John Locke's Use of Inquiries: Method, Natural History, and Religious Belief

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Abstract: John Locke maintained a longstanding engagement with the practice of framing inquiries in order advance knowledge in different domains. Influenced by Robert Boyle and the Royal Society, he devised questions on a wide range of topics, shared questionnaires, and wrote to individuals with specific queries, as his journals, notebooks and correspondence testify. Locke's method coincides with attempts by natural historians to capture insights from travellers, armed with suitable questions for a variety of destinations. Little attention has been paid to Locke's approach beyond valuable work by Peter Anstey. This article investigates Locke's commitment to inquiries and modes of communicating them. It also discusses a neglected manuscript in which Locke outlines a brief set of inquiries devoted to religion. Thus he adapted the method of naturalists to advance the anthropological study of religious belief and enthusiasm in particular.

Keywords: Locke, Royal Society, Boyle, natural history, religion.

In an elaborate conceit in *Some Thoughts concerning Education* (1693), John Locke described children as "travellers newly arrived in a strange country, of which they know nothing". On this basis he cautioned against dismissing their inquiries even when they risked becoming tedious. To reinforce the point he remarked that "If you or I now should be set down in *Japan*, with all our Prudence and Knowledge about us":

> we should, no doubt (if we would inform our selves of what is there to be known) ask a thousand Questions, which, to a supercilious or inconsiderate *Japaner*, would seem very idle and impertinent; though to us they would be very material and of importance to be resolved; and we should be glad to find a Man so complaisant and courteous, as to satisfy our Demands, and instruct our Ignorance[1].

[1] J. Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, ed. John W. and Jean S. Yolton, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1989, p. 184 (§120).

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The scenario sketched out by Locke, designed to encourage truthfulness in dealings with children, demonstrates at the same time his consciousness that knowledge acquisition is driven by asking questions, and furthermore that the paradigm case is that of the traveller confronting the unknown.

Locke made widespread use of inquiries across the range of his interests, adopting a method that had become well established in the Royal Society and among key figures associated with the new science like Robert Boyle. In the 1660s, the Royal Society famously compiled a series of questions to be explored by travellers in a range of exotic destinations, while Boyle provided an important general framework for such questions[2]. These contributions are well known, but less familiar is Locke's avid response to this approach, apparent in his adoption of inquiries in his notebooks, journals, and correspondence. The interrogatory mode was more than just a valuable means of establishing matters of fact for Locke, but also a way of organizing conjecture on major themes in his intellectual repertoire.

Locke made a significant intervention by extending the method to encompass not just the natural world but also human custom. In particular, he sought information on religion from travellers as part of a project exploring comparative forms of worship, priesthood, and belief – above all, belief in ostensible revelations. In a largely overlooked early manuscript, Locke mobilized this strategy by producing a set of generic questions designed to elucidate any religion that a traveller might encounter. The scope of the investigation and the assumptions that inform it are instructive, and their formulation would continue to influence his encounter with travellers over ensuing decades.

1. *Historicising inquiries*

The influences on Locke's methodological approach in framing inquiries and his sense of opportunity when it came to exploiting the potential of travel become immediately apparent if we attend to the work of the Royal Society and Robert Boyle. But before exploring these important connections, we need to set such practices in a broader history of early modern engagement with travel and knowledge production. One of the defining features of the period

[2] For previous scholarship, see D. Carey, "Compiling Nature's History: Travellers and Travel Narratives in the Early Royal Society", in *Annals of Science* 54 (1997), 3, pp. 269-92; R. Yeo, "Queries in Early Modern English Science", in *Intellectual History Review* 32 (2022), 3, pp. 553-73.

is in fact the effort to provide a structured environment in which to acquire useful information in the midst of Continental journeys and expeditions much further afield. Initially we can trace these efforts to Humanist interventions in the art of travel in the sixteenth century and the development of rigorously defined fields of observation[3]. In their most explicit form, they emerged as Ramist tables providing branching structures (often conspicuously modelled on the relationship of genera and species) that took defined categories and broke them down into more specific domains, each requiring attention. The pinnacle is the massive work of the Basel humanist and encyclopedist Theodor Zwinger, *Methodus apodemica* (1577)[4], but many further examples could be cited, including the short table in Bernardus Varenius's widely circulated *Geographia generalis* (1650). Others preferred to present their instructions not in tabular form but as a list of "heads" or topoi directing the investigation, sometimes in numbered format, as did Egnazio Danti, the Perugian mathematician, astronomer and cosmographer, in 1577[5], or Albert (or Albrecht) Meier, writing under the patronage of the humanist statesman Heinrich Rantzau, in his *Methodus describendi regiones, urbes et arces* (1587), a work translated into English in 1589[6]. Others adopted the style of the questionnaire, such as the Dutch humanist and librarian Hugo Blotius, an associate of Zwinger's[7]. We should be sensitive to the different morphologies, modalities, and historical moments in

3 See J. Stagl, *A History of Curiosity: The Theory of Travel 1550-1800*, Harwood Academic, Chur, Switzerland 1995, revised as *Eine Geschichte der Neugier: Die Kunst des Reisens 1550-1800*, Böhlau, Vienna 2002; J.-P. Rubiés, "Instructions for Travellers: Teaching the Eye to See", in *History and Anthropology* 9 (1996), pp. 139-90, reprinted in *Id.*, *Travellers and Cosmographers: Studies in the History of Early Modern Travel and Ethnology*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2007; D. Carey, "Inquiries, Heads, and Directions: Orienting Early Modern Travel", in J.A. Hayden (ed.), *Travel Narratives, the New Science, and Literary Discourse, 1569-1750*, Ashgate, Farnham 2012, pp. 25-51.

4 See W. Neuber, "Begriffshierarchie und ramistische Wissenschaft in Theodor Zwingers *Methodus Apodemica*", in W. Kühlmann, W. Neuber (eds.), *Intertextualität in der frühen Neuzeit*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt 1994, pp. 253-78.

5 E. Danti, "Delle osservationi de Viaggi", in *Le scienze matematiche ridotte in tavole*, Bologna 1577, p. 50. For a translation, see T. Frangenberg, "Chorographies of Florence: The Use of City Views and City Plans in the Sixteenth Century", in *Imago Mundi* 46 (1994), pp. 41-64.

6 A. Meier, *Methodus describendi regiones, urbes et arces*, Helmstedt 1587; *Certaine briefe, and speciall Instructions*, trans. P. Jones, London 1589.

7 P. Molino, "Alle origini della *Methodus Apodemica* di Theodor Zwinger: La collaborazione di Hugo Blotius, fra empirismo ed universalismo", in *Codices Manuscripti* 56-7 (October 2006), pp. 43-67. Blotius's list of questions appeared in print in P. Hentznerus, *Itinerarium Germaniae, Galliae, Angliae, Italiae*, 3rd ed., Nuremberg, 1629, Yy7r-Zz6v. For a German translation, see J. Stagl, "Vom Dialog zum Fragebogen: Miszellen zur Geschichte der Umfrage", in *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 31 (1979), 3, pp. 611-38 (631-8).

which these contributions occur, but it is apparent that the format was readily convertible between headings and tables, prompted by a common aspiration to give discipline and coherence to travel.

