the natural temptations that prevent us from holding ourselves within bounds when we engage in metaphysical speculations[13].

The translation is by Schwab, and I have made some important modifications, about which more later. First, however, we need to orient ourselves by reviewing d'Alembert's concluding comments on Newton and metaphysics.

D'Alembert is sure that Newton did not neglect metaphysics because he would have been aware that "it constitutes the basis of our knowledge and that clear and exact notions about everything must be sought in metaphysics alone". This comment reflects d'Alembert's belief that metaphysics is the highest of all the sciences, a point that is nicely illustrated in the foldout diagram of the scheme of knowledge where metaphysics comes first in the central column of knowledge that pertains to reason[14]. Yet Newton, according to d'Alembert, did not discuss metaphysics in his main publications, and we are left to the writings of his followers to determine what his views were. No doubt d'Alembert has the likes of Samuel Clarke and the notion of absolute space in mind here[15]. Whatever the reason for Newton's reluctance to treat of metaphysics, what is clear to d'Alembert is that "he has not caused any revolution here". This sets up the contrast with Locke about whom d'Alembert goes on to claim:

> Locke undertook and successfully carried through what Newton had not dared to do, or perhaps would have found impossible. It can be said that he created metaphysics, almost as Newton had created physics.

Without the distinction between particular and general metaphysics this claim might seem obscure. D'Alembert reiterates it a few sentences later, though now with more detail:

> he reduced metaphysics to what it really ought to be: the experimental natural philosophy [*physique*] of the soul – a very different kind of natural philosophy [*physique*] from that of bodies, not only in its object, but in its way of viewing that object.

Newton dealt with material bodies, Locke with the soul. Where Newton had engaged in experimental natural philosophy of material bodies, Locke

13 D'Alembert, "Preliminary Discourse", cit., pp. 83-84, modified.
14 Reproduced in d'Alembert, "Preliminary Discourse", cit., pp. 144-45.
15 See d'Alembert, "Preliminary Discourse", cit., p. 18.

reduced particular metaphysics to "the experimental natural philosophy of the soul"[16].

D'Alembert clearly sees Locke's *Essay*, whose title he gives in full and which he had carefully read[17], as a work of experimental philosophy and it is worth digressing to flesh this out a little. Not only was d'Alembert committed to the neo-Aristotelian theory of knowledge acquisition and to a tripartite faculty psychology, he was also an advocate of experimental philosophy, and by the late 1740s was *au fait* with the leading British writings of the movement[18]. The "Preliminary Discourse" endorses experimental philosophy and rejects speculative philosophy, what in the French context was called the spirit of systems, with its indulging in hypotheses and untested principles. Unfortunately, this is obscured in Richard Schwab's translation of *physique expérimentale* as 'experimental physics' and I have modified the translation accordingly[19]. Thus, later in the "Preliminary Discourse" d'Alembert offers an extended attack on the spirit of systems, citing Condillac as one who has "dealt a death blow to it", alluding to the latter's *Traité des systèmes*[20].

It is important at this juncture to make the historiographical observation that d'Alembert uses the actors' category of experimental philosophy as a descriptor for Locke's project in the *Essay*, a book which proponents of the post-Kantian historiography of rationalism versus empiricism would later describe

[16] See also Anne Robert Jacques Turgot's undated comment in his "Réflexions générales et pensées diverses": "La vraie métaphysique, dont Locke nous a ouvert le premier le chemin", in A.R.J. Turgot, *Œuvres de Turgot et documents le concernent*, ed. by G. Schelle, 5 vols., Paris 1913-23, vol. 1, p. 346.

[17] There is ample evidence in the "Preliminary Discourse" alone that d'Alembert had imbibed distinctive Lockean doctrines from the *Essay* itself and not from his Lockean compatriot Condillac. See, for example, his equivalent of the Lockean distinction between intuitive and demonstrative knowledge: "Evidence properly pertains to the ideas whose connection the mind perceives immediately. Certitude pertains to those whose connection can be known only by the aid of a certain number of intermediate ideas", d'Alembert, "Preliminary Discourse", cit., p. 44. The doctrine of intermediate ideas is absent from Condillac. See also d'Alembert's critique of logic which bears strong parallels with Locke, ibid., p. 30.

[18] See P.R. Anstey "D'Alembert, the 'Preliminary Discourse' and experimental philosophy", *Intellectual History Review* 24 (2014), pp. 508-9.

[19] D'Alembert defines *physique* as "the study of Nature", "Preliminary Discourse", cit., p. 16.

