

# Francesco Soave critic of John Locke's *Essay*

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*Abstract:* In 1775, Francesco Soave published his voluminous abridgement of John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, incorporating notes and appendices aimed at discussing and updating the content of the *Essay*. The paper highlights Soave's debt to Condillac, but also his originality. Like Condillac, Soave rejected Locke's opinion that reflection is a source of ideas, yet he kept his distance from the abbot on a number of issues such as the way of explaining how mental operations originate from sensation and the roles played by reflection and consciousness in the construction of the idea of personal identity. The paper also points out that Soave was quite averse to Locke's moral theory and regarded him as a moral relativist. Finally, the criticism that Soave moved against Le Clerc regarding the unorthodox implications of Locke's theory of personal identity is taken into consideration.

*Keywords:* Condillac, sensation, consciousness, mixed modes, resurrection of the same body.

When Francesco Soave published his abridgment of Locke's *Essay* in 1775<sup>1</sup>, the full version of the book had not yet appeared in Italian. Fifty years would pass before this would happen<sup>2</sup>. This considerable delay was due to the charge of atheism brought against Locke by many Italian scholars<sup>3</sup>, in keeping with the condemnation expressed by the Roman Church in 1734. However, other

<sup>1</sup> J. Locke, *Saggio filosofico di Giovanni Locke su l'umano intelletto compendiato dal dott. Winne. Tradotto e Commentato da Francesco Soave*, 3 vols., Gaetano Motta, Milano 1775. Here I shall refer to the 1819 edition in three tomes printed by Baglioni in Venice. As for the *Essay*, I shall refer to the Clarendon edition: J. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. by P.H. Nidditch, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1975. Regarding the life and works of Francesco Soave, see E. Garin, *History of Italian Philosophy*, trans. and ed. by G. Pinton, vol. 2, Rodopi, Amsterdam 2008, pp. 783-87.

<sup>2</sup> Locke, *Saggio sull'umano intelletto*, 8 vols., Pietro Bizzoni, Pavia 1819-26.

<sup>3</sup> Garin, *History of Italian Philosophy*, cit., p. 717.

works by the English philosopher were beginning to be translated into Italian, starting with *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, published in 1735<sup>4</sup>, then *Several Papers Relating to Money, Interest and Trade*<sup>5</sup> and the second *Treatise on Government* followed in 1751 and 1773 respectively<sup>6</sup>. As for the *Essay*, it is likely that the favourable opinion expressed by the abbot Condillac, a great admirer of the work, contributed to increasing the interest of the Italian public towards it<sup>7</sup>. This was the case for Soave, whose abridgement mentions Condillac frequently.

Soave's compendium is a comparison between different texts. He carefully examined the *abrégé* of the *Essay* published in 1720 by Jean Paul Bosset, a French scholar whose biography is almost unknown<sup>8</sup>, but he also kept an eye on the abridgment that John Wynne had made with Locke's consent in 1696, while he was *Magister artium* at Jesus College, Oxford<sup>9</sup>. Wynne had managed to reduce the *Essay* to one third of its total length by skipping the content of the first book almost entirely<sup>10</sup> and cutting out other parts – such as a large portion of II.xxi, devoted to the freedom of will. Nevertheless, his abridgement was extremely faithful to the vocabulary of the original, a quality lauded by Locke in a letter he addressed to his friend William Molyneux in 1697<sup>11</sup>.

Bosset followed Wynne in selecting the contents to be included in his

<sup>4</sup> In 1735, two Italian editions of Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, originally published in 1694, came to light: J. Locke, *L'educazione de' figliuoli. Tradotta già dall'inglese del Sig. Locke in linguaggio francese e da questo trasportata nell'italiano*, S. and G. Marescandoli, Lucca 1735, and *Della educazione dei fanciulli. Scritto in lingua inglese dal Signor Locke, indi tradotto in lingua francese dal Signor Coste, e finalmente tradotta in lingua italiana dall'edizione francese fatta in Amsterdam l'anno 1733*, 2 vols., Francesco Pitteri, Venezia 1735. An abridged version of *Some Thoughts* was published the following year: see J. Locke, *Arte dell'educare i fanciulli di Giovanni Loche inglese ridotta ad aforismi con alcune giunte*, D. Ramanzini, Verona 1736.

<sup>5</sup> J. Locke, *Ragionamenti sopra la moneta, l'interesse del danaro, le finanze e il commercio*, A. Bonducci, Firenze 1751. The original work had been published in 1696.

<sup>6</sup> J. Locke, *Il governo civile. Tradotto nell'italiano idioma e dedicato a sua eccellenza il Sig. Girolamo Durazzo*, Amsterdam, 1773.

<sup>7</sup> Yolton highlighted this regarding Europe. See J. W. Yolton, *Locke and French Materialism*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1991.

<sup>8</sup> J. Locke, *Abrégé de l'Essai de Monsieur Locke, sur l'entendement humain. Traduit de l'Anglois, par Monsieur Bosset*, Jean Watts, Londres 1720.

<sup>9</sup> J. Locke, *An Abridgment of Mr. Locke's Essay Concerning Humane Understanding*, ed. by J. Wynne, A. and J. Churchill, London 1696.