Recognition of the need to inform travel with inquiries, heads, and directions was by no means confined to European journeys. We can see the pattern in various items included in Richard Hakluyt's vast compendium dedicated (largely) to long-distance expeditions, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589; second edition 1598-1600). Hakluyt printed a range of texts offering instruction on what to observe especially geared around commercial interests (from manufacturing techniques to dyestuffs and "merchantable" commodities), identification of natural resources, and markets for English goods[8]. Trading companies engaged in similar practices from the early seventeenth century onwards, such as the VOC (the Dutch East India Company), with its "Memoir of the things which merchants and other officers should observe in compiling their reports or discourses" first issued in the 1610s[9]. Among English sources, the East India Company's archival records feature a document entitled "Progress of questions and answers concerning Japon" from 1627 sent by the company's factors in Batavia[10]. These records speak to the priority of achieving the aims of the administrators and shareholders of the companies by organizing information and coordinating activity at a distance through systems of command.

The most sophisticated early modern intervention of this kind came from Spanish authorities using their own administrative structures and personnel, originating with the Consejo de Indias (the Council of the Indies) formed in 1524. The centralised model of governance and the urgent requirement of information in a standardized format led to the development of printed questionnaires distributed throughout the Spanish possessions in the New World. This project was initiated under the reign of Philip II by Juan de Ovando in his capacity as visitor (*Visitador*) of the Council of the Indies. In 1569 he produced a questionnaire with 31 headings. Juan López de Velasco created a version with

[8] D. Carey, "Hakluyt's Instructions: *The Principal Navigations* and Sixteenth-Century Travel Advice", in *Studies in Travel Writing* 13 (2009), 2, pp. 167-85.

[9] G. van Meersbergen and F. Birkenholz, "Writing that Travels: The Dutch East India Company's Paper-Based Information Management", in A. Laursen Brock, G. van Meersbergen, and E. Smith (eds.), *Trading Companies and Travel Knowledge in the Early Modern World*, Routledge, Abingdon 2021, pp. 43-70. They conclude that "the template as it was dispatched with the ships *Witten Beer* and *Swarten Beer* in November 1614 remained remarkably constant until at least 1779" (p. 51).

[10] A. Farrington, *The English Factory in Japan 1613-1623*, vol. 2, British Library, London 1991, pp. 970-72.

135 questions in 1573[11], which was then distilled into a list of 50 questions in 1577 under the title *Instrucción y Memoria de las Relaciones que se han de hazer para la descripción de las Indias, que su Magestad manda hazer para el buen gouierno y ennoblescimienta de ellas*[12]. The success of this undertaking yielded a remarkable body of responses known as the *Relaciones Geográficas*. In 1604, the Council issued an expanded version with 355 questions, the work of López de Velasco's successor as Cosmógrafo, Andrés García de Céspedes[13].

Awareness of the benefits of ordering travel and enhancing its epistemic value through structured questions and instructions was therefore widespread in the early modern period, whether the activity was led by individuals, corporate bodies or states. Within the scope of investigation, natural history and natural philosophy played their part, usually in a way that was conditioned by assessing a politically-defined territory and its resources but sometimes as an extensive inquiry with its own ends.

As the seventeenth century progressed, the impact of this method on natural history developed substantially. Francis Bacon's campaign to reform the study of nature identified the use of questions as a productive means to yield new forms of attention, a practice conjoined with travel. In his "Parasceve, ad historiam naturalem et experimentalem" ("A Preparative to a Natural and Experimental History"), part of the *Great Instauration*, Bacon presented a catalogue of 130 different "Histories" embracing an enormous array of subjects (under three broad divisions – the history of "generations", "pretergenerations" and "arts"), encompassing, among other things, the earth and sea, their shape and extent; geographical natural history; the history of winds, clouds, and rain; histories of trees, plants, and shrubs, of fish, birds, quadrupeds, and serpents. Bacon emphasised that questions could be put to good use in this investigation, although they should concern facts rather than causes (*non Causarum dico, sed Facti*)[14].

[11] "Ordenanzas para la formation del libro de las Descriptiones de Indias" (San Lorenzo de El Escorial, 3 July 1573), reprinted in F. de Solano (ed.), *Cuestionarios para la formación de la Relaciones Geográficas de Indias siglos XVI/XIX*, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, Madrid 1988, pp. 16-74.

[12] The *Instrucción* has been reprinted in several places: Solano (ed.), *Cuestionarios*, cit., pp. 79-87; M. Jiménez de la Espada (ed.), *Relaciones geográficas de Indias.–Perú*, vol. 1, Ediciones Atlas, Madrid 1965, pp. 85-90; F. del Paso y Troncoso (ed.), *Papeles de Nueva España*, vol. 4, Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, Madrid 1905, pp. 1-7. For a translation, see H.F. Cline, "The *Relaciones Geográficas* of the Spanish Indies, 1577-1586", in *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 44 (1964), 3, pp. 341-74 (363-71).

[13] "Interrogatorio para todas las ciudades, villas y lugares de españoles, y pueblos de naturales de las Indias Occidentales, islas y Tierra Firme", in Solano (ed.), *Cuestionarios*, cit., pp. 97-111.

[14] F. Bacon, *The Instauratio magna Part II: Novum organum and Associated Texts*, ed. with facing-page translations by G. Rees and M. Wakely, Clarendon Press, Oxford 2004, pp. 455, 457, 469.

Bacon had a major impact on subsequent practice in formulating questions or inquiries, notably in activities associated with Samuel Hartlib and the Royal Society. In 1652, Hartlib was responsible for the publication of "An Interrogatory Relating more particularly to the Husbandry and Naturall History of Ireland" (published as an appendix to the second edition of *Samuel Hartlib his Legacie* (1652)). This document, occasionally mentioned but rarely discussed by historians of the use of inquiries, adopted an alternative mode of presentation for asking questions, but its Baconian pedigree is still apparent. The "Interrogatory" is presented in the unusual format of an alphabetical index, with entries running from "Appricocks" to "Wormes". There are 362 separate entries which list the indexed term and then record relevant queries. The focus on documentation, evident in the wish to determine whether different animals, birds, or trees exist in Ireland, complements the governing concern with establishing the country's natural resources, including food stuffs, methods of animal husbandry and agriculture, as well as trades and manufactures of different kinds. Surveying of shores, rivers, and land with arable potential supports the basic plan of assessing Ireland's suitability for commercial and agricultural development. In relation to the productive potential of different trades or natural commodities, the question is frequently posed of what "charges" they incur and what profit they generate (as in the case of pilchard or eel fishing). With respect to animals and birds, the index typically requests information on the "natures and properties" of different creatures[15].

The Royal Society, founded in 1660, followed up on these sources of inspiration and method, developing Bacon's programme and Hartlib's ethos. In one of its early meetings, the Society established a committee assigned to devise "proper questions to be inquired of in the remotest parts of the world"[16]. Minutes from the first decade record discussion and development of inquiries for an array of destinations such as Iceland and Greenland (compiled by Robert Hooke), Virginia, Hungary and Transylvania, Persia, Egypt, the Caribbean, and the East Indies[17]. Henry Oldenburg, the Society's first secretary, communicated the travel inquiries to a wider public in the journal he founded, *Philosophical Transactions*. The topics addressed range from curiosities of nature to

[15] "An Interrogatory Relating more particularly to the Husbandry and Naturall History of Ireland", in *Samuel Hartlib his Legacie*, 2nd ed., London 1652, sig. Q4r-V1r. For further discussion, see A. Fox, "Printed Questionnaires, Research Networks and the Discovery of the British Isles, 1650-1800", in *Historical Journal* 53 (2010), 3, pp. 593-621 (595-6).