[20] D'Alembert, "Preliminary Discourse", cit., pp. 94-95, partially derived from J. Le Rond d'Alembert, *Recherches sur la précession des equinoxes, et sur la nutation*, Paris 1749, pp. vii-viii. See also ibid., p. xxxviii. For further discussion of d'Alembert and the spirit of systems, see V. Le Ru, *Jean Le Rond d'Alembert philosophe*, Vrin, Paris 1994, pp. 173-77. For the origins of the anti-system sentiment in France, see P.R. Anstey, "The Principled Enlightenment", cit., pp. 135-39. For a collection on the spirit of systems in eighteenth-century France, though one that largely ignores the distinction between experimental and speculative philosophy, see S. Marchand and E. Pavy-Guilbert, (eds.), *L'Esprit de système au xviii^e siècle*, Hermann, Paris 2017.

as the quintessential work of British empiricism. It must be said that it is hard to see any value in the post-Kantian terms of reference here, whereas the distinction between experimental and speculative philosophy plays an important role in the "Preliminary Discourse" in general and in d'Alembert's understanding of Locke in particular. Thus, for example, d'Alembert elaborates on Locke's method by pointing out the parallels with experimental natural philosophy:

> Reasonable metaphysics can only consist, as does experimental natural philosophy [*Physique expérimentale*], in the careful assembling of all these facts, in reducing them to a corpus of information, in explaining some by others, and in distinguishing those which ought to hold the first rank and serve as the foundation.

Here 'reasonable metaphysics' is the metaphysics of the soul, that is, the science of that which has the faculty of reason[21], and this, d'Alembert points out, consists in assembling the relevant facts, forming them into a body of data from which we can glean explanatory relations and determining which of those facts can serve as principles of the science. The same goes for experimental natural philosophy, which at one point d'Alembert calls reasoned natural philosophy [*Physique raisonnée*][22]. The salient difference is the method by which the facts are acquired. In reasonable metaphysics Locke

> was content with probing deeply into himself, and after having contemplated himself, so to speak, for a long time, he did nothing more in his treatise, [...] than to present mankind with the mirror in which he had looked at himself.

Thus, Locke's method was one of introspective observation whereby one can "experiment in himself"[23], in contrast to the objective method of studying material bodies. Yet the aim of both methods is identical: to establish principles upon which to found a science, those facts which "hold the first rank and serve as the foundation" of reasonable metaphysics.

[21] In Part III of the "Preliminary Discourse", d'Alembert and Diderot speak of "the *science of the soul*, which has been subdivided into *science of the reasonable soul* [...] and *science of the feeling soul*", "Preliminary Discourse", cit., p. 149. Again, in the article on "Catalogue" in the *Encyclopédie*, Michel-Antoine David claims "Metaphysics searches for knowledge of that which is the mind and thought, the properties and operations of the reasonable soul", *Encyclopédie*, cit., vol. 2, p. 764.

[22] D'Alembert, "Preliminary Discourse", cit., p. 55.

[23] See, for example, J. Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. by P.H. Nidditch, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1975, II.xxi.47, p. 263 and II.xxiii.32, pp. 313-14.

D'Alembert is also aware of the importance of the negative side to Locke's method, the diagnosis of error which is caused by the abuse of words: "[h]e sought the principal causes of our errors in those abstractions and in the abuse of signs, and that is where he found them". This is not just a passing reference to Locke's view of the causes of error, for earlier in the "Preliminary Discourse" d'Alembert elaborates on his own commitment to this very analysis of conceptual errors in the context of his discussion of one of the three leading types of principle, namely, axioms, and it is worth digressing to set out d'Alembert's view.

> As some philosophers have observed, we owe many errors to the abuse of words. It is perhaps to this same abuse that we owe axioms. My intention is not, however, to condemn their use; I wish only to point out that their true purpose is merely to render simple ideas more familiar to us by usage, and more suitable for the different uses to which we can apply them. I say virtually the same thing of the use of mathematical theorems, although with the appropriate qualifications. Viewed without prejudice, they are reducible to a rather small number of primary truths. If one examines a succession of geometrical propositions, deduced one from the other so that two neighboring propositions are immediately contiguous without any interval between them, it will be observed that they are all only the first proposition which is successively and gradually reshaped, so to speak, as it passes from one consequence to the next, but which, nevertheless, has not really been multiplied by this chain of connections; it has merely received different forms. It is almost as if one were trying to express this proposition by means of a language whose nature was being imperceptibly altered, so that the proposition was successively expressed in different ways representing the different states through which the language had passed[24].

D'Alembert compares the abuse of words with the progression from axioms to theorems in geometry. He does not, of course, reject axioms or theorems, rather he seeks to show how language tends to render the usage of simple ideas more complicated than it ought to be. (Note here the commitment to the theory of ideas and the theory of principles.) Using the analogy of geometrical reasoning, d'Alembert claims that in a series of deductions from a geometrical proposition, each successive proposition is "only the first proposition which is successively and gradually reshaped, so to speak, as it passes from one consequence to the next". It is similar to expressing a proposition in a language that is subtly changing so that the same proposition is expressed using different words

[24] D'Alembert, "Preliminary Discourse", cit., p. 28.

as the language mutates. At this point in the text, d'Alembert loses the flow of the claims that instigated the analogy, and he moves on to express wonder at the genius of those who have discovered those fundamental truths from which we are able to extract new geometrical knowledge. Nevertheless, the Lockean analysis of the sources of error remains and he adverts to it again when discussing the difficulty of distinguishing between the sciences and arts: "How many questions and how much trouble we would spare ourselves if we finally determined the meaning of words in a clear and precise way!"[25].