<sup>10</sup> In the Introduction, Wynne offered a synthesis of *Essay* I.i.1-3, whereas he reproduced I.i.4-7 entirely and part of I.i. 8. Moreover, he abridged a short portion of I.ii.1. See Wynne, *An Abridgment*, cit., pp. 7-11.

<sup>11</sup> See Locke to William Molyneux, 2 July 1695, in J. Locke, *Correspondence*, ed. by E. S. de Beer, vol. 2, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1976, p. 406.

*abrégé*, but added the *extrait* of the first book of the *Essay* that Jean Le Clerc had published in the *Bibliothèque universelle* in 1690<sup>12</sup>. Moreover, he expanded Wynne's synthesis of II.xxi. Finally, Bosset substituted the dedication to Locke in Wynne's abridgement with a dedication to Wynne, who had become bishop of Saint Asaph in the meantime, and reproduced part of Locke's letter to Molyneux in the Preface. The *abrégé* terminates with a short work entitled *Nouveau système sur les idées*, probably authored by Bosset, containing a criticism of Locke's system influenced by Leibniz's nativism and the vocabulary of Malebranche<sup>13</sup>.

Soave's compendium shows some similarities to Bosset's *abrégé*. Soave eliminated the dedication to Wynne, but in the Preface he reproduced that part of Locke's letter to Molyneux that was in the *abrégé*. Again following Bosset, he included the *extrait* of the first book written by Le Clerc, but added some notes to it. Most importantly, Soave incorporated many appendices in his compendium, increasing its length considerably. The result was a work in three volumes, to which a fourth would be added in the following editions containing the translation of another work by Locke, *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*<sup>14</sup>. This posthumous text had been originally thought up of as a chapter to be added to the *Essay*, which explained Soave's intention to include it in his compendium.

As for the translation, Soave based himself on Bosset's *abrégé* though not exclusively. In the Preface, he declared that he had consulted "the great work of Locke himself"<sup>15</sup> in order to "better illustrate some passages in the compendium that seemed to me not to be expressed with the clarity and precision that are necessary in works of this kind and to add some details that seemed to me of the utmost importance"<sup>16</sup>. Thus, Soave was not fully satisfied with the French translation carried out by Bosset, who in turn had expressed some res-

<sup>12</sup> The *extrait* appeared anonymously and untitled in Le Clerc's *Bibliothèque universelle et historique* 17 (1690), pp. 399-427. I would like to thank Davide Poggi for bringing this and other information on Bosset to my attention. Le Clerc's *extrait* was intended to complete the one he had published in the *Bibliothèque* in 1688, which skipped the first book.

<sup>13</sup> Regarding the content of the *Nouveau système*, see J. Schöler, "L'Essai sur l'entendement de Locke et la lutte philosophique en France au XVIIIe siècle: l'histoire des éditions, des traductions et de la diffusion journalistique (1688-1742)", in *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 4 (2001), esp. pp. 126-38, 161-3 e 225-7.

<sup>14</sup> Soave translated the title as *Guida dell'intelletto nella ricerca della verità*; in the 1819 edition, this work appears in the third tome on pp. 1-122.

<sup>15</sup> F. Soave, "Prefazione", in Locke, *Saggio filosofico*, cit., t. 1, p. vi.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

ervations concerning that done by Pierre Coste in 1700<sup>17</sup>. On some occasions, Soave modified the structure of propositions preferring that of the English original, whereas elsewhere he introduced more drastic changes<sup>18</sup>. However, Soave's originality is more evident as far as the contents of his compendium are concerned. The appendices interspersed amongst the pages of his *Saggio filosofico* are numerous, and are often meant to elaborate on some themes that Locke had mentioned (such as somnambulism and the idea of a universal language). In the Preface, Soave explained that his aim was to update, develop and discuss Locke's ideas in the light of recent studies (those of Condillac, Charles Bonnet, Jean Baptiste René Robinet, as well as those of Andrea Draghetti, professor of Metaphysics at Brera college, and many others), so as to offer "a complete system of metaphysics" to the public<sup>19</sup>.

However, Soave did not merely mean to update the *Essay*. He found some important defects in Locke's work, beside its being too long (a judgment already expressed by Le Clerc). In the Preface, he remarked that there were some "mistakes" in it and some propositions contrary to the Catholic religion, which should be confuted. Here I shall examine these criticisms expressed by Soave, which sometimes do not concur with those moved by Condillac against the *Essay*.

### 1. *Soave against Locke. The Analisi dell'intelletto*

In the Preface, Soave manifested his great admiration for the contents of the *Essay*, first of all the struggle against nativism, then the enquiry into the origin of ideas, the discovery of how much language influences human cognition and

<sup>17</sup> See J. Locke, *Essai philosophique concernant l'entendement humain, où l'on montre quelle est l'étendue de nos connoissances certaines, et la manière dont nous y parvenons. Traduit de l'Anglois de Mr. Locke, par Pierre Coste, sur la quatrième édition, revüë, corrigée, & augmentée par l'auteur*, H. Schelte, Amsterdam 1700. A comparison between Bosset's and Coste's translations is to be found in G. Rooryck, L. Jooken, "Locke ou la traduction de l'entendement", in T. Naaijken (ed.), *Event or Incident. On the Role of Translations in the Dynamics of Cultural Exchange*, Peter Lang, Bern 2010, pp. 211-46; D. Poggi, *Lost and Found in Translation? La gnoseologia dell'Essay lockiano nella traduzione francese di Pierre Coste*, Olschki, Firenze 2012, p. 17, in note; p. 71, n. 141; *passim*.