[16] T. Birch, *The History of the Royal Society of London*, vol. 1, London 1756, p. 15.

[17] Ibid., pp. 68, 69, 79, 119, 130, 144, 165-6, 180, 192, 199, 297-8, 318-19.

manufacturing techniques, occasional recommendations for experimentation on site, collection of samples, and other requests.

The particularity of inquiries for specific destinations (however extensive the territory in question) served important purposes of exercising curiosity and responding to prior travel reports, but the Royal Society also recognized the need to supply more general advice on what to observe in the midst of travel. Robert Boyle was prevailed upon to supply "General Heads for a Natural History of a Countrey, Great or small", a four-page piece published in the eleventh number of the *Philosophical Transactions* in 1666. This intriguing document, which was tirelessly circulated by Henry Oldenburg (along with copies of inquiries for specific destinations)[18], is perhaps the best-known single text in the tradition of travel inquiries. Michael Hunter has shown that this document was regarded not so much as an exclusive production of Boyle's but rather as something of a collaborative contribution[19]. Boyle divides the "General Heads" into what should be observed into three areas: the Supraterraneous, Terrestrial, and Subterraneous, with a series of sub-fields for attention, suggesting the influence of Varenius's Ramist table on the structure of his advice[20]. (Elsewhere there is evidence of the impact of the Hartlibian "Interrogatory" on his approach.) Boyle followed up with further contributions to the *Philosophical Transactions* in this genre in the same year, his brief "Other Inquiries concerning the Sea", and the more elaborate "Articles of Inquiries touching Mines"[21]. Once again, we can see an overlapping vocabulary of articles, heads, and inquiries, all combining to introduce some degree of order to observations on the

[18] See, e.g., *The Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg*, ed. A.R. Hall and M. Boas Hall, 13 vols., University of Wisconsin Press, Madison 1965-73; Mansell, London 1977-86, vol. 3, pp. 58, 87, 207, 243, 276-7, 340-41, 526; vol. 4, pp. 133, 166-7; vol. 5, pp. 315, 440. The documents were also seen in close relationship. The brief "Inquiries for Persia" points the reader to "Other *Queries*, concerning the Air, Waters, Minerals, Vegetables, Animals, &c. peculiar to Persia" in Boyle's "General Heads" and "Inquiries concerning Mines", *Philosophical Transactions* 2 (1667), 23, p. 420. Likewise, the "Inquiries and Directions for the Ant-Iles, or Caribe-Islands" cites Boyle's contributions on mines for inquiries relating to earths and minerals, and "General Heads" on air, winds, and weather; *Philosophical Transactions* 3 (1668), 33, p. 639.

[19] M. Hunter notes that Oldenburg produced a restructured version of the "General Heads" (printed as an appendix in Hunter, "Robert Boyle and the Early Royal Society: A Reciprocal Exchange in the Making of Baconian Science", in *British Journal for the History of Science* 40 (2007), 1, pp. 1-23 (22-3)).

[20] See Carey, "Inquiries, Heads, and Directions", cit., pp. 47-8. I have drawn on this essay for some of the summaries of traditions of inquiry provided above. On Boyle and Varenius, see also P.R. Anstey, "Locke on Measurement", in *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 60 (2016), pp. 70-81 (79).

[21] "Other Inquiries concerning the Sea", in *Philosophical Transactions* 1 (1666), 18, pp. 315-16; "Articles of Inquiries touching Mines", in *Philosophical Transactions* 1 (1666), 19, pp. 331-43.

natural world[22]. Here the Royal Society's practice seems to have had sway over Boyle rather than the other way around, as Hunter argues. Furthermore, we see this method radiate across Boyle's scientific interests, not just those informed by travel[23]. Nonetheless, travel remained a particular locus, guided in part by general recommendations outlined in the texts of advice from 1666 but also in Boyle's personal encounter with travellers[24]. We find a convergence in Boyle's posthumous work prepared for the press by John Locke, *The General History of the Air* (1692). Boyle refers in the preface not only to a "Set of Heads and Inquiries" that he drew up to aid the virtuosi who planned to join him in the study, but also to observations he had been "furnished with by Answers to the Questions I put to divers Travellers and Navigators"[25].

2. *Locke's inquiries*

We are now in a position to consider Locke's extensive deployment of inquiries and his engagement with the tradition. The frequency with which they appear in his manuscripts and correspondence is notable in itself, but their presence also testifies to the importance of a Baconian conception of natural history as a key component of his philosophical outlook and practice, and of the major impact of Boyle on his work, whom he first met in 1660[26]. Among

22 Hunter, "Robert Boyle and the Early Royal Society", cit., p. 11.

23 See M. Hunter (ed.), *Robert Boyle's 'Heads' and 'Inquiries'*. Robert Boyle Project Occasional Papers, no. 1 (2005). https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/141212607.pdf; for wider discussion of his method and debt to a Baconian conception of natural history, see P.R. Anstey and M. Hunter, "Robert Boyle's 'Designe about Natural History'", in *Early Science and Medicine* 13 (2008), 2, pp. 83-126.

24 On Boyle's meetings with travellers, see M. Hunter, *Boyle Studies: Aspects of the Life and Thought of Robert Boyle (1627-91)*, Ashgate, Farnham 2015, ch. 9; S. Irving, *Natural Science and the Origins of the British Empire*, Pickering & Chatto, London 2008, pp. 85-6; M. Jansson, "Eyewitnesses to the Phenomenon of Russian Cold: Robert Boyle and the Accounts of Early Travelers to the North", in *Quaestio Rossica* 10 (2022), 3, pp. 1057-83.

25 R. Boyle, *The General History of the Air*, London 1692, pp. x-xi. See on this topic C. Crignon, "What is at Stake in a Natural History of the Air? Francis Bacon and Robert Boyle", in *Archives de philosophie* 84 (2021), 1, 93-113.

26 P.R. Anstey has argued persuasively that the Baconian legacy is "central to Locke's account of natural philosophical knowledge in the *Essay* [*concerning Human Understanding*]" and that "the construction of natural histories is constitutive of natural philosophy". "Locke, Bacon and Natural History", in *Early Science and Medicine* 7 (2002), 1, pp. 65-92 (68). On Locke and Boyle, see this article and additional information in P.R. Anstey, *John Locke and Natural Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2011, pp. 51, 58. Locke owned more books by Boyle than anyone else in his library and participated in two of Boyle's works directly, contributing to *Memoirs for the Natural History of*

his many connections with Boyle with relevance in the current context, we can include Locke's attempt to secure information on a mine in the Mendip Hills in Somerset during a visit in May 1666, although the expedition was largely unsuccessful[27]. Boyle encouraged the endeavour and followed up by stating a wish to provide Locke with "some sheets of Articles of Inquirys about Mines in generall", the work that appeared later that year in the *Philosophical Transactions*[28]. We have already noted Locke's editorial role in pulling together Boyle's *General History of the Air* in 1692 after Boyle's death in late 1691, but his participation in the project effectively stemmed back over the previous twenty-five years[29]. Peter Anstey has documented that among Locke's papers on natural philosophy and medicine there are copies of sets of Boyle's queries on a range of topics. Some are closer in form to "titles" for experimentation[30] – identifying the kinds of inquiries that could be made in interrogating natural phenomena like fire and flame or human blood[31], but others are more obviously interrogatory, requiring engagement with other parties, in some cases in the context of travel (such as a set of queries related to Boyle's *New Experiments and Observations Touching Cold* (1665) that were copied in 1681)[32]. Boyle's "Topics for the

Humane Blood, London 1684, and editing *The General History of the Air*. Locke also had access early on to Boyle's papers "where he would have been privy to many of these lists" of inquiries (Anstey, *Locke and Natural History*, cit., 61).

