Seeing Together, Seeing for Ourselves: John Locke's Search for Common Ground in Natural Historical Inquiry

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2020

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

DEITRICH SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

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This dissertation approaches John Locke's natural historical commonplace books as a means of pursuing the aims of rhetoric—exploring the conditions of possibility for knowing, being, and acting together—amidst political and epistemic fragmentation that foreclosed verbal persuasion. Locke responds to this fragmentation by searching for a means of producing shared standards for sustaining communities without imposed or received authority—a means of seeing together while still seeing for ourselves. His epistemological works pursue this means by looking not to reason, but rather to the formation of clear, distinct, and, I argue, *common* ideas upon which reason operates. In *An Essay on Human Understanding*, this pursuit turns on the question of how to standardize the ideas signified by words, introducing the problem of authority, or whose ideas to use. Locke's political writings offer a partial remedy, conceiving of authority as collective inquiry into what is common and useful across the experiences of individuals. To explicate the practices that constitute such inquiry, I read Locke's natural historical commonplacing activities alongside his recommendations in *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, a practical complement to the *Essay*.

The inquiry prescribed in the *Conduct* and performed in Locke's notebooks is the topical inquiry of the commonplacer, adapted for natural history by Francis Bacon. An adaptive, mediatory, generative conceptual framework, the topics offer Locke a means of articulating the particular into the general and vivifying the general via the particular. In Lockean

commonplacing, they allow individuals to participate in the formation of common, provisional objects of understanding via the two principal activities of the rhetorical commonplacer: accumulating perspectives and judging what is salient among them. In the *Conduct*, this rhetorical production of common objects emerges as Locke's source of common ground, while the commonplacer's rhetorical habits of inquiry constitute the civic virtues of the society he envisions. By tracing the rhetorical heritage of Locke's remedy for the rhetorical exigencies of his moment, I present him as a rhetorical theorist—a rhetorical architect in Richard McKeon's sense—who adapts traditional rhetorical means to address rhetoric's defining problematic in a new milieu.

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Acknowledgements

I am moved by the extent to which this dissertation has been a collective effort, inspired and sustained by countless acts of generosity, brilliance, benevolence, investment—by friends, family, faculty, staff, administrators, students, strangers.

I am deeply grateful to my dissertation director, Lester Olson, whose work drew me to rhetoric long before we met and whose guidance helped make it my home. Since our first seminar together, I have admired and benefitted from your conscientiousness as an educator, the wisdom and sincerity of your counsel, and the way you read, listen, and inquire to genuinely understand. I also owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Olga Kuchinskaya, a guiding light for me in the program, both academically and personally, and a deeply valued source of inspiration, insight, and mentorship. I have learned so much from you and find myself returning so frequently to moments from your office and seminars. I am, further, very thankful to James Wynn for consistently encouraging generosity and asking vital questions, and, especially, for offering energy, guidance, and resolve at a moment when it was needed most.

Finally, I am indebted to David Marshall, whose work informs every aspect of this dissertation, and who models, as a scholar and an educator, the wise adaptability pursued therein. Your brilliance and discernment (and willingness to review an endless stream of proposals) transformed not only the trajectory of this project, but also my sense for the possibilities of rhetorical scholarship.

In addition to my committee, I am thankful to the faculty members whose seminars I had the privilege of attending—in particular, Lynn Clarke, for helping me become a better thinker, writer, and teacher; and John Lyne, for being such an important part of my time at Pitt, for

1.0 Introduction

To what extent may science be seen as pursuing the defining ends of rhetoric—exploring the conditions of possibility for knowing, being, and acting together—in a manner not reducible to its classical means of verbal persuasion? Observing the inadequacy of verbal interventions in twenty-first century science policy controversies,[1] this dissertation works to reconceptualize the rhetorical potential of science in a manner attentive to our moment's widespread political and epistemic fragmentation[2]—to imagine how rhetoric, qua scientific inquiry, might help to reinvent the common ground upon which public deliberation depends.

To develop such a conceptualization, I turn to a perhaps unexpected rhetorical theorist: John Locke. Locke, like Aristotle, Cicero, and other esteemed contributors to the rhetorical canon, worked to conceive of a path toward cooperative action in the face of division and uncertainty. But unlike these classical rhetoricians, he was unable to find a viable solution in linguistic interventions. Indeed, he is infamous among communication scholars for his

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[1] As Marlia Banning observes in her study of climate change discourse, "the grounds have been well laid in contemporary public life for the reduction of all civic discourse, critical argumentation, and any unwanted information—including scientific research—to just another viewpoint. *Ultimately, this undermines the common reference world so essential to public information and deliberation*." Marlia Elisabeth Banning, "When Poststructural Theory and Contemporary Politics Collide: The Vexed Case of Global Warming," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 6, no. 3 (2009), 298, emphasis added.