We return, in conclusion, to d'Alembert's own historiography. Recall that d'Alembert situates Locke in the age of reason, following his treatment of Newton, and claims that Locke brought about a change in metaphysics that the great Newton himself was either unable or unwilling to attempt, namely, creating a metaphysics of the soul. Two further points can be added now. First, one of the central drivers of d'Alembert's history is the notion of revolution.

The era of philosophy opened under the bondage of Scholasticism: "Scholasticism, which constitutes the whole of so-called science of the centuries of ignorance, still was prejudicial to the progress of true philosophy in that first century of enlightenment"[26]. It could only be overcome by "bold and new opinions"[27]. As the previous century opened, Francis Bacon

> asserted that the scholastics had enervated science by their petty questions, and that the mind ought to sacrifice the study of general beings for that of individual objects; nonetheless, he seems to have shown a little too much caution or deference to the dominant taste of his century in his frequent use of the terms of the scholastics, sometimes even of scholastic principles, and in the use of divisions and subdivisions, fashionable in his time. After having burst so many irons, this great man was still held by certain chains which he could not, or dared not, break[28].

That task was finally achieved by Descartes. It was he who

> had the courage to arise against a despotic and arbitrary power and who, in preparing a resounding revolution, laid the foundations of a more just and happier government, which he himself was not able to see established[29].

25 Ibid., p. 40.
26 Ibid., p. 71.
27 Ibid., p. 76.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid., p. 80.

Unhappily, his natural philosophy was ultimately rejected, and "[h]is metaphysics ... suffered virtually the same fate"[30].

Yet it was Descartes who paved the way for Newton who "gave philosophy a form which apparently it is to keep". This was, of course, the method of experimental philosophy: "That great genius saw that it was time to banish conjectures and vague hypotheses from physics, or at least to present them only for what they were worth, and that this science was uniquely susceptible to the experiments of geometry"[31]. And yet it was left to Locke to apply this method to the study of metaphysics, for Newton "has not caused any revolution here". It was not that Locke was working from a new set of observations: "facts as ancient as the world exist equally in all men". It was Locke's careful assembling of these facts that led to explanatory relations between them and the establishment of principles of reasonable metaphysics that brought about the revolution in metaphysics.

D'Alembert rounds off his treatment of the contributions of Newton and Locke with a kind of 'swings and roundabouts' claim concerning national hegemony in the age of reason: "[w]e may conclude from all this history that England is indebted to us for the origins of that philosophy which we have since received back from her"[32]. Then after a brief discussion of Leibniz and his metaphysics, d'Alembert turns to the theme of the immediate reception of his "[p]rincipal geniuses" Bacon, Descartes, Locke and Newton[33]. Our interest is in Locke. D'Alembert's general observation is that none of them had an impact on the sciences during their lifetimes: this was to follow in future generations. As for Locke, "[f]orgotten for a long time in favor of Rohault and Régis, and still rather poorly known by the multitude, Locke is finally beginning to have some readers and a few partisans among us"[34]. No doubt d'Alembert has Voltaire and Condillac in mind here, yet the overall impression is that the importance of Locke is yet to be widely appreciated. This is strikingly different to Condorcet's claim forty-four years later that Locke's method "was soon adopted by all philosophers"[35], and it is to Condorcet that we now turn.

30 Ibid., pp. 79-80.
31 Ibid., p. 81.
32 Ibid., p. 85.
33 Ibid., p. 85; see also p. 60.
34 Ibid., p. 91.
35 Condorcet, *The Sketch*, cit., p. 96.

2. *Locke in Condorcet's* The Sketch

Condorcet's history of human progress is divided into ten epochs. The first nine epochs cover the progress from pre-civil human existence to the revolutionary period of the late eighteenth century; the tenth epoch is a projection beyond Condorcet's day into the future. His treatment of Locke is found in the ninth epoch whose subtitle is "From Descartes to the foundation of the French Republic". This epoch is characterised as that time when reason finally threw off the chains of tyranny and superstition, as Condorcet puts it: "[i]t remains for us to study the stage in which [reason] finally succeeds in breaking these chains, [...] when at last she can go forward unhindered"[36].

The focus of the opening section of the ninth epoch is political liberty that is the first form of release from the constrictive chains of the past. Condorcet portrays the gradual progression of political liberty that, in spite of the prevailing forms of despotism, grew from the "spirit of industry and commerce" and, importantly, "through a wider diffusion of the *philosophical ideas of equality and humanity*" and the gradual progress of "enlightenment"[37]. A critical turning-point resulting from these developments is the newly emerging influence of public opinion on leaders and nations. This has led to national political revolutions, such as that in America and that which France was currently experiencing. Within the swelling voice of public opinion, finally, the "true rights of man" have been discovered, rights which can be deduced from a single truth: that "*man is a sentient being, capable of reasoning and of acquiring moral ideas*"[38].