27 Locke to Boyle, 5 May 1666, J. Locke, *Correspondence*, ed. by E.S. de Beer, vol. 1, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1976, pp. 273-6. Boyle provided Locke with a barometer with which to take readings. Having sought the deepest available mineshaft, Locke was discouraged by the miners from the attempt. They pointed out the practical difficulties and expressed some degree of doubtfulness about what he might be up to. The expedition was not a wasted effort. For some discussion of reports from miners that Locke gathered during the visit, see J. Walmsley, "John Locke on Respiration", in *Medical History* 51 (2007), 4, pp. 453-76 (470).

28 Boyle to Locke, 2 June 1666, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, cit., p. 279. Quoted in Anstey, *Locke and Natural Philosophy*, cit., 62.

29 Anstey, "Locke, Bacon and Natural History", cit., 79.

30 On Boyle's shifting vocabulary and the at times more experimental conception of queries and articles of inquiry, see Anstey and Hunter, "Robert Boyle's 'Designe about Natural History'", cit., 113.

31 See fifty-one heads on flame and fire in Bodleian Library MS Locke c. 42 (first part), pp. 266-7, attributed to Boyle and dated 1682; and queries about human blood datable to 1666-67 in Bodleian Library MS Locke f. 19, pp. 272-3 and 302-3. Boyle's name is not mentioned but they clearly derive from him. See Anstey, *Locke and Natural Philosophy*, cit., p. 62. Anstey (p. 62n86) argues against Walmsley's attribution of the queries to Locke in "Locke on Respiration", cit., p. 467. For a transcription on the heads concerning fire and flame, see *Robert Boyle's 'Heads' and 'Inquiries'*, cit., 34-6; on blood, see M. Hunter and H. Knight (eds.), *Unpublished Material Relating to Robert Boyle's Memoirs for the Natural History of Human Blood*, Robert Boyle Project Occasional Papers no. 2 (2005), pp. 19-20. https://www.bbk.ac.uk/boyle/media/pdf/BOYLE_Blood_Revise4.pdf

32 Bodleian Library MS Locke c. 31 fol. 49v.

History of Diseases" (a version of which appears in one of Locke's notebooks) is very much continuous with his "General Heads", setting out areas for further investigation in different countries[33].

Boyle was not the only source of inquiries that survive in Locke's papers. A series of "Inquirys concerning the use and Cultivars of the Kitchen Garden & Winter Greenes", deriving from Charles Howard, survives in Bodleian Library MS Locke f. 7, pp. 49-52[34], while another notebook includes transcriptions of correspondence on second sight between the antiquarian John Aubrey and James Garden, professor of theology in Aberdeen, which includes a questionnaire on the topic that Garden devised and various responses he received[35].

Locke developed inquires of his own, confirming his debt to Boyle and the Royal Society. Locke's relationship with the Society was formalized in November 1668 with his election as a fellow[36]. He served on the Council in 1669 and 1672. Using his networks very much in the manner of the Society, Locke evidently encouraged a colonial agent in the Bahamas, Richard Lilburne, to supply information. Responding by letter in 1674 from New Providence, Lilburne apologized for not having "met with any rareities worth your acceptance though I have been diligent in inquireing after them". Nonetheless he provided a brief report of interest on a species of poisonous fish which caused joint pain to anyone who consumed them[37]. The description was sufficiently notable to prompt Locke to communicate it to Henry Oldenburg, and it was read before the Society in 1675 and printed in the *Philosophical Transactions* (as "An extract of a Letter, written to the Publisher by Mr. J.L.")[38]. The letter and the printed version reference the fact that Locke had followed up by providing

33 MS Locke c. 42 (first part), p. 98, dating from 1682. Compare British Library Sloane MS 25002, fols 1v-2, transcribed in *Robert Boyle's 'Heads' and 'Inquiries'*, cit., 33-4.

34 See P.R. Anstey and S.A. Harris, "Locke and Botany", in *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 37 (2006), pp. 151-71 (165n). They acknowledge Michael Hunter's tracing of the inquiries to Charles Howard in British Library, Add MS 4458, f. 140.

35 MS Locke c. 31, fols 11-25. On this correspondence, see M. Hunter, *The Occult Laboratory: Magic, Science, and Second Sight in Seventeenth-Century Scotland*, Boydell Press, Woodbridge 2001, pp. 23-4. Chapter 4 includes a transcription of the letters, which are dated 2 January and 4 May 1694.

36 M. Hunter, *The Royal Society and Its Fellows 1660-1700: The Morphology of an Early Scientific Institution*, 2nd ed., British Society for the History of Science, London 1994, pp. 184-5.

37 Richard Lilburne to Locke, [6 August] 1674, in *Correspondence*, vol. 1, cit. pp. 406-7. Anstey, *Locke and Natural Philosophy*, cit., p. 60, has noted the possible connection with Boyle's "General Heads" and its advice to inquire about "*Fishes*, what kinds of them", including "Peculiarities of any kind", *Philosophical Transactions* 1 (1666), 11, p. 187.

38 Locke to Oldenburg, 20 May 1675, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, cit., p. 423. *Philosophical Transactions* 10 (1675), 114, p. 312.

his correspondent with additional "Quæres I lately sent him by a ship bound thither"[39]. These were answered by Lilburne in August of that year[40].

Locke again participated in a formal process of circulating inquiries in the early 1690s, on this occasion in conjunction with his friend Dr Charles Goodall. The topic in this instance was medical in orientation, with questions circulated under the heading "Enquiries to be made about Bills of Mortality, Airs, Diseases etc.", which connect with Boyle's interests and approach in several ways while also moving beyond them. The five questions asked about the contents of bills of mortality in foreign countries[41] and the causes of death in various European cities as well as in Constantinople and Smyrna and in colonial territories in America, the Caribbean and elsewhere; the air in different countries "with the temper and alteration" of it by season and "the diseases these countreys are subject to, and the time when?"[42]; the view of physicians about Jesuit's bark (quinine) and their account of it; the esteem in which the physician Thomas Sydenham was held; and the relative social position in different countries of physicians, surgeons, apothecaries and hospitals[43].

Locke's journals and correspondence yield further evidence of the role of inquiries in his repertoire of strategies for pursuing his various intellectual interests. During his extended travels in France (1675-79), among other pursuits he was actively seeking information on crops and commodities that would sustain the economic development of Carolina[44]. In a journal entry of 1677 made

39 Bodleian Library MS Locke d. 9, pp. 87 and 236. The queries are printed in J. Locke, *Correspondence*, ed. by E.S. de Beer, vol. 8, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1989, pp. 428-9.

40 Lilburne to Locke, 12 August 1675, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, cit., pp. 424-6. Another Bahamian correspondent, Isaac Rush, sent a (lost) letter on the topic referenced by Rush in his letter to Locke of 19 August 1675, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, cit., p. 427.

41 In a journal entry from 1679, Locke asked: "Q Whether Anabaptists Quakers & Jews are comprehended in the bills of mortality". Bodleian Library MS Locke f. 28, p. 152.

42 Boyle included a section on air and its various qualities in his "General Heads" which encompassed attention to diseases "supposed to flow from the Air", whether epidemical or otherwise. "General Heads", cit., p. 187.