[2] Fragmentation here refers to a turn to private grounds of judgment and an accompanying loss of the reciprocity and common ground assumed in traditional notions of argumentation. In the US, this turn is observable in growing anti-intellectualism and political polarization, articulated as a refusal to genuine public deliberation. In so-called public debates, Banning laments, "the goal is to win, not to solve a central problem of the public good" "Poststructural Theory and Contemporary Politics," 296-297. Absent reciprocity and common ground, one might see science not as a barrier to public deliberation, as Thomas Goodnight suggested in his influential 1982 essay, but as a corrective to private interests and an alternative space for shared understanding. Goodnight himself makes this point in a recent reassessment: citing Leah Ceccarelli's work on manufactured controversies, he suggests that science has been devalued to the point that rhetoricians committed to the possibility of public life should be tasked with "rediscovering" rather than strictly dismantling "the grounds of disciplinary authority" G. Thomas Goodnight, "The Personal, Technical, and Public Spheres: A Note on 21st Century Critical Communication Inquiry," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 48, no. 4 (2012), 265; "The Personal, Technical, and Public Spheres of Argument," *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory* (1999), 258-259.

impassioned attacks on rhetoric as the art of verbal persuasion. Yet his best-known works—his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and *Two Treatises of Government*—both strive to imagine how we might know, be, and act together amidst the epistemic and political upheavals of early modern Europe, exigencies for which language was, for many early moderns, not a remedy, but a cause.[3] A major quandary that unites Locke's epistemological work in the *Essay* and his political work in the *Two Treatises* is the question of how individuals might see (and therefore act) together while still seeing for themselves. While his concerns about language are serious enough to imperil these efforts,[4] his celebration of and engagement with natural history and experimental natural philosophy, particularly in the context of medicine, suggests an alternative possibility: that *inquiry* might form the foundations of shared existence upon which verbal deliberation can begin.

My focus, then, is not on the rhetoric *of* Lockean inquiry, where rhetoric is understood as a collection of specific technical means adapted from antiquity, but rather rhetoric *as* Lockean inquiry, where inquiry is understood as the means by which Locke pursued the defining ends of rhetoric. By "ends" of rhetoric, I do not mean a specific rhetorical product (for example, a

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[3] Apart from Locke, famous 17th century critics of language and rhetoric include Royal Society historiographer Thomas Sprat and member John Wilkins, known for his efforts to create a universal language. Sprat, Thomas. *History of the Royal Society*. Eds. Jackson I. Cope, and Harold Whitmore Jones. (St. Louis: Washington University Press, 1959), Wilkins, John. *An Essay Towards a Real Character, and a Philosophical Language* (London, 1668). For recent accounts of early modern anxieties about language, see Hannah Dawson, *Locke, Language and Early-Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), Sidonie Clauss, "John Wilkins' Essay toward a Real Character: Its Place in the Seventeenth-Century Episteme," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 43, no. 4 (1982), David Marshall, "The Problem of Language in Early Modern Thought," *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 27, no. 2 (2009), Thomas C. Singer, "Hieroglyphs, Real Characters, and the Idea of Natural Language in English Seventeenth-Century Thought," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 50, no. 1 (1989).

[4] See Dawson, *Locke, Language and Early-Modern Philosophy*, in particular, pp. 277-304. Hannah Dawson makes a strong case for the far-reaching and potentially deleterious implications of Locke's concerns about language on his political philosophy. She summarizes: "By infecting men with erroneous and empty discourse and by encouraging them to pretend to a greater intelligence than they can ever have, language threatens both the judgment that establishes political legitimacy and the precious policy of toleration. Moreover, Locke's apprehension about those loose ties that bind words to ideas challenges both the trust and the unity that gives life to civil society" (9).

speech) nor an established set of supposedly rhetorical values (for example, subjectivism, embodiment, eloquence, etc.), but rather a posture that orients rhetoric toward a particular set of problems related to the uncertainty, difference, and contingency of human activities and relations.[5] While the specific means and products of rhetoric vary, its "ends," understood as posture, cultivate and articulate an attunement to the conditions of possibility for knowing, being, and acting together in the face of such problems. "Ends" in this sense refers to both an investment in the challenges of community (without a defining commitment to a particular perspective or solution) and a readiness for practical action and production (without a defining commitment to a specific means or product). For the purposes of this project, I ask how Locke pursued the ends of rhetoric via proto-scientific inquiry, and what this approach to inquiry offered his vision of civil society that verbal approaches could not.