Here we have a very pregnant thought, one that requires careful unpacking. We note first, the gesture to Principle Minimalism, the view that a science can be founded on one fecund principle. Second, we note the emphasis on rights, a key theme of the ninth epoch with the expression "natural rights of man" alluding to such writings as Lafayette's famous "Declaration of the rights of man and the citizen" of 1789 and Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*[39], and with the ensuing claim that "the maintenance of these rights was the sole object of men's coming together in political societies"[40]. In fact, Condorcet follows this claim with a kind of précis of a Rousseauean theory of political society in which he speaks

[36] Ibid., p. 89.
[37] Ibid., p. 91.
[38] Ibid., p. 92.
[39] See T. Paine, *Rights of Man*, London 1791. For Condorcet and Paine, see Williams, *Condorcet and Modernity*, cit., p. 24.
[40] Condorcet, *The Sketch*, cit., p. 92.

of the individual binding "himself in advance to the will of the majority which then becomes unanimous" and the basis of political obligation. Third, we note the theme of people as sentient, reasoning beings who are able to acquire moral ideas. This takes us back to the Introduction of *The Sketch* where Condorcet's anthropology sets the terms of reference for the whole work. It also drives us forward to the treatment of Locke who set out in what sense humans are sentient beings and just how our moral ideas are acquired. And so, it is to Locke that we now turn; I quote the extract in full.

Descartes had brought philosophy back to reason; for he had understood that it must be derived entirely from those primary and evident truths which we can discover by observing the operations of the human mind. Soon, however, his impatient imagination snatched it from the path that he had traced for it, and for a time it seemed that philosophy had regained her independence only to be led astray by new errors.

At last, Locke grasped the thread by which philosophy should be guided; he showed that an exact and precise analysis of ideas, which reduces them step by step to other ideas of more immediate origin or of simpler composition, is the only way to avoid being lost in that chaos of incomplete, incoherent and indeterminate notions which chance presents to us at hazard and we unthinkingly accept.

By this same analysis he proved that all ideas are the result of the operations of our minds upon sensations we have received, or, to put it more exactly, that they are the combinations of these sensations presented to us simultaneously by the faculty of memory in such a way that our attention is arrested and our perception is thereby limited to no more than a part of such compound sensations.

He showed that if we attach a word to each idea after analysing it and circumscribing it, we shall succeed in remembering the idea ever afterwards in a uniform fashion; that is to say, the idea will always be formed of the same simple ideas, it will always be enclosed within the same limits and it can in consequence be used in a chain of reasoning without any risk of confusion. On the other hand, if a word is used in such a way that it does not correspond to a determinate idea, it can at different times arouse different ideas in the same person's mind, and this is the most fecund source of error in reasoning.

Locke, finally, was the first man who dared to set a limit to human understanding, or rather to determine the nature of the truths that it can come to know and of the objects it can comprehend.

This method was soon adopted by all philosophers and, by applying it to moral science, to politics and to social economy, they were able to make almost as sure progress in these sciences as they had in the natural sciences. They were able to admit only proven truths, to separate these truths from whatever as yet remained doubtful and uncertain, and to ignore whatever is and always will be impossible to know.

Similarly, the analysis of our sentiments leads to our finding, in the development of our capacity to feel pleasure and pain, the origin of our moral ideas, the foundation of those general truths which, resulting from these ideas, determine the necessary and immutable laws of justice and injustice, and, finally, the motives that we have for conforming to them, motives which spring from the very nature of our sensibility, from what might be called our moral constitution.

This metaphysical method became virtually a universal instrument. Men learnt to use it in order to perfect the methods of the physical sciences, to throw light on their principles and to examine the validity of their proofs; and it was extended to the examination of facts and to the rules of taste.

Thus, it was applied to all the various undertakings of human understanding, and by means of it the operations of the mind in every branch of knowledge were subjected to analysis, and the nature of the truths and the kind of certainty we can expect to find from each of these branches of knowledge was thereby revealed. It is this new step in philosophy that has forever imposed a barrier between mankind and the errors of its infancy; a barrier that should save it from relapsing into its former errors under the influence of new prejudices, just as it should assure the eventual eradication of those that still survive unrecognised, and should make it certain that any that may take their place will exercise only a faint influence and enjoy only an ephemeral existence[41].

As with d'Alembert's "Preliminary Discourse", the paragraph preceding the discussion of Locke provides a carefully crafted segue. Condorcet claims that it was Descartes who "brought philosophy back to reason" by showing that it is derived from principles that are observed from the operations of our minds. He almost certainly has the *cogito* in mind here and the general project of the *Meditations*. Condorcet attributes the key corrective shift in philosophy to Descartes but claims that he soon lost his way, and Condorcet goes on to argue that it was Locke who "grasped the thread by which philosophy should be guided", thus motivating his treatment of Locke. However, before proceed-

41 Ibid., pp. 95-97.

ing to analyse Condorcet's discussion of Locke, it is worth zooming out and taking a wider view of the overall project of *The Sketch* in order to situate the 'Cartesian corrective' and its working out by Locke within his (Condorcet's) narrative of human progress.