43 Printed in K. Dewhurst, *John Locke (1632-1704) Physician and Philosopher: A Medical Biography. With an Edition of the Medical Notes in his Journals*, Wellcome Historical Medical Library, London 1963, pp. 301-2. On quinine (kinkina) Goodall had written to Locke in 1687 asking his assistance in circulating questions on the topic he had devised to ask of "Natives of Peru brought into Europe", Spaniards and priests who had lived there or merchants ([c. 25] July 1687, J. Locke, *Correspondence*, ed. by E.S. de Beer, vol. 3, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1978, pp. 232-3). Goodall said he had hopes for useful information from Hans Sloane who was shortly to head to Jamaica with the Duke of Albemarle. Goodall's planned book on quinine did not materialise.

44 D. Armitage, "John Locke, Carolina, and the *Two Treatises of Government*", in *Political Theory* 32 (2004), 5, pp. 602-27.

while in the Loire he asked "Q. What fruits good there for Carolina or England particularly the plumbs of Tours. Prunes de St. Margaret." Later, he recorded the more general query: "France) Q. Whatever may be usefull in Carolina"[45]. Here the purpose of the question is to organize his own attention as much as it is to ask other parties for their views. In other journals from the same era of travel in France, Locke records his reading and notes on various books. These too became productive of inquiries. In relation to Nicolas Villault's *Relation des costes d'Afriques Appellées Guinée* (1669), he took note of a description of palm wine and asked "Q. How this unfermented liquor comes to fuddle men?" While reading the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega's *Commentaries*, he noted the claim that venomous creatures reacted with "horror" to pepper and inquired: "Q. whether this be true of the East Indian peper that which our author speaks of being the peper of Peru"[46]. Queries in these journals likewise spoke to his interests in medical matters and currency[47]. Responding to a review in the *Acta Eruditorum* of a book by the Jesuit Daniello Bartoli, Locke took note of the discussion of grafting and asked: "Q Whether hence may not be taken a rule in grafting, viz that plants will graft one on another which have seeds alike. JL"[48].

Locke's ethnographic concerns also benefited from the technique of the inquiry. For example, he wrote to his friend Nicolas Toinard in 1679 asking if he knew anything about an African people living near the river Gambra called the Geloofs (i.e. Wolofs or Oulofs), a reference which he had taken personally from Robert Boyle[49]. Locke's frequent exchanges with Toinard include a later letter from 1698 asking him about the customs of inhabitants near the river Senegal. When Toinard sent him a new travel book by François Froger (*Relation d'un Voyage* [...] *aux Côtes d'Afrique, Détroit de Magellan, Brezil, Cayenne, & Isles Antilles*), Locke responded with inquiries for the traveller concerning Cayenne where he had visited, including the beliefs of native people, their length of life, and the country's different natural productions[50]. On another occasion, Locke

45 Bodleian Library MS Locke f. 15, pp. 42, 91.

46 J. Lough, "Locke's Reading during his Stay in France (1675-79)", in *The Library*, 5th ser., 8 (1953), pp. 229-58 (238, 241).

47 Ibid., pp. 242, 243.

48 Bodleian Library MS Locke f. 9, p. 91.

49 Locke to Toinard, 20 September and 13 October 1679, J. Locke, *Correspondence*, ed. by E.S. de Beer, vol. 2, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1976, p. 117. For the reference from Boyle, see Locke's journal for 1679, British Library Add MS 15642, p. 161. Printed in Dewhurst, *John Locke (1632-1704) Physician and Philosopher*, cit., p. 176.

50 On Senegal see Locke's letter to Toinard of 25 March 1698, J. Locke, *Correspondence*, ed. by E.S. de Beer, vol. 6, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1981, p. 361, and Toinard's letter of 6 July 1698, *Correspondence*,

wrote to Hans Sloane to let him know of an opportunity to meet a Japanese individual named "Bango" whom Locke said was "in our neighbourhood" and spoke some English: "I shall not say any thing to you concerning the heads to be talkd on with him, you know soe well better than I what questions are fit to be asked concerning that country. I would only be resolvd in this one whether the Importation of gold and silver be prohibited there"[51].

Locke developed a separate interest in the base (or "nodus" as he called it) used in different countries for numeration, evident in various manuscript sources and surviving correspondence. In the same letter in which he asked Toinard about Senegal he commented: "What you say about the Africans' and Brazilians' arithmetic is most acceptable. I do not know whether I asked you formerly to tell me whether you know of any peoples who have placed the nodus of numeration elsewhere than in the number ten. If you know any such I ask you anew to inform me, for I am eager to learn about it and have long since been inquiring about it"[52]. Evidence that his interest in this topic was indeed longstanding appears in a journal entry nearly twenty years earlier, recording details of a conversation with the important French traveller in India, François Bernier: "Mr. Bernier told me that the Bramins Gentils, the old inhabitants of Indostan, count their time by weeks & give the days' denominations as we doe by the seven planets & in the same order, their day denominated from the sun being the same with our Sunday, & soe of the rest, & in numbering make their nodus as we doe at 10"[53].

3. *Locke's inquiries and religion*

Locke made an important contribution to the tradition by firmly incorporating human practice and belief into the scope of studies aided by the use of

vol. 6, cit., p. 445. On Froger, see Locke to Toinard, 25 March 1698, *Correspondence*, vol. 6, cit., p. 358. Locke was also interested in variations in the pendulum in Cayenne and what Froger could report. See Anstey, "Locke on Measurement", cit., p. 80.

[51] Locke to Hans Sloane, 15 March 1697, *Correspondence*, vol. 6, cit., p. 36. In reply Sloane referred to Bango as Chinese, saying that he had attempted to speak with him "but the Language made us have little conversation". Nonetheless he vowed to follow up. Sloane to Locke, 18 March 1697, *Correspondence*, vol. 6, cit., p. 56.

[52] Locke to Toinard (in Latin), 25 March 1698, *Correspondence*, vol. 6, cit., pp. 357-63 (translation by de Beer).

[53] J. Lough (ed.), *Locke's Travels in France 1675-1679 as Related in his Journals, Correspondence and other Papers*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1953, p. 282.

inquiries. He may have taken as a point of departure Boyle's "General Heads" which devoted a separate heading to "the earth and its inhabitants". Here he recommended that travellers attend to "both *Natives* and *Strangers*, that have been long settled there" and to take note of their "Stature, Shape, Colour, Features, Strength, Agility, Beauty (or the want of it)[,] Complexions, Hair, Dyet, Inclinations, and Customs that seem not due to Education"[54]. Boyle moves without comment from physical attributes to an assessment of ways of life and the elusive issue of "inclinations". Thus he endorses applying the method of natural history to investigating the cultural and mental tendencies of different peoples. The object of study is evidently human nature and how it is manifested in these domains – which may account for the unexplained emphasis on customs that originate not from education but, by implication, from nature itself. Like much in the document, these remarks are concise and cryptic but nonetheless intriguing.