My interpretation of Lockean inquiry as a rhetorical endeavor is made possible by Richard McKeon's bipartite understanding of the rhetorical tradition as an ongoing evolution of a technical means (for example, verbal persuasion and its associated terminology) *joined to* a theoretical sensibility—an attunement to the contingencies and possibilities in our ways of relating to one another. Unlike scholarship that presents rhetoric as either a technical means ("restricted" approaches, which interpret their objects of study as one would an oratorical text) or as a sensibility ("liberated" approaches that mention rhetoric only in passing), McKeon

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[5] In his study of Vico, David Marshall offers a reconceptualization of rhetoric that is central to this project: Rhetoric, he explains "is a constantly evolving set of concepts that have come into focus as a result of work done by investigators sensitive to the inevitable diversity of human opinion. *Rhetoric* is a grammatical fiction that is better understood as a set of related practices. Rhetoric in this sense is not an art, but rather a form of inquiry…an intellectual response to doubt that is historically contingent" David Marshall, *Vico and the Transformation of Rhetoric in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 20. My use of "posture" is an attempt to emphasize this notion of rhetoric as inquiry into "the conditions of possibility for living in society with others" (193) alongside the notion of rhetoric as engaged in and shaped through the art of creating such conditions (articulated by Richard McKeon, as I discuss in the following paragraph).

emphasizes that these aspects of rhetoric are always interwoven.[6] His historical perspective allows us to appreciate the ways in which the technical and attitudinal resources of rhetoric are interrelated. Nancy Struever gives an especially helpful account of how the "technical tasks" or "habits" of rhetoric are interwoven with the deeper rhetorical sensibilities previously mentioned. Noting that the rhetorical engagement of possibility requires "temporal sophistication," she writes: "The training exercises of rhetoric as well as oratorical performances assume just such a sophisticated sense of time. Rhetoric's proclivity for possibility engages specific habits of suggesting, describing, inventing, contesting possibilities as coming to pass, or not, in time; it assumes working inside a domain filled with movement, with processing of potentiality into actuality."[7] Embedded in rhetoric's "merely" technical machinery is a host of assumptions about the nature and spirit of its work that distinguish it from other fields of inquiry and action. The topics, for example, are not simply a list of standard arguments for the rhetor to pluck as needed; they are an evolving collection of generalizations that name points of shared investment and are used to give shape to the details of a particular case.[8] Accordingly, individuals trained in topical inquiry may become adept at moving between general and particular, at observing and adapting to change, in perceiving continuity across difference.

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[6] For a discussion of "restricted" and "liberated" rhetoric, see Michael Leff, "The Habitation of Rhetoric," in *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory* ed. John Lucaites, Celeste Condit, and Sally Caudill (New York: Guilford, 1999). In rhetoric of science, these designations correspond, respectively, to studies that 1) understand rhetoric in oratorical terms, employing the classical vocabulary to analyze scientific texts and 2) use rhetoric as an umbrella term for what people say and how they say it. In this latter approach, the conceptual heavy lifting is often done by theorists from other fields such as science studies and continental philosophy. There are, of course, many compelling ways to connect such theorists to the rhetorical tradition, but this work tends to be outside the scope of the study at hand. For an informative debate between advocates of these two perspectives, see William Keith, Steven Fuller, Alan Gross and Michael Leff, "Taking up the Challenge: A Response to Simons," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 85 (1999) and Herbert W. Simons, "The Globalization of Rhetoric and the Argument from Disciplinary Consequences," *Poroi* 2, no. 2 (2003). For more recent articulations, see Celeste Condit, "Chaim Perelman's Prolegomenon to a New Rhetoric," in *Reengaging the Prospects of Rhetoric*, ed. Mark Porrovecchio (New York: Routledge, 2010), and Leah Ceccarelli, "Where's the Rhetoric? Broader Impacts in Collaborative Research," *Poroi* 10, no. 1 (2014).

[7] Nancy Struever, *Rhetoric, Modality, Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 74.

[8] Rhetoric, Modality, Modernity, in particular 27-29.