<sup>18</sup> This happens especially when Soave translated *Essay* III.vi.1, devoted to the names of substances. Bosset had modified Coste's translation of this paragraph, lamenting its imprecision in the Preface; Soave changed Bosset's translation completely. See Locke, *Abrégé*, cit., p. 137; Locke, *Saggio filosofico*, cit., t. 2, p. 34.

<sup>19</sup> Soave, "Prefazione", in Locke, *Saggio filosofico*, cit., t. 1, p. 8.

finally the examination of the extent and limits of human knowledge. To Soave, Locke would be “the first and most important amongst the metaphysicians”<sup>20</sup>, an opinion that recalled that expressed by Condillac in his *Essai sur l'origine des connoissances humaines*. In the Introduction, Condillac lauded the superiority of Locke's metaphysics, “as simple as truth itself”<sup>21</sup>, contrasting it with that of Descartes and Malebranche. He criticised the inadequacy of Descartes' method, which failed to examine the origin of ideas, whereas he charged Malebranche with losing himself in the intelligible world in an attempt to investigate it. He also attacked Leibniz's monadology and all those philosophical systems that, unlike Locke's, pretended to explain the essence, nature and all the properties of reality. Soave agreed with Condillac and seemed even more enthusiastic about Locke's system, which he regarded as complete in itself. In the Preface, he insisted that the criticism that Condillac and Charles Bonnet had levelled at Locke only concerned the way the development of the faculties of the soul and the origin of language were treated in the *Essay*<sup>22</sup>; however, no one could add anything of significance to the *Essay* as far as the limits of human knowledge and the criticism of nativism and linguistic abuses are concerned, according to Soave.

Elsewhere in the compendium Soave lauded the *Essay* even at Condillac's expenses. If the French abbot had deemed the treatment of innate ideas in the first book too long, Soave maintained that this overabundance was necessary to uproot such a common prejudice. However, he took another criticism made by Condillac very seriously, namely the lack of an analysis of understanding, and tried to remedy it in a long work, *Analisi dell'intelletto* (analysis of the intellect), prefixing it to the second book. The *Analisi* set out by recalling Condillac's example of the animated statue in his *Traité des sensations*, yet Soave abandoned it immediately, considering it too long and likely to arouse misunderstandings. He was evidently aware of the number of criticisms addressed to Condillac on this account, yet he had another more important reason for keeping his distance from him. The abbot imagined a statue organized inwardly like a man, animated

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> E. B. de Condillac, *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, ed. and transl. by H. Aarsleff, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2001, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> This second criticism was only moved by Condillac. Soave mentioned two works by the entomologist Charles Bonnet (1720-93), namely his *Essay de psychologie* (1755) and the two volumes of *Essai analytique sur les facultés de l'âme* (1760), whereas he cited four works by Condillac, *Essai sur l'origine des connoissances humaines* (1746), *Traité des systèmes* (1749), *Traité des sensations* (1754) and *Traité des animaux* (1755).

by a soul that had never received an idea, into which no sense-impression had ever penetrated. He unlocked its senses one by one, beginning with smell. The statue's smell-experience produced pleasure or pain, that is to say the master-principle which, determining all the operations of its mind, raised it by degrees to all the knowledge of which it was capable. Soave believed that sight, not smell was to be credited with this role. In his example, the visit to a garden, sight is the first sense to be awakened, followed by touch and the other senses. Why this disagreement with Condillac? The answer is to be found in the first appendix, centring around Molyneux's problem. Molyneux had asked Locke a question in their correspondence that reappeared in *Essay* II.ix.8<sup>23</sup>. Although this paragraph is not in Soave's compendium (nor was it in Wynne's abridgement or in Bosset's *abrégé*), he must have been aware of the controversies it had stirred up in Europe<sup>24</sup>. Molyneux had asked Locke whether a man born blind who had recovered his sight would be able to distinguish between two objects, a globe and a prism, which he had formerly learned to distinguish through touch. In the *Essay*, Locke agreed with Molyneux that this was impossible. He explained that our sight provides us not only with the ideas of light and colour, which only it perceives, but also with those of space, figure and motion, which it perceives together with the other senses. This second group of ideas modifies those of light and colour, that is to say the way objects appear to us, so that our senses get used to deciphering those modifications. They become able to perceive, for instance, that a change in the colour of the face of a cube corresponds to a certain depth or motion. However, the blind would not have enough time to develop this habit soon after recovering sight, so he would be unable to distinguish between the two objects. In the first Appendix, Soave tried to elaborate upon Locke's explanation. What would the blind have to learn to do to become able to differentiate between the globe and the prism? His answer revolves around the three-dimensionality of space. Only after having learned to put a distance between himself and the objects by determining their limits through sight would the blind be able to distinguish one from the other, wrote Soave<sup>25</sup>. Thus he agreed with Condillac that the blind would be incapable of discerning any figure soon after recovering sight, but he rejected the paramount role that the latter con-

<sup>23</sup> Locke, *Essay*, cit., II. ix.8, p. 146.