Some uncertainty remained about the scope of this investigation within the remit of natural history, at least as understood by Henry Oldenburg. Oldenburg omitted the category of "customs that seem not due to education" when he restructured Boyle's "General Heads" for circulation to some of his correspondents[55]. In the reviews he included of travel books in the *Philosophical Transactions* he often explicitly omitted attention to ethnographic matters, but he came back to the issue in the preface the eleventh volume of the *Philosophical Transactions* (1676) and supported investigation of "the intrinsick mentals or intellectuals of Mankind"[56]. Through his published work, most notably the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1690) and its rationale for a natural history of man, Locke may in turn have influenced guidelines for travellers provided by John Woodward in his *Brief Instructions for Making Observations in All Parts of the World* (1696), which appeared with the Royal Society's imprimatur. Woodward wrote to Locke with a copy of the pamphlet. In it, he called for information on natives of Africa, the East and West Indies, Tartary, Greenland, "or any other remote, and uncivilized, or Pagan Countries", with a specific

54 Boyle, "General Heads", cit., p. 188.

55 Hunter, "Robert Boyle and the Early Royal Society", cit., p. 23.

56 *Philosophical Transactions* 11 (1676), 123, pp. 553-4. For further discussion of this question, see D. Carey, *Locke, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson: Contesting Diversity in the Enlightenment and Beyond*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006, ch. 1. In parallel, what we might call a hybrid approach, combining curiosity about natural history with attention to antiquities and customs, was well established among other contemporaries active in the Royal Society, such as John Aubrey and Robert Plot, who circulated inquires in aid of their projects. See Fox, "Printed Questionnaires", cit.

invitation to record "their *Tempers*, *Genius's*, *Inclinations*, *Virtues*, and *Vices*", as well as their social practices and "*Notions* touching the *Supreme God*"[57].

Locke's sense of opportunity and adaptation of the method of framing natural history inquiries to explore issues of culture, belief, and knowledge appears in an early manuscript that has not received attention. The undated manuscript, possibly from the early 1670s if not earlier, survives in a guard-book assembled by Public Record Office archivists from materials in the Shaftesbury papers (Locke entered the household of the first Earl of Shaftesbury (then Lord Ashley) in 1667 and lived in Ashley's residence, Exeter House in the Strand, until 1675). In it, Locke recorded a series of inquiries focusing specifically on religious belief and practice in foreign countries. The questions may have been geared to a particular, although unidentified, religion, as John Milton has suggested,[58] but I believe they are generic, and intended to provide the basis for a thorough anthropological assessment regardless of where travellers found themselves. What did Locke propose as subjects of investigation?

> What they believe concerning God
> Spirits good & bad
> The soule & its state after this life
> Heaven
> Hell
> The world its beginning & duration
> And upon what grounds their belief concerning these things is founded?
> What is [*sic*] the obiects, Manner, Time & Place of their religious worship
> Whether they have priests. How distinguished from others? & whether they are good men?
> Whether they pretend to any Revelation from heaven of their Religion & Miracles to confirme it? And when this was. And what probabilitys offerd
> Whether there be any Apparitions, Oracles, Praedictions, Conjurations or inchantments amongst them?[59]

In analysing the manuscript, Locke's approach appears at first blush to be governed by essentially informational interests: that is, to document the basic substance of religious views. Part of this investigation is conducted through

[57] J. Woodward, *Brief Instructions for Making Observations in All Parts of the World*, London 1696, pp. 8-10. For Woodward's letter to Locke, 6 January 1696, see J. Locke, *Correspondence*, ed. by E.S. de Beer, vol. 5, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1979, p. 506.

[58] J.R. Milton, "Locke's Manuscripts among the Shaftesbury Papers in the Public Record Office", in *Locke Newsletter* 27 (1996), pp. 109-30 (127).

[59] The National Archives PRO/30/24/47/30, fol. 44.

attention to certain formal aspects of religious life: is there a priesthood? How are priests marked off from the laity? When and where do they worship? What are the objects of veneration? Beliefs similarly have a kind of structure, some of which is predetermined, since to qualify as a religion certain things are required: a conception of the deity, some account of the soul, creation, notions of heaven and hell, and the existence of spirits, either malevolent or benevolent.

But it is striking that Locke's documentary purpose is also framed in ways that indicate a variety of built-in assumptions. When he asks about cosmology, by inquiring about the beginning of the world and its duration, he follows up by inquiring: "upon what grounds their belief concerning these things is founded?" To raise this issue is automatically to regard belief as *having* grounds, and to make it, by implication, propositional, as representing a kind of claim about the world for which supporting argument is required.

The editorial drift becomes more apparent when he broaches the issue of "revelation". By asking "Whether they pretend to any Revelation from heaven of their Religion" he not only seeks to establish a matter of importance at a factual level – whether or not the claim to revelation is made – but he accepts in advance that believers must "pretend" to it, in the sense of alleging something falsely, given the reservation of true revelation to the Judeo-Christian faith. Locke also anticipates that any such communication from the divine would, as a matter of course, require confirmation from miraculous events, hence his interest in when they transpired. But he goes further, notably, by asking "what probabilitys [are] offerd". The investigation has been shaped here by a curious orientation. By definition, miracles defy probability – they interrupt the course of nature and in so doing testify to the power of the divine to communicate through the extraordinary. Locke's question is different: the occurrence of an event as constituting an occasion of the miraculous is itself subject to probabilistic analysis[60].

There is evidence in another manuscript source that Locke identified himself as having explicitly formulated a list of inquiries, possibly the one on religion. In a journal entry from 1676 he records: "Memo. to put into my enquirys

[60] In a posthumously published "Discourse of Miracles", dating from 1702, Locke set out the complex case for how the miraculous should be evaluated and what role such events played in Judaism and Christianity. Locke maintained that we only have a clear account of three figures (Moses, Jesus and Muhammed) who professed to come in the name of the one true God. He added: "For what the *Persees* say of their *Zoroaster*, or the *Indians* of their *Brama* (not to mention all the wild Stories of the Religions farther East) is so obscure or so manifestly fabulous, that no account can be made of it". J. Locke, *Writings on Religion*, ed. Victor Nuovo, Clarendon Press, Oxford 2002, p. 45.

the Nodus of numbers. Their account of time, especially weeks. Their epochs & the age of the world"[61]. While his interest in the nodus of numeration crops up in various contexts, as we have seen, the reminder to himself in 1676 is connected with religion. He was prompted by his reading of a work by the Dutch *Predikant* (preacher) in India, Abraham Roger, in French translation, which reported that the Brahmins (on Locke's calculation) held that the world had existed for 3,892,739 years as of AD 1639[62].

Whether or not Locke is referring in his memo to this specific set, his questions on religion clearly formed the basis for his engagement with a number of correspondents from whom he sought information on native religions. In November 1675, he received a letter from Dr Henry Woodward, who had settled in the Carolina colony, containing extensive information on the Westo Indians and prompted it would seem by Locke's headings. Woodward began by saying "I have made the best inquiry that I can concerneing the religion and worship. Originall, and customs of our natives". Of a group near Port Royal, whom he knew best, he reported on their cosmology and noted that they worshipped the sun, spoke of spirits who often appeared before them, had notions of the "deluge", and acknowledged the immortality of the soul, with rewards in the afterlife for the virtuous and punishments for others. Another group on the Savannah River worshipped the devil "in a carved image of wood", of whom he hoped to provide a further account[63]. Years later, in 1698, Locke was still pursuing the same issues, including in his questions for Froger in Cayenne, as I noted, where he asked "Whether the Indians in the neighbourhood worship or recognize any god besides the stars, and with what kind of worship"[64].