In the Introduction, Condorcet sets out some of the organising principles of his history of human progress. He opens *The Sketch* with a statement of the nature of the metaphysics of the human mind:

> Man is born with the ability to receive sensations; to perceive them and to distinguish between the various simple sensations of which they are composed; to remember, recognise and combine them; to compare these combinations; [...] to attach signs to them all in order to recognise them more easily [...] This faculty is developed in him through the action of external objects [...] through communication with other beings like himself; and finally through various artificial methods [...] Sensations are attended by pleasure or pain [...] as a consequence of this capacity and of his ability to form and combine ideas, there arise between him and his fellow creatures ties of interest and duty [...] If one confines oneself to the study and observation of the general facts and laws about the development of these faculties, considering only what is common to all human beings, this science is called metaphysics[42].

This is Condorcet's basic summary of the relevant features of his conception of humankind that pertain to his history of its progress through the centuries. Note how Lockean it sounds: talk of the action of external objects as the cause of sensations, the talk of simple sensations or ideas which can be combined and decomposed, the attaching of signs to ideas to generate language, the association of pleasure or pain with each sensation. And all of this is a science: "this science is called metaphysics". Clearly Condorcet's conception of human understanding is cut from the same cloth as that of d'Alembert in the "Preliminary Discourse".

More importantly, however, it is this conception of the understanding, this science of metaphysics of the mind, that provides the raw materials of the ensuing history of human progress: "if one studies this development as it manifests itself in the inhabitants of a certain area at a certain period of time and then traces it on from generation to generation, one has the picture of the progress of the human mind"[43], a progress that "is subject to the same general laws that can

[42] Ibid., p. 1.
[43] Ibid., pp. 1-2.

be observed in the development of the faculties of the individual"[44]. Thus, this Lockean-style science of the human mind provides the terms of reference for understanding the changes in different human societies throughout human history and for instructing us "about the means we should employ to make certain and rapid the further progress that [man's] nature allows him still to hope for"[45].

In the master narrative of *The Sketch*, philosophy loses its way and it is only in the final paragraphs of the eighth epoch that the transition to the period of enlightenment begins. There, according to Condorcet, "[t]hree great men have marked the transition from this stage of history to the next: Bacon, Galileo, Descartes". Bacon provided the method for studying nature through "observation, experiment and calculation". Galileo "showed by example how to arrive at a knowledge of the laws of nature" but limited himself to the physical sciences[46]. It was Descartes who extended the new method to "all the subjects of human thought" even though he gave too much licence to his imagination. Above all, claims Condorcet, it was Descartes who "commanded men to shake off the yoke of authority [*de secouer le joug de l'autorité*]", echoing d'Alembert's almost identical claim that "Descartes dared at least to show intelligent minds how to throw off the yoke ... of authority [*secoüer le joug ... de l'autorité*]"[47]. It is this that brings us to Locke.

Thus, it is only with the Cartesian corrective and then Locke's grasping of the "thread by which philosophy should be guided" that humankind gets back on track and begins to lock in the inevitable progress that is to follow. Interestingly, the very same metaphor of grasping the thread [*saisi le fil*] is used in the second paragraph of Condorcet's 'Reception Discourse' to the French Academy on 21 February 1782, where he claims:

> The general system of principles of our knowledge has been developed, in which the method of discovery of truth has been reduced to an art, namely, to formulas, and in which reason has finally recognised the route that she must follow and grasped the thread [*saisi le fil*] which will prevent her from losing her way [*s'égarer*][48].

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid., p. 2.

[46] Ibid., p. 87, modifying 'experience' to 'experiment' for *l'expérience*.

[47] Condorcet, *The Sketch*, cit., p. 88 = *Esquisse*, cit., p. 231; d'Alembert, "Preliminary Discourse", cit., p. 80 = "Discours préliminaire", *Encyclopédie*, cit., p. xxvi. See also the subtitle to the eighth epoch, Condorcet, *Esquisse*, cit., p. 185.

[48] J.-A.-N. Caritat, marquis de Condorcet, 'Discours prononcé dans L'académie Française', *Œuvres de Condorcet*, ed. by A. Condorcet O'Connor and M.F. Arago, Paris 1847, vol. 1, p. 390.

Here the nature of 'the general system of principles of our knowledge' is not specified. However, in Condorcet's *Life of Voltaire* it becomes clear what Condorcet had in mind: it is the method of Locke: "he [Locke] had given the first theory of the human mind founded on experience, and had shown the route that it was necessary to follow in metaphysics in order that it not lose its way [*s'égarer*]"[49]. Indeed, in the tenth epoch of *The Sketch*, Condorcet goes further and claims not only has the correct method been established, but the principles themselves have been discovered:

> Since the discovery, or rather the exact analysis of the first principles of metaphysics, morals and politics is still recent and was preceded by the knowledge of a large number of detailed truths, the false notion that they have thereby attained their destination has gained ready acceptance[50].

Thus, this notion of the discovery of the true method and its widespread implementation predates *The Sketch*, but it is only in this latter work that its nature and efficacy are elaborated. Let us, therefore, turn to his appraisal of Locke.