<sup>24</sup> This controversy is usefully summarised in P. Omodeo, "L'abate Condillac e la finzione della statua", in *Belfagor* 47 (1992), 2, pp. 133-52.

<sup>25</sup> See Soave, "Appendice I. Problema di Molyneux ed esame del modo, con cui arriviamo a conoscere l'esistenza degli Obbietti esterni" (Molyneux's problem and an examination of the way we come to know about the existence of external objects), in Locke, *Saggio filosofico*, cit., t.1, p. 103.

ferred on touch when explaining how this would happen<sup>26</sup>. According to Condillac, it is touch that allows us to discover the reality of the external world by supplying us with different sensations depending on whether we touch our body or external objects. Soave criticised this opinion. The two types of sensation, he remarked, would be indistinguishable for the statue, because while touching itself it would not be aware of touching an object endowed with extension and parts. As a result, it could not appropriate this sensation. Only the involvement of all the senses, especially touch and sight, would provide the statue with this ability, according to Soave<sup>27</sup>.

If we now return to the *Analisi dell'intelletto*, Soave's agreement with the solution that Locke had offered to Molyneux's problem becomes evident. In his example, everything begins with the "confused apprehension of a bundle of things"<sup>28</sup>, that is to say with visual sensation followed by the tactile sensation produced by handling a fruit. Soave wrote, "with my hand I perceive its extension, figure and solidity; with my eyes I see its extension, figure, colour"<sup>29</sup>. Again following Locke, he distinguished between the real qualities of external objects, namely extension, figure and solidity, and their apparent qualities, such as colour, coldness, warmth, etc., and insisted that the nature of the substance that constitutes the foundation of these qualities is unknown, though it certainly exists. Soave also mentioned that sensations are transmitted to the brain through "the movement of very minute parts"<sup>30</sup> exciting nerves, a statement that recalled what Locke had affirmed in the *Essay*<sup>31</sup>.

Moving forward in his analysis, Soave became more critical of Locke. Regarding the terms "sensation" and "perception", he informed the reader that he would use the first to signify those impressions that cause an "internal modification of pleasure or pain"<sup>32</sup> that is not accompanied by a mental representation, whereas he would name those impressions that produce this representation as perception. By contrast, he would use the term "apprehension" whenever there was no need to distinguish between sensation and perception, so that either a representation or a modification or both of them might occur. This clarifica-

<sup>26</sup> E.B. de Condillac, *A Treatise on the Sensations*, in *Id.*, *Philosophical Writings*, trans. by F. Philip, vol.1, Lawrence Erlbaum, Hillsdale NJ 1982, pp. 234 and 289-90. Condillac's answer to Molyneux's problem was different in the *Essai*, as Soave remarked. In this, Condillac had answered positively.

<sup>27</sup> Soave, "Appendice I", cit., pp. 107-9.

<sup>28</sup> Soave, "Analisi dell'intelletto", cit., p. 35.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>31</sup> Locke, *Essay*, cit., II.viii.21, p. 139.

<sup>32</sup> Soave, "Analisi dell'intelletto", cit., p. 48.

tion was meant to correct the language of the *Essay*, where apprehension is a generic term whereas “perception” is employed both as being synonymous with having an idea, and to individuate a variety of mental acts such as perceiving the agreement or disagreement between ideas and the meaning of signs<sup>33</sup>. As for “sensation”, sometimes it refers to the bodily cause of perception, sometimes to a kind of perception “which actually accompanies, and is annexed to any impression on the Body”<sup>34</sup>.

Soave disliked this broader use of the two terms, which in his opinion prevented the reader from grasping the distinction between those impressions that produce a mental representation and those that do not. This ambiguity was the cause of a more serious mistake in the *Essay*, according to Soave. In the Introduction, Locke had affirmed that he would use the term “idea” “whatever is the object of the understanding when a man thinks”, that is to say as synonymous with “phantasm, notion, species or whatever it is that the mind can be employed about in thinking”<sup>35</sup>. However, Soave remarked that the proper meaning of idea, i.e. “image”, could not be attributed to a simple modification. In accordance with Condillac, he defined the representation or image stored in the memory as an idea so as to keep it distinct from simple modifications, which would not involve any representation though they might be stored in the memory in the form of notions<sup>36</sup>.

Soave’s agreement with Locke is more substantial as far as the faculty of memory is concerned<sup>37</sup>. In keeping with the *Essay*, he argued that attention awakens the ideas and notions stored in our memory and that this awakening is always accompanied by an “additional perception”, that is to say the perception of having already had a certain impression<sup>38</sup>. He named this act of the mind as “riconoscimento” (recognition) so as to distinguish it from simple recollection, investigating the underlying physiological mechanism in one of the Appendices<sup>39</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> See Locke, *Essay*, cit., II.i.9, p. 108, and II.xxi.5, p. 236.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, II.i.23, p. 117; II.xix.1, p. 226. See M. Jacovides, “Locke on Perception”, in M. Stuart (ed.), *A Companion to Locke*, Blackwell, London 2016, pp. 175-92.