The final question in Locke's short early manuscript covered "Apparitions, Oracles, Praedictions, Conjurations or inchantments". He similarly followed through on this interest by drawing on his network of correspondents. In 1681, he wrote to Toinard with a question for their mutual friend François Bernier, wondering whether he had observed, "parmi les Orientaux tant Turcs que Paiens quelque Sorcelerie. Spectre, Oracles ett et si le Diable se fait vaire [*sic*] a ces gens la comme en l Amarique, la Lapponie et autre part parmi les paiens" (among the Orientals, both Turks and pagans, any sorcery, spectre, oracles, etc.,

61 Lough, "Locke's Reading", cit., p. 233n1.

62 Bodleian Library MS Locke f. 1, p. 388; Lough, "Locke's Reading", cit., p. 233. See A. Roger, *La Porte Ouverte, pour parvenir à la connoissance du Paganisme Caché. Touchant la croyance & la religion des Bramines* [...] *Seconde Partie* [trans. Thomas La Grüe], Amsterdam 1671, pp. 72-4.

63 Dr Henry Woodward to Locke, 12 November 1675, *Correspondence*, vol. 1, cit., pp. 431-3.

64 Locke to Toinard, 25 March 1698, *Correspondence*, vol. 6, cit., pp. 358.

and if the devil appears to these people as in America, Lapland, and elsewhere among the pagans)[65].

Locke took a further opportunity in 1683 when a personal connection with the family of the Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth promised dividends in India. His friend, the philosopher Damaris Masham, was Cudworth's daughter. Her brother Charles was departing for India in service of the East India Company. Locke wrote to him with a range of questions, including "whether they have any apparitions amongst them and what thoughts of spirits, and as much of the opinions religion and ceremonys of the Hindos and other heathens of those countrys as comes in your way to learne or enquire". Here he requests documentation in an ostensibly neutral vein, but elsewhere in the letter the editorial drift is more pointed. Locke noted that

> Some of those who have traveld and write of those parts, give us strange storys of the tricks donne by some of their Juglers there, which must needs be beyond leger de main and seeme not within the power of art or nature. I would very gladly know whether they are really donne as strange as they are reported [...][66]

The note of imposture in the reference to "Juglers" is incorporated into the investigation. He wondered, as he went on to explain, whether the perpetrators were Muslims or, as he suspected, "heathens", that is, Hindus, and how they were "looked on by the Bramins and other people of the country"[67]. While the focus of Locke's interest, on this occasion, was India, a particularly fruitful locus of inquiry[68], we have seen that nearer to home he obtained two manuscript discussions of second sight associated with Garden and Aubrey in the 1690s, indicating the breadth of his anthropological inquiries facilitated by inquiries.

Within six months of arriving in India Charles Cudworth was dead, depriving Locke of a potentially valuable source of information on the ground, but Locke did not give up the attempt. Evidence of his determination appears in a letter he received from a later correspondent, possibly a kinsman, called John Lock, who wrote from Surat in January 1703 (the letter arrived in England just ten months before Locke's own demise). In answer to Locke's request for infor-

65 Locke to Toinard, 14 October 1681, *Correspondence*, vol. 2, cit., p. 454.

66 Letter of 27 April 1683, *Correspondence*, vol. 2, cit., p. 591. The questions raised by Locke relate closely to his journal entry of 8 October 1677 recording a conversation with François Bernier. See *Locke's Travels in France 1675-1679*, cit., p. 177.

67 Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 2, cit., p. 591.

68 See D. Carey, "John Locke's India: Religion, Revelation, and Enthusiasm", in *Cultural Histories of India: Subaltern Spaces, Peripheral Genres, and Alternate Historiography*, ed. Rita Banerjee, Routledge, Abingdon 2020, pp. 15-34.

mation on religion his correspondent concentrated on the level of learning displayed by different sects in the country. He declared the Brahmins "mighty Ignorant in the history of their Religion". As for Muslims, their religion was "well enough known in Europe". What knowledge they had was evidently passed down "from father to son merely by practice" and not by the study of books, as was more familiar in Europe. Thus he engaged if only by implication with a question Locke was concerned with, namely the role of tradition in revealed religions[69]. If someone asked a "Banian", as he referred to them (used generically for Hindus in Western India), why they marked their forehead, he commented, "The Answer they presently make is the Padres and their Book says soe, but very few amongst the Padres can read it themselves." Lock noted the existence of several casts, and singled out for attention the "Vertiats" (Jains) whose beliefs he outlined in some detail[70].

Locke's preoccupation with religion features centrally in his anthropological investigations, but his questions form part of a much larger ethnographic inquiry into government, society, economy, and other matters, reflected in the sorts of issues that he raised with travellers, including Cudworth and Lock in their encounter with India. Some of the challenges and limitations of this method are also apparent in his exchanges. The first of these is the problem of generating a response to the inquiries. There are a number of dimensions to this we need consider. On the one hand the complexity of the questions automatically raises the issue of the competence of the inquirer. In the case of religion a certain amount of observation would have satisfied Locke's demands in some cases – for example in identifying the existence of a priesthood and the performance of rites – standard fare in ethnographic descriptions found in travel writing of the period. But the majority of his concerns require philosophical acuity on the part of the questioner in order to elicit information on belief systems. On the other hand, as we have seen, networks of transmission are needed in order to convey information, which serve to facilitate but also necessarily mediate the process and define its parameters in sometimes hidden ways.

What I would describe as the utopianism of the questionnaire is also apparent here – the expectation that answers can be obtained if suitably directed individuals are employed in the task. Yet the framer of inquiries rarely takes into

[69] See Locke's query in his Lemmata Ethica notebook, likely based on his reading of Bernier: "Q. Whether the Bramines besides their book of Hanscrit make use also of Tradition & soe of others who pretend to a revealed religion? JL." Bodleian Library MS Locke d. 10, p. 163.

[70] John Lock to Locke, 11 January 1703, J. Locke, *Correspondence*, ed. by E.S. de Beer, vol. 7, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1982, pp. 736-7.

account the conditions of knowledge exchange. The most obvious obstacle is linguistic, a point that never received attention in any of the Royal Society inquiries or in Boyle's "General Heads". But beyond that, the person delegated to ask questions and record answers inevitably relied on the those he encountered. Locke's Surat correspondent (John Lock) commented on the difficulty of eliciting information. He indicated that "what knowledge any European can gain must bee by short questions and one or 2 at a Time for they find it difficult to understand us and wee them." In fact, he acknowledged that the source of his information on the Jains in India was a Jesuit whom he described as a "man of Sober Life, and Good Learning" who was "very inquisitive", but even he professed that he found it "very difficult to inform himself of their Customs"[71].

There is a further sociological dimension to these exchanges that is often overlooked: how did figures responsible for preparing questionnaires and inquiries create an obligation to respond on the part of their contacts? The Royal Society attempted to use its social connections and institutional prestige, the gentlemanly status of participants and a variety of informal ties to impose a moral responsibility – a precarious and far from systematic method, but one necessitated by the lack of resources available to commission journeys by trained observers (an opportunity that only really emerges in the eighteenth century). In his letter to Cudworth, Locke made a considerable rhetorical effort to cultivate a relationship that would encourage his contact to respond to him. He began, it must be said, from a privileged position since he had an entré to Cudworth through his close friend and philosophical sparring partner, Damaris Masham. While offering his inquiries to her brother with a measure of embarrassment, Locke also situated the practice of philosophical correspondence. He explained that there is "a commerce of Freindship as well as merchandise". Although the common motive of travel to the East is "geting mony and growing rich", he hoped to offer the prospect of a "greater advantage by another sort of correspondence with you there"[72].