For McKeon, the interwoven aptitudes for production and inquiry give rhetoric an architectonic capacity: particularly in times of fragmentation (such as our own), rhetoric in his view should function as "an art of producing things and arts, not merely one of producing words and arguments."[9] The rhetorician as architect discovers and invents new ways of coming together, adapting the technical resources of previous eras to imagine—and make—new systems of relating part to whole, art to science, eloquence to wisdom. Rhetoric, in this sense, is not a particular means but an art of adapting its means to particular situations.

By studying the role that inquiry played in Locke's search for common ground, I conceive of early modern proto-science—and natural history in particular—as exactly this sort of architectural achievement.[10] Departing from the body of textually oriented rhetorical scholarship that studies scientific language and argument; this alternative approach suggests that science, in its infancy, pursued rhetorical ends through a means quite different from verbal argumentation and persuasion: by discovering/inventing new sites and systems through which to pursue shared judgment, common objects, and cooperative action—for example, public experiments, anatomy theaters, scientific journals, or, in Locke's case, commonplace books.[11]

In fact, McKeon's work suggests that verbal persuasion is only possible *after* the most basic ways of relating have been established. As Mark Backman explains in his introduction to

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[9] Richard McKeon, "The Uses of Rhetoric in a Technological Age: Architectonic Productive Arts," in *The Prospect of Rhetoric*, ed. Lloyd Bitzer and Edwin Black (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 53.

[10] I use "proto-science" to refer to the suite of practices and commitments associated with natural philosophy (in particular, experimental natural philosophy) and natural history, but not yet institutionalized as "science" as we understand it today. Locke and his contemporaries used the term "science" as well, albeit in the Aristotelian sense of necessary truth—something that Locke believed was beyond the reach of experimental natural philosophy (e.g. *Essay*, IV, xii, 10). For a detailed account of Locke's conception of natural philosophy in relation to science, see Peter R. Anstey, *John Locke and Natural Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 24-30.

[11] See for example Paula Findlen, "Anatomy Theaters, Botanical Gardens, and Natural Historical Collections," in *Cambridge History of Science*, ed. Katharine Park and Lorraine Daston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Jan V. Golinski, "A Noble Spectacle: Phosphorus and the Public Cultures of Science in the Early Royal Society," *Isis* (1989); Jordynn Jack, "A Pedagogy of Sight: Microscopic Vision in Robert Hooke's Micrographia," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 95, no. 2 (2009).

McKeon's *Rhetoric: Essays in Invention and Discovery*, "Language is…an effective tool, but it *follows* from the creation of new ways of conceiving and acting upon change…it trails the invention of new devices of science and new forms of cooperative action."[12] The rhetorical production of common ground is, in other words, a prerequisite for verbal intervention.

Focusing on the rhetorical work that precedes verbal persuasion makes it possible to reconsider Locke's relationship with rhetoric beyond his critiques of ornamental language. Locke's *Essay* and *Two Treatises* both grapple with and ultimately falter upon a distinctly early modern challenge for rhetoric: the question of how inherently free and equal individuals, each drawing upon a unique set of experiences and predispositions, might arrive at shared ways of seeing, being, and acting together. His posthumously published *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, intended as a practical complement to his *Essay,* presents a unified solution: a collective mode of inquiry that is sufficiently robust—which is to say strong, adaptive, and grounded in the world—to serve as the foundations for community.[13] For Locke, the site of rhetorical production—the site in which we form these foundations—is the natural historical commonplace book, where an evolving set of topical heads allows individual inquirers to produce shared objects of understanding through the layering of perspectives. Lockean commonplacing, I argue, represents both 1) a mode of rhetorical inquiry, adapted for its moment, attuned to the local and contingent, and adept at moving between particular and general; and 2) a technical means of producing common ground amidst fragmentation. The collective mode of inquiry laid out in the *Conduct* is, I argue, the *topical* inquiry of the humanist commonplace

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[12] Mark Backman, "Introduction: Richard McKeon and the Renaissance of Rhetoric," in *Rhetoric: Essays in Invention and Discovery*, ed. Mark Backman (Woodbridge, CT: Ox Bow Press, 1987), xx.