Condorcet's central claim about Locke is that he introduced a new and correct method, one which has subsequently borne much fruit in its various applications. This method revolves around Locke's theory of ideas: "he showed that an exact and precise analysis of ideas, which reduces them step by step to other ideas of more immediate origin or of simpler composition, is the only way to avoid being lost in that chaos of incomplete, incoherent and indeterminate notions which chance presents to us at hazard and we unthinkingly accept". It is by understanding the combinatorial nature of our ideas that we are able to avoid error. Moreover, if we attach a word to each particular idea, we are able not only to recall that idea from then on, we are also able to reason using that idea without "risk of confusion". It is the misuse of words, attaching them to indeterminate ideas, that is the primary source of errors of reasoning. The development of a precise and exact language of science had long been a desideratum for Condorcet and he discusses this further in the tenth epoch[51].

[49] Condorcet, *Vie de Voltaire*, in *Œuvres de Condorcet*, cit., vol. 4, p. 19.

[50] Condorcet, *The Sketch*, cit., pp. 137-8.

[51] See Condorcet, 'Discours', *Œuvres de Condorcet*, cit., vol. 1, p. 392: "[the moral sciences and the physical sciences] must follow the very same method, acquiring a language equally exact and precise to attain to the same degree of certitude"; see also his comments in the tenth epoch in, Condorcet, *The Sketch*, cit., p. 139.

The parallels with d'Alembert's discussion of Locke are obvious, and yet he plies Locke's theories of ideas and language for his own purposes, purposes that differ markedly from those of his older mentor and patron[52]. While he does claim that Locke's method was "virtually a universal instrument" used "to perfect the methods of the physical sciences" and even the rules of taste, his primary concern is with the application of that method to morality, politics and social economy.

> This method was soon adopted by all philosophers and, by applying it to moral science, to politics and to social economy, they were able to make almost as sure progress in these sciences as they had in the natural sciences.

Condorcet does not go into details, and there is certainly an element of hyperbole in his claims about the reach and efficacy of Locke's "metaphysical method". However, it is worth teasing out just what he has to say about the application of the method to morality and politics.

First, Condorcet is concerned to stress that Locke's method set limits to what we can know: "the first man who dared to set a limit to human understanding" by circumscribing in morals, politics and social economy those truths that we can come to know, and by enabling us to distinguish between certain and uncertain or doubtful truths, such that theorists in these sciences "were able to admit only proven truths, to separate these truths from whatever as yet remained doubtful and uncertain, and to ignore whatever is and always will be impossible to know".

Next, Condorcet sets this out in a little more detail. We find through "the analysis of our sentiments" a capacity to feel pleasure or pain which, in turn, aids us in the formation of our moral ideas, ideas which become the constituents of general moral truths: "the foundation of those general truths which, resulting from these ideas, determine the necessary and immutable laws of justice and injustice". And while Condorcet restricts himself to generalities here, we saw above that in the opening section of the ninth epoch, just a few pages earlier, he had referred to that truth "man is a sentient being, capable of reasoning and of acquiring moral ideas". Indeed, he also alludes to some specific moral and political principles espoused by Locke and Algernon Sidney, "principles,

[52] David Williams rightly points out Condorcet's appropriation of d'Alembert's notion of the chain linking the sciences. In the 'Discours' of 1784 he had claimed: "[T]he sciences are held together by a chain which links each one to all the others", D. Williams, *Condorcet and Modernity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004, p. 95, quoting Condorcet, *Œuvres de Condorcet*, cit., vol. 1, p. 439.

which the noble Sydney paid for with his blood and on which Locke set the authority of his name, [and] were later developed by Rousseau with greater precision"[53]. Condorcet refers here to implications of the principle of human equality: that there are not two races, the rulers and the ruled, and that "all men have an equal right to be informed on all that concerns them". And so, we can see that Locke's universal instrument, his way of ideas, his metaphysical method, ties in seamlessly with the broader social and political dimensions of Condorcet's agenda in the ninth epoch.

Finally, Condorcet portrays Locke's method as drawing a line in the sand: "this new step in philosophy [...] has forever imposed a barrier between mankind and the errors of its infancy; a barrier that should save it from relapsing into its former errors under the influence of new prejudices". The Lockean method provides a kind of guarantee that humankind will not regress to the errors of former epochs, while at the same time making it certain that any new errors or prejudices "will exercise only a faint influence" and will not last. The Lockean method then, is portrayed by Condorcet as a kind of panacea for humankind that both prevents social devolution and guarantees protection over the *longue durée* from the deleterious effects of new errors and vices.

3. *Comparisons and conclusions*

The two histories of philosophy that we have examined are marvellous works, works that many regard as the quintessence of the French Enlightenment, and the philosophy of Locke plays an important role in both. While the "Preliminary Discourse" and *The Sketch* have different aims and were composed nearly half a century apart, there are striking continuities between the two in their handling of Locke and his place in the development of enlightenment and, therefore, of human progress.

Here is a list of the features they have in common. First, both authors use a dialectical structure that sets out progress from the Renaissance to the modern era in terms of liberation from a form of intellectual bondage, with the new era being ushered in by Descartes and consolidated by Locke; second, both authors deploy similar structural motifs, including the use of small groups of "principal geniuses" – d'Alembert's Bacon, Descartes, Locke and Newton; Condorcet's

[53] Condorcet, *The Sketch*, cit., p. 93.