Having stated his requests, he returns to this theme, suggesting a scenario in which such friendship matures over time from bare civility to a deeper exchange, with a rather nicely phrased comic turn:

> He that in his first addresse should only put of[f] his hat make a leg and say your servant Sir to a man at the other end of the world, may, (if the windes sit right and the ships come home safe to bring back the returne of his com-

71 Ibid., p. 737.

72 Locke, *Correspondence*, vol. 2, cit., p. 591.

> plement,) may I say in two or three years perhaps atteine to some thing that looks like the begining of an acquaintance, and by the next Jubilee there may be hopes of some conversation between them[73].

He closed by describing himself in mocking terms as "a blunt fellow", one "as far removd from the Ceremony of the easterne people you are among as from their country". Locke shaped the prospective exchange in such a way as to avoid placing himself in a position of authority, and invited Cudworth to see it as one of equality, predicated on friendship. The obligation to respond was therefore an obligation of friendship rather than duty to a superior.

4. *From inquiry to conjecture*

At the root of this for Locke, need we remind ourselves, was the desire for solid testimony and material affording philosophical insight. In this final section I consider instances in Locke's notebooks of processes of transformation in which inquiry turns into conjecture and conjecture into philosophy[74]. A substantial example appears from a journal entry in 1677, recorded when he was reading Jean Thévenot's *Relation d'un Voyage Fait au Levant* (1665):

> The Turks very seldome or never betray their prince to Christians says Thevenot p. 111 / 576 & I believe it is true. Q Whether it be not their aversion to our Religion that keepes them soe. For they often betray him to the persians. There are as I conceive fewer Renegados of Turks then of Christians. Q. Whether it be not their great ignorance that makes them soe. And whether it be not the safest way to keepe any people fast to any opinion to make them prejudiced them selves in the right [and] thereupon conclude it unreasonable & impious to doubt or enquire. For there are soe few that have either the meanes to know or the ability to [...] all that is necessary to be understood for the decideing differences in religion that to set them upon enquiry is to expose the greatest part of mankinde either to the artifices of the subtil, or to a perfect hazard of eternall doubt. This practise is thought to suit well with the [needs]

73 Ibid., p. 592.

74 We get a taste of this from a journal record made in France while he was reading Bernier. In May 1676, Locke took note of "The way of falling into an Extasie" in the first volume of the *Suite des Memoires du S^r Bernier sur l'Empire du Grand Mogol*, Paris 1671. This led him to conjecture: "Q Whether Extasie be any thing else but dreaming with the eyes open or whether dreaming be any thing else but the appearance of Ideas in the minde without knowing the cause that produces them there as wide wakeing". MS Locke f. 1, p. 256 (not reproduced by Lough, "Locke's Reading", cit.).

> of policy, but by force to keepe people from opining is supposed by many not to agree well with true religion or common charity. JL[75].

Locke moves rather swiftly through the intellectual gears in this instance. The pattern is one in which inquiries – prefaced with a "Q" – are in fact not so much questions as conjectures or answers to a dilemma that Locke poses to himself. The question in that sense already anticipates a reply on his part. The query form may suggest a degree of hesitation, but Locke overcomes it in an argued perspective on how ignorance is encouraged in order to secure people in their opinions. Locke signed this entry "JL", his customary practice in the notebooks when he had arrived at some conclusion which he regarded as representing his considered thinking on a given subject. Locke identifies a stratagem in play – but he terminates with the view that this policy does "not agree well with true religion or common charity". This viewpoint ties into the position he would develop at greater length in the *Letter concerning Toleration*, where freedom of inquiry and opinion forms the cornerstone of the rationale for extending toleration.

My final example comes from an important journal entry on the subject of enthusiasm dated 19 February 1682. Locke reverses the pattern in the sense that he begins with an emphatic statement before arriving at a query. In the entry, Locke starts by defining enthusiasm as "A strong and firm persuasion of any proposition relating to religion for which a man hath either no or not sufficient proofs from reason but receives them as truths wrought in the mind extraordinarily by God himself"[76]. In short they are revelations certified only by the believer. In a chapter on enthusiasm added to the fourth edition of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (Book IV, ch. 19) in 1700, Locke attempted to resolve the dilemma of accepting on the one hand God's capacity to communicate with his desire on the other to police unwarranted and self-authorizing statements about divine illumination. There, he elided reference to anthropological testimony, but it appears in the journal entry on enthusiasm where he noted that "I find that Christians, Mahomedans, and Brahmins all pretend to it (and I am told the Chinese too)". He went on to cite passages from Paul Rycaut's *Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (1667) and Bernier's *Suite des Memoires*. The first recorded the "Turkish Dervishes [who] pretend to revelations, ecstasies, visions rapture to be swallowed up and transported

[75] Bodleian Library MS Locke f. 2, pp. 270-71.

[76] Bodleian Library MS Locke f. 6, p. 20. Printed in J. Locke, *Political Essays*, ed. M. Goldie, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1997, p. 289.

with illustrations of God [...] seeing the face of God" and the second referenced "Jaugis [Yogis] amongst the Hindoos [who] talk of being illuminated and entirely united to God". The force of this was evidently comparative as he adverted twice to the fact that "the most spiritualised Christians" did likewise[77]. Thus his anthropological inquiries were designed to yield insight into a pattern within human intellectual life which gained significance when it was identified as being shared across cultures. The repeated emphasis on pretenses is diagnosed in a medical fashion. He sees the claims as "merely the effect and operation of the fancy" and notices the techniques adopted to instigate illuminations and to "depress the rational power of the mind" – by "fasting, solitude, intense and long meditation on the same thing, opium, intoxicating liquors, long and vehement turning round" (the latter a reference to dervishes)[78].

He closed the passage by noting that he could not recall reading of "any enthusiasts amongst the Americans". This suggested to him a further inquiry: "whether those that found their religion upon revelation do not [...] imagine that since God has been pleased by revelation to discover to them the general precepts of their religion, they that have a particular interest in his favour have reason to expect that he will reveal himself to them if they take the right way to seek it". The answer to this question really came in the chapter on enthusiasm. But we can trace the interest right back to inquiries about religion formulated in his early manuscript. As we have seen, he asked in that context about "Whether they pretend to any Revelation from heaven of their Religion & Miracles to confirme it? And when this was. And what probabilitys offerd". There, as I have suggested, his perspective was already clear but it becomes conspicuous in the journal entry of 1682. The question he posed on that occasion offers itself as something susceptible of an answer through observation, though we might doubt whether a question so loaded could really be tackled impartially. As for Locke, he expressed both caution and optimism at the same time, remarking: "But of this I shall conclude nothing till I be more fully assured in matter of fact"[79].

Inquiries played a lasting part in Locke's intellectual methodology, supporting his investigations across a host of areas. Questions posed for travellers in the context of natural history reflect most obviously his debts to Robert Boyle and the Royal Society in adopting this approach, but he adapted the

77 Locke, *Political Essays*, cit., p. 290.
78 Ibid., pp. 290-91.
79 Ibid., p. 291.

strategy to progress his understanding of issues across a broad spectrum, perhaps most notably in connection with religious practice and belief. Locke may have declined in 1695 the invitation to produce "an historical account of the various ravings men have imbraced for religion" (a suggestion that came via his friend William Molyneux), partly on the grounds that this would result in a "huge volume" in itself[80], but he remained deeply committed to interrogating the anthropology of belief, a project dependent on the testimony of travellers elicited through inquiry.

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