<sup>35</sup> Locke, *Essay*, cit., I.i.8, p. 47.

<sup>36</sup> Condillac, *A Treatise on the Sensations*, cit., p. 167. This passage appears in the “Extrait raisonné du Traité des sensations”: see E.B. de Condillac, *Oeuvres complètes, revues, corrigées par l’auteur*, vol. 4, Paris, Dufart 1803, pp. 39-40. See Soave, “Analisi dell’intelletto”, cit., pp. 64-65.

<sup>37</sup> Locke, *Essay*, op. cit., II.x.3, p. 150.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, II.x.2, p. 150. Soave, “Analisi dell’intelletto”, cit., p. 69. Regarding this important aspect of Locke’s thought, see V. Lähteenmäki, “Locke on Memory”, in J. Gordon-Roth, S. Weinberg (eds.), *The Lockean Mind*, Routledge, Oxford-New York 2022, pp. 138-48.

<sup>39</sup> Soave, “Appendice. Riflessioni intorno alla memoria” (Reflections on memory), in Locke, *Saggio filosofico*, cit., t. 1, pp. 122-32.



After having examined and rejected Condillac's opinion that memory could be assimilated to imagination, an idea the abbé probably inherited from Gas-sendi<sup>40</sup>, Soave set out to consider reflection. Here, the influence of Condillac's sensism is much more evident, though not decisive. Whereas Locke described reflection as one of the two sources of ideas along with sensation, Condillac insisted that "it would be more precise to recognize only a single one, either because reflection is in its very essence only sensation in itself, or because it is less the source of ideas than the channel by which they are derived from the senses"<sup>41</sup>. Thus, Condillac did not consider reflection as a source of ideas. Following Condillac, Soave described reflection as the operating of the mind on the manifold contents that are in the intellect, not as a source of new ideas. By reflection, he wrote, Locke would mean "that act through which the soul directs the attention on itself and on its operations"<sup>42</sup>, a definition that he believed should be expanded. Properly understood, reflection would be for Soave the deliberate application of attention to whatever content, either the impressions caused by an external object or the ideas in the mind. He preferred this definition to that of Condillac, which he complained was not always the same. While in the *Essai* Condillac described reflection as the shifting of attention from external objects to the ideas that they produce in virtue of their being signs, in the *Traité des sensations* he assimilated it to transferring attention from one impression to another<sup>43</sup>. To Soave, the first definition was too limited, because it concerned solely one type of reflection, whereas the second was appropriate only if the act of diverting attention was intended as deliberate, not as mechanically produced by the strength of the ensuing impressions<sup>44</sup>. Concisely, Soave criticised Condillac for neglecting the fundamental distinction between reflection and attention, namely that the first is deliberate, whereas the second is fortuitous<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> See Condillac, *A Treatise on the Sensations*, cit., p. 184: "Memory is the beginning of an imagination that has as yet but little force; imagination is memory itself invested with all possible vividness". Soave considers the term 'imagination' as inadequate. In common usage, he says, the term signifies not only our power to recall ideas, but also that of linking them. See Soave, "Analisi dell'intelletto", cit., p. 68.

<sup>41</sup> Locke, *Essay*, cit., II.i.4, p. 105; Condillac, *A Treatise on the Sensations*, cit., p. 158 ("Extrait raisonné du Traité des sensations", cit., p. 13).

<sup>42</sup> Soave, "Analisi dell'intelletto", cit., p. 69. Soave might refer to what Locke had stated in *Essay*, II.i.4, p.105: "By REFLECTION then, in the following part of this Discourse, I would be understood to mean, that notice which the mind takes of its own Operations".

<sup>43</sup> Soave refers to what Condillac affirmed in *A Treatise on Sensations*, cit., p. 160 ("Extrait raisonné", cit., pp. 18-19): "Attention thus guided is like a light that reflects from one body to another to illuminate both, and I call it reflection". See Soave, "Analisi dell'intelletto", cit., p. 69.

<sup>44</sup> Soave, "Analisi dell'intelletto", cit., p. 70.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

Unlike Condillac, Soave described reflection as a set of higher-order mental operations emerging from perception, attention, contemplation and the retention of ideas, yet he agreed with him that reflection is never a source of simple ideas. Only abstraction, a type of operation deriving from reflection<sup>46</sup>, would produce ideas according to Soave, yet these would be general ideas, not simple ideas<sup>47</sup>.

The reflection of the soul upon itself, Soave continued, produces the “consciousness (*coscienza*) of our operations and *modifications*, of our *personality* and of all the other internal cognitions”<sup>48</sup>. What Soave named here as “personality” corresponds to personal identity, a concept that is examined in *Essay* II. xxvii. To Locke, the foundation of personal identity lies in consciousness, which constantly accompanies our thoughts being the “perception of what passes in a man’s own mind”<sup>49</sup>. Thanks to memory, he asserted, consciousness assures us that our self that now perceives, judges, and so on, is the same self that perceived yesterday, the day before and so on, so far back as our memories extend. This persistence of the self through recollection corresponds to our idea of personal identity in the *Essay*. Soave seemed to have fully understood that what Locke called consciousness was not reflection<sup>50</sup>. He insisted that “sensitive consciousness”, that is to say Locke’s “consciousness”, should be distinguished from “reflective consciousness”, or the act through which the mind detaches itself from its present operations and comes to consider itself as the self that perceives, judges, reminisces, and so on<sup>51</sup>. Moreover, Soave argued that it is “reflective consciousness”, a type of reflection, that allows us to conclude that this self that now exists is the same self that existed yesterday, or a year ago. I can come to the conclusion that those sensations I had in the past belong to me just as those I have at present, he wrote, only by reflecting on them. Thus, reflection would play a fundamental role in forming the idea of personal identity<sup>52</sup>. I think that Locke would agree on this, because he described a person as

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 72. Soave lists three operations that originate from reflection, namely comparison, abstraction and the reflection of the soul upon itself.