Bacon, Galileo and Descartes[54] – and the effective use of segue paragraphs and short pithy summaries of key doctrines; third, both authors use geographical markers and 'map-hopping' from England to France and back again; and more specifically, both authors add a modest Leibnizian postscript following their treatments of Locke[55]. Each of these stylistic and structural features of their histories contribute to a vivid sense of forward momentum in the history of philosophy and the arts and sciences. While d'Alembert's history is prefatory to the *Encyclopédie* and Condorcet's is a broad-ranging vision for indefinite social and intellectual progress, both works utilise Locke's account of the understanding with its theory of ideas, its epistemic humility and its analysis of the source of errors of reason to great effect. Neither work attempts a detailed exposition of any aspect of Locke's philosophy: Locke after all is one small constituent of far larger projects. Finally, in neither case is Locke used for point scoring against antagonists, and here the contrast with Voltaire is instructive.

In his letters on M. Locke in *Letters Concerning the English Nation* (1733) and its French equivalent, *Lettres philosophique* (1734), Voltaire introduces Locke as a kind of philosophical counterpoint to the excesses of Descartes' philosophy[56]. It was "Our *Des Cartes*" who substituted the errors of the ancients with his own, who "hurried away by that systematic Spirit which throws a Cloud over the Minds of the greatest Men"[57]. He "thought he had demonstrated that the Soul is the same Thing as Thought ... He asserted, that Man thinks eternally, and that the Soul, at its coming into the Body, is inform'd with the whole Series of metaphysical Notions"[58]. It is this summary of Cartesian doctrines and its mocking tone that provides the entrée and rationale for his treatment of Locke's philosophy. Thus, Voltaire ranges over a number of Lockean doctrines, including the rejection of innate ideas, the critique of the Cartesian doctrine that the mind thinks all the time and the limits of human knowledge, but he devotes most attention to Locke's suggestion concerning thinking matter. To be sure, Voltaire cleverly captures Locke's agnosticism on this issue, indeed he is singularly impressed by Locke's epistemic humility throughout. However, he cannot resist driving home the materialist implications of the thinking matter issue

54 D'Alembert, "Preliminary Discourse", cit., pp. 74-85, 90-91; Condorcet, *The Sketch*, cit., p. 87.

55 D'Alembert, "Preliminary Discourse", cit., pp. 86-87; Condorcet, *The Sketch*, cit., p. 97.

56 On Voltaire as an historian and historiographer, see S. Pierse, "Voltaire: polemical possibilities of history", in *A Companion to Enlightenment Historiography*, cit., pp. 153-87.

57 Voltaire, *Letters Concerning the English Nation*, ed. by N. Cronk, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1994, p. 55.

58 Ibid.

against his clerical targets. By contrast, the issue of thinking matter is not alluded to at all in either the "Preliminary Discourse" or *The Sketch*. D'Alembert, who was openly dualist in his philosophy of mind in the "Preliminary Discourse"[59], would have been well aware of Condillac's dismissal of Locke's thinking matter suggestion in the former's *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*[60]. Moreover, d'Alembert's *Essai sur les élémens de philosophie* contains a long discussion of the ontological status of the soul that affirms Locke's rejection of innate ideas[61], yet he avoids the thinking matter entirely in the "Preliminary Discourse"[62]. For his part, Condorcet was as opposed to religious superstition as Voltaire and yet he too chose not to engage with this issue of metaphysical speculation. It was the Lockean method with its theory of ideas and the signification of words that both philosophes regarded as transformative.

More importantly for our purposes, Voltaire's anti-Cartesian stance was part of his broader polemical agenda to undermine the hegemony of Cartesian natural philosophy and its concomitant commitment to speculative philosophy in France, and to promote in its stead experimental natural philosophy particularly as it was exemplified by Newton. This polemical thread begins with the letter on Bacon: "He is the father of Experimental Philosophy", "no one, before the Lord *Bacon*, was acquainted with experimental Philosophy"[63]. And it is Descartes who provides the contrast class. In the letter on Locke, Descartes is the one who was "hurried away by that systematic spirit", that is, speculative philosophy. Again, in the subsequent letter on Descartes and Newton, Descartes "gave entirely into the Humour of forming Hypotheses; and then Philosophy was no more than an ingenious Romance"[64]. Interestingly, for "the Humour of forming Hypotheses" the French version has *se livra à l'esprit de Systême*[65], that is, the French equivalent of speculative philosophy. Locke, by contrast, "has display'd the human Soul, in the same Manner as an excellent

59 D'Alembert, "Preliminary Discourse", cit., pp. 13 and 52.

60 Condillac, *Essay*, cit., p. 13. See also, J.O. de La Mettrie, "Man Machine", in *Man Machine and Other Writings*, ed. by A. Thomson, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1996, p. 3.