<sup>47</sup> Soave, “Analisi dell’intelletto”, cit., p. 81.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 72. The italics are in the original text.

<sup>49</sup> Locke, *Essay*, cit, II.i.19, p. 115.

<sup>50</sup> This is a crucial point in the interpretation of Locke. Regarding this distinction, see V. Lähteenmäki, “The Sphere of Experience in Locke: Relations between Reflection, Consciousness, and Ideas”, in *Locke Studies* 8 (2008), pp. 59-100.

<sup>51</sup> Soave, “Analisi dell’intelletto”, cit., p. 78.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

“a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection”<sup>53</sup>, moreover he did not attribute the ability to operate on ideas to consciousness. To Locke, reflection is a mental operation, whereas consciousness is a perception. He would not agree with Condillac, who equated a lively consciousness of what is perceived with attention<sup>54</sup>.

Moving forward to examine the different kinds of ideas, Soave detected another mistake in the *Essay* concerning the relevance conferred on the names of mixed modes<sup>55</sup>. These sort of ideas, as Locke explained, are forged by the intellect without any model in nature, thus their content heavily depends upon the name associated with them:

it is the Name that seems to preserve those *Essences*, and give them their lasting duration. For the connexion between the loose parts of those complex *Ideas*, being made by the Mind, this union, which has no particular foundation in Nature, would cease again, were there not something that did, as it were, hold it together, and keep the parts from scattering (*Essay*, III.v.10, p. 434).

Moral ideas are mixed modes, according to Locke. Here Soave perceived a great difficulty. He wrote, “by representing in my mind those acts that are typical of a *proud man*, a *mean man*, a *drunkard*, a *vengeful man*, I find no difficulty in reiterating the general notion of *vice* on whatever occasion, without thinking of this name at all”<sup>56</sup>. Locke would be therefore wrong in regarding names as necessary to preserve the essence of mixed modes, for Soave. He was evidently concerned about the difficulty of reconciling Locke's opinions on moral qualities with moral realism. This concern reappeared when Soave considered *Essay* II.xx and xxi, which focus on the idea of good and on the freedom of will respectively.

## 2. *Locke's moral relativism*

In *Essay* II.xx.2, Locke stated that what we mean by “good” is being “*apt to cause or increase Pleasure*”, a definition that Soave remarked should be modi-

<sup>53</sup> Locke, *Essay*, cit., II.xxvii.9, p. 335.

<sup>54</sup> See Condillac, *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, cit., p. 21. Soave, “Analisi dell'intelletto”, cit., p. 79.

<sup>55</sup> Regarding mixed modes see Locke, *Essay*, cit., II.xii.5, p. 165.

<sup>56</sup> Soave, “Analisi dell'intelletto”, cit., p. 76. The italics are in the text.

fied<sup>57</sup>. In an Appendix added to this chapter, he argued that good signifies first of all the object that is apt to “preserve and perfect us”, then the impression that it produces in us and finally the pleasurable sensation that we get from it<sup>58</sup>. More substantial is Soave’s disagreement with Locke when it comes to *Essay* II.xxi.55, where a parallel between human opinions on good and personal tastes is drawn. Here Locke wrote that ancient philosophers would have vainly enquired into the nature of *summum bonum*, because

as pleasant Tastes depend not on the things themselves, but their agreeableness to this or that particular Palate, wherein there is great variety: So the greatest Happiness consists, in the having those things, which produce the greatest Pleasure; and in the absence of those, which cause any disturbance, any pain. Now these, to different Men, are very different things. (*Essay* II. xxi. 55, p. 269)

Before revelation, which grounds the hope of eternal life, this divergence of opinions could be said “reasonable”, according to Locke<sup>59</sup>. Here Soave highlighted a contradiction. Even those who lived before revelation were guilty, he claimed, when they acted against the law of nature, because they let themselves be “blindly determined, without doing in advance a mature exam that would disclose what they should love or reject”<sup>60</sup>. They did not act freely as they should, being endowed with the power to suspend their desires. In the *Essay*, this power is said to be “the source of all liberty”<sup>61</sup>, because it allows us to refrain from doing what our present uneasiness, or desire, determines our will to do, so that “we have opportunity to examine, view and judge, of the good or evil of what we are going to do”<sup>62</sup>. Locke emphasised that we have this freedom, as Soave had evidently noticed. In *Essay* II.xxi.51, he affirmed that true happiness only derives from pursuing “the true intrinsic good”<sup>63</sup>, and in II.xxi.56 he claimed that the law of nature allows us to distinguish between true and seem-

<sup>57</sup> Locke, *Essay*, cit., II.xx.2, p. 229. Soave likewise criticised Locke’s definition of beauty, for its being not universal: see Locke, *Essay*, cit., II. xii.5, p. 165; Soave, “Appendice al capo xii. Analisi del bello”, in Locke, *Saggio filosofico*, cit., t. 1, pp. 138-42.

<sup>58</sup> Soave, “Appendice. Analisi delle Passioni”, in Locke, *Saggio filosofico*, cit., t. 1, p. 177. Condillac’s opinion was quite different. See G. Paganini, “Un’etica per i lumi. Condillac dalla psicologia alla morale”, in *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia* 47, (1992), 4, pp. 647-88.

<sup>59</sup> Locke, *Essay*, cit., II.xxi.55, p. 270.

<sup>60</sup> Locke, *Saggio filosofico*, cit., t. 1, p. 195, in note. The contradiction, says Soave, can be dispelled if we assume that the pleasures Locke has in mind are not dishonest or against reason.

<sup>61</sup> Locke, *Essay*, cit., II.xxi.47, p. 263.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., II. xxi. 51, p. 267.

ing goods: "The eternal Law and Nature of things must not be alter'd to comply with his[man's] ill-order'd choice. If the neglect or abuse of the Liberty he had, to examine what would really and truly make for his Happiness, misleads him, the miscarriages that follow on it, must be imputed to his own election"<sup>64</sup>. Thus, Soave concluded that what Locke stated in *Essay* II.xxi.55 contradicted what he had written elsewhere about human freedom, on which he agreed.

However, Soave encountered another more serious problem in the way the *Essay* defined virtue, namely as the content of the law of reputation. In the *Appendice al metodo* that concludes the compendium<sup>65</sup> he referred to what is written in *Essay* II.xxviii.11, "*Virtue* is every-where that, which is thought Praiseworthy, and nothing else but that, which has the allowance of publick Esteem, is called *Virtue*"<sup>66</sup>. To Soave, this statement mixed virtue up with opinion promoting moral relativism, an objection that had already been raised by one of Locke's contemporaries, James Lowde, in 1694. Locke had replied to Lowde that what was written in the *Essay* about the law of reputation was meant to demonstrate that human opinions on virtue are not too far from what is commanded by the law of nature, in spite of their being distinct from it<sup>67</sup>. Soave might have read Locke's reply, which was added to the second edition of the *Essay*; however, it is likely that the obscurities that he found in his views on mixed modes, the notion of good and the freedom of will inclined him towards Lowde's opinion<sup>68</sup>.

While Soave seemed quite outspoken when criticising Locke's moral thought, he appeared much more cautious as far as his religious opinions are concerned, as we shall see in the next paragraph.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., II. xxi. 56, p. 271.

<sup>65</sup> See Soave, "Appendice al Metodo" (Appendix to the Method) in Locke, *Saggio filosofico*, cit., t. 3, p. 127.

<sup>66</sup> Locke, *Essay*, cit., p. 354.

<sup>67</sup> J. Lowde, *A discourse concerning the nature of man, both in his natural and political capacity: both as he is a rational creature, and member of a civil society. With an examination of some of Mr. Hobbs's opinions relating hereunto*, T. Warren, London 1694. Locke's reply was added to the "Epistle to the reader" in the second edition of the *Essay*. See Locke, *Essay*, cit., II.xxviii.11, pp. 354-5.

<sup>68</sup> An in-depth analysis of the problems engendered by Locke's theory of mixed modes is to be found in S. Forde, "Mixed Modes" in John Locke's Moral and Political Philosophy", in *The Review of Politics* 73 (2011), 4, pp. 581-608. A different interpretation of Locke's moral thought is to be found in N. Wolterstorff, *John Locke and The Ethics Of Belief*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1996.

3. *The “statements that Catholic religion must not tolerate”. The question of the resurrection of the same body and the thinking matter hypothesis*

One of the notes that Soave added to his compendium defended the Catholic belief in the resurrection of the same body. In this regard, Locke had been attacked by the Anglican Bishop Edward Stillingfleet, who accused the *Essay* of supporting the opinion that the *post-mortem* body was different to the *pre-mortem* body by denying that sameness of body was relevant to personal identity. In answering to Stillingfleet<sup>69</sup>, Locke had confirmed that this was his conviction. Although he agreed on regarding resurrection as an article of faith, he did not deem it necessary for Christians to believe in the identity between the *pre-mortem* and the resurrected body<sup>70</sup>.

In this regard, Soave did not comment anything when abridging *Essay* II.xxvii, where Locke expounded his views on personal identity. However, he added a note to I.iv.5, where the issue of resurrection emerged in connection with the denial that our idea of identity is innate. Locke wrote,

He, that shall, with a little Attention, reflect on the Resurrection, and consider, that Divine Justice shall bring to Judgment, at the last Day, the very same Persons, to be happy or miserable in the other, who did well or ill in this Life, will find it, perhaps, not easy to resolve with himself, what makes the same Man, or wherein *Identity* consists (*Essay* I.iv.5, p. 86).