61 See d'Alembert, *Essai*, cit., pp. 165-78. For d'Alembert's critique of innate ideas, see ibid., pp. 176-77, "Preliminary Discourse", cit., p. 7 and 80.

62 David Renaud Boullier, in his critical review of d'Alembert's discussion of Locke in the "Preliminary Discourse", was quick to draw the link with thinking matter. See D.R. Boullier, *Apologie de la métaphysique*, Amsterdam 1753, pp. 13-16. For a survey of discussions of Locke and thinking matter in eighteenth-century France, see J.W. Yolton, *Locke and French Materialism*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1991.

63 Voltaire, *Letters*, cit., p. 51 and p. 52.

64 Ibid., p. 65.

65 Voltaire, *Lettres philosophiques*, Amsterdam 1734, p. 128.

Anatomist explains the Springs of the human Body. He every where takes the Light of Physicks [natural philosophy] for his Guide"[66]. It is this claim that provides the point of connection with d'Alembert.

However, by the time d'Alembert came to write the "Preliminary Discourse" Voltaire's view had become *de rigueur*: experimental philosophy was widely accepted in France and the spirit of systems, together with Cartesianism, were on the outer. Thus, while d'Alembert, in one sense, mimics Voltaire by claiming Locke "reduced metaphysics to ... the experimental natural philosophy of the soul", there is no polemical undertone to d'Alembert's claim: he has no axe to grind the against the method of the last generation of French Cartesians and the spirit of systems. Indeed, for d'Alembert, "times have changed, and a writer among us who praised systems would have come too late"[67]. Needless to say, by the time Condorcet composed *The Sketch*, this ship had well and truly sailed: there was simply no need to explain or defend the method of experimental philosophy[68].

This brings us, in conclusion, to some historiographical reflections, reflections that bear both on Enlightenment historiography of the eighteenth century and that of our own day. If the foregoing analyses of Voltaire's, d'Alembert's and Condorcet's treatments of Locke are accurate, two points are clear. First, the distinction between experimental and speculative philosophy provided some of the actual terms of reference through which Locke's contributions and importance were understood. This is especially true of Voltaire and d'Alembert. One does not need to force this interpretation onto the texts; this is not an instance of historiographical confirmation bias. D'Alembert's Locke created the experimental natural philosophy [*physique expérimentale*] of the soul in the way Newton created physics. It is not too much to claim, therefore, that any interpretation of Locke's place in the French Enlightenment that ignores this seam is effacing the philosophes' own historiographical perspective.

Secondly, and finally, two of the three treatments of Locke juxtapose him, not with Berkeley, not with Hume, but with Descartes. In the case of Con-

66 Ibid., p. 56.

67 D'Alembert, "Preliminary Discourse", cit., p. 94. D'Alembert also differs from Voltaire in claiming that it was Robert Boyle, not Bacon, who was "the father of experimental natural philosophy [*physique*]", ibid., p. 86, reflecting his deeper and wider reading in the writings of early English experimental philosophers. For his part, Condorcet claims experimental philosophy "was born in the school of Galileo", *The Sketch*, cit., p. 83; see also ibid., p. 88.

68 For the reception of experimental philosophy in France in the eighteenth century, see P.R. Anstey and A. Vanzo, *Experimental Philosophy and the Origins of Empiricism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2023, pp. 149-75.

dorcet this pairing is one of philosophical continuity; Descartes is portrayed as having taken the initial innovative steps, only to be derailed by speculation, so it was left to Locke to implement the true method for the study of the human mind. In other words, Locke completes what Descartes had begun. Locke is not the antidote to Descartes, but a philosophical counterpart of a genius who was, unhappily, side-tracked by his own rich imagination[69]. The post-Kantian historiographical categories of rationalism and empiricism could not be further from Condoret's conception. For promotors of this post-Kantian historiography today, Locke is the antithesis of Descartes; for Condorcet, Locke carried through what Descartes had started. Berkeley and Hume, the other so-called British empiricists, are not even in the frame. Indeed, Berkeley and Hume are entirely absent from both the "Preliminary Discourse" and *The Sketch*[70]; they have no role to play in the two leading French Enlightenment histories of philosophy. Thus, the histories of d'Alembert and Condorcet, like Locke's own study of human understanding, provide us with a kind of mirror for our own historiographical proclivities and post-Kantian projections. In our post-colonialist age, these accounts of the unstoppable progress of reason and the unparalleled achievements of European civilisation have become key targets of the culture wars. And yet, whatever stand we take on these matters, there is no doubting that Locke was and is a pivotal player in it all.

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[69] Turgot, who provided inspiration for Condorcet's history of human progress, said of Locke, Berkeley and Condillac, "they are all children of Descartes", in "On universal history", in *The Turgot Collection*, ed. by D. Gordon, Mise Institute, Auburn AL 2011, p. 386. For Turgot and Condorcet on *le tableau historique*, see B. Binoche, *Les trois sources des philosophies de l'histoire*, Hermann, Paris 2008, pp. 47-69.

[70] For Condorcet and Hume, see R.H. Popkin, "Condorcet and Hume and Turgot", in *Condorcet Studies* 2 (1984), pp. 47-62.

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