In his *extrait* of the first book, Le Clerc had added an example to clarify Locke's opinion: if a bell broke and the metal of which it was made was melted to make another bell, nobody would say that the new bell is identical to the first. Thus he concluded that “unless one wants to depart from common usage, it should be said that those that will raise will not be the same men, and will not have the same bodies”<sup>71</sup>. In his note, Soave remarked that the example was wrong, because the new bell would be really different, both because some parts of the old one would get lost while it was melted, and because the disposition of the remaining ones would be different. Therefore, unlike the case of the res-

<sup>69</sup> The controversy between Locke and Stillingfleet (1697-99) is in Locke, *Works*, vol.4, J. Johnson et al., London 1801 (10th ed.).

<sup>70</sup> Locke, “Reply to the Bishop of Worcester's Answer to his Second Letter”, in *Works*, cit., pp. 314, 324.

<sup>71</sup> [Le Clerc], *Bibliothèque universelle et historique*, cit., p. 426; the translation is mine. Locke, *Saggio filosofico*, cit., p. 31.

urrection of bodies, there would be no identity either of substance or form. To clarify his opinion, Soave put forward another example, that of a machine that is dissembled and reassembled in the same way as before, without any loss of parts, but he also added that, if the new bell in Le Clerc's example had the same form as the old one, everyone would say, mistakenly, that it is identical to the first. Locke was therefore right, concluded Soave, when he stated that we do not possess a distinct idea of identity and that, therefore, this idea is not innate. Notably, Soave seemed to be willing to clear Locke from the suspicion of supporting an opinion contrary to Catholicism, a suspicion that Le Clerc seemed instead willing to fuel.

When it comes to the hypothesis of thinking matter in *Essay* IV.iii.6, which had brought the charge of materialism against Locke, Soave behaved differently. He let Condillac speak, reproducing in a long note what he had affirmed in his *Essai*. Locke was wrong, so Condillac's argument ran, to believe that we cannot know whether God has provided some parts of matter with the faculty of thinking, because we do not need to know the essence of matter to be assured that this is impossible. We only need to remember that while matter is an aggregate of parts, the thinking subject is one<sup>72</sup>.

In the last Appendix, Soave again referred to Condillac to counter Leibniz's criticism of the *Essay*, which addressed thorny questions such as the difficulty of guaranteeing the immortality of the soul in Locke's system. He abridged what Condillac had written in his *Traité des systèmes* about the difficulties intrinsic in Leibniz's monadology and the greater intelligibility of Locke's system, without adding any comment<sup>73</sup>. Once again, Soave appeared unwilling to enter into a debate upon Locke's orthodoxy, despite what he had affirmed in the Preface about the presence of "statements contrary to the Catholic faith" in the *Essay*. In this regard, he found it preferable to rely on Condillac's authority.

### *Conclusion*

There are many other objections that Soave raised to the *Essay*. For instance, he criticised Locke for having mistakenly described what animals learn by experience as instinct<sup>74</sup>, and for failing to clarify the mechanism through which

<sup>72</sup> Condillac, *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, cit., p. 13.

<sup>73</sup> Condillac, *A Treatise on Systems*, in Id., *Philosophical Writings*, cit., esp. pp. 50-80.

<sup>74</sup> Soave, "Appendice II. Riflessioni sopra l'istinto" (Reflections on instinct), in Locke, *Saggio filoso-*

some perceptions appear familiar to us<sup>75</sup>. On several occasions he censured the *Essay* for the absence of a physiology of sensation, an absence that he regretted especially when he considered behavioural disorders such as somnambulism<sup>76</sup>. It would be wrong therefore to affirm, as Garin did, that Soave confined himself to correcting Locke's religious convictions<sup>77</sup>. On the contrary, he generally refrained from expressing his opinion on this subject, entrusting Condillac with the role of censor. Things are different as far as Locke's ideas on ethics are concerned, for Soave is quite outspoken in criticising the *Essay* in this regard.

Another of Garin's observations needs perhaps to be reconsidered. He stated that Soave increased the halo of mystery hiding the structure of reality in the *Essay*, with the aim of "taking advantage of those motives in Locke that responded to the needs of his moderate and timid empiricism"<sup>78</sup>. On the contrary, Soave seemed eager to show how much progress scientific knowledge had made since the writing of the *Essay*. Despite agreeing with Locke on the unknowable nature of substances, his opinions were much more optimistic regarding our understanding of the mechanism of sensation.

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*fico*, cit., t. 1 pp. 115-21. Regarding the passivity Locke attributed to the mind of animals see J. Rickless, "Locke on the Probability of the mind's immateriality", in *Locke Studies* 20 (2020), p. 13n.

<sup>75</sup> Soave, "Appendice. Riflessioni intorno alla memoria", cit., pp. 122-37.

<sup>76</sup> Soave does the same in "Appendice al capo xix. Riflessioni intorno ai Sogni, ai fenomeni de' Sonniloqui e dei Sonnanboli, e al Delirio, e alla Pazzia" (Reflections on dreams, phenomena of Soliloquies and Sleepwalkers, and on Delirium, and Madness), in Locke, *Saggio filosofico*, cit., t. 1, pp. 156-71.

<sup>77</sup> See Garin, *History of Italian Philosophy*, cit., 1, p. 786.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*



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