[13] The *Essay* lays out the limitations of human understanding; the *Conduct* catalogues the specific ways in which these limitations can lead us astray, and makes recommendations for how to pursue (imperfect) knowledge, in light of all that we cannot know.

book, adapted to the exigencies of seventeenth-century Europe. It is, further, precisely the kind of inquiry that Locke performs in his own commonplace books, where he follows Francis Bacon in adapting the topics for use in natural inquiry rather than literary excerpting. The *Conduct*, for these reasons, may be read as a treatise on commonplacing—a novel form of natural historical commonplacing capable of serving as the keystone of Locke's civil society.

1.1 Locke as a Rhetorical Theorist of Science

Locke's use of natural historical inquiry to lay the foundations of civil society makes him a promising theoretical resource for scholars working at the interface of science and politics. Leah Ceccarelli articulated the need for such resources in a 2013 review essay, praising the growing interest in public engagement within the field of rhetoric of science (henceforth RS), while arguing that "we need to think more and talk more about how we do this work so that we can help each other more effectively transform our scholarly findings into meaningful action in these fora."[14] What is needed, in other words, is a richer theorization of rhetoric's foundational commitments to action and civic engagement, a theorization with which to facilitate the "translation of basic research on the rhetoric of science and technology into improved public communication of science and technology."[15] In studying Locke rhetorically, I seek to contribute to this conversation by exploring ways in which rhetoric might facilitate public discourse on science beyond verbal persuasion. As a rhetorical theorist, Locke allows us to imagine rhetoric

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[14] Leah Ceccarelli, "To Whom Do We Speak? The Audiences for Scholarship on Rhetoric," *Poroi* 9, no. 1 (2013), 4.
[15] "To Whom Do We Speak?," 6.

qua natural history as a resource not for improving public communication, but rather for establishing the common ground upon which such communication is possible.

Ceccarelli's call to rhetorically informed action was answered by numerous scholars who have worked to re-engage the productive, public-oriented aspects of the rhetorical tradition by collaborating with scientists. Their responses, collected in a special issue of *Poroi*, describe projects that are exciting and in many cases quite successful—yet differ strikingly in their account of rhetoric and its potential contributions.[16] For Kenny Walker, rhetoric offers insight on the dynamics of public discourse and the management uncertainties. For Jeanne Goodwin et al. and Caroline Gottschalk Druschke, it lends an ethical dimension to scientific inquiry and communication. For Sara Parks and John Rief, it offers a methodological view from above—a generalist's perspective in Parks's case, an architect's in Rief's.[17] Parks sees her role as a rhetorician working on a multi-disciplinary NSF grant project as creating common ground: "I can make global sense of communication and collaboration breakdowns where many faculty and staff only see individuals at fault. And I can provide or identify shared objects, ideas, or values that serve to start and restart conversations."[18] Rief, whose scholarship is particularly relevant to this dissertation, reflects on his work in health services alongside McKeon's vision of rhetoric to reimagine the rhetorician as integrator. The rhetorician, he suggests, is uniquely suited to respond to "call[s] for methodological ingenuity" and "translational research" from the National Institutes of Health and scholars of health services—"for new approaches that can connect disparate

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[16] See *Poroi* 10, Iss. 1 (2014).

[17] Kenny C. Walker, "Rhetorical Properties of Scientific Uncertainties: Public Engagement in the Carson Scholars Program," *Poroi* 10, no. 1 (2014); Jean Goodwin et al., "Rhetorical Resources for Teaching Responsible Communication of Science," *Poroi* 10, no. 1 (2014); Caroline Gottschalk Druschke, "With Whom Do We Speak? Building Transdisciplinary Collaborations in Rhetoric of Science," *Poroi* 10, no. 1 (2014); Sara B. Parks, "Is There Room for a Student of Rhetoric in a Giant NSF Grant Project?," *Poroi* 10, no. 1 (2014); John J. Rief, "Building the Case for an "Architectonic" Function of Rhetoric in Health Services Research," *Poroi* 10, no. 1 (2014).

[18] Parks, "Room for a Student of Rhetoric," 4.

elements of the larger healthcare system."[19] These latter visions of rhetoric are particularly aligned with my project, in that they identify rhetoric primarily by its aim of facilitating communication and, in Rief's case, developing the methodologies—the appropriate modes of inquiry and production—for such communication. But a question arises in both cases: What gives rhetoricians the capacity to serve in these capacities?

Ceccarelli's response to the scholarship above centered on this question. While the contributing scholars employed a wide range of methodologies in their work, from ethnography to statistical analysis, what did not appear in any case, Ceccarelli argued, was a serious application of recognizably rhetorical terms or concepts.[20] Accordingly, she responded with a call for a more precise account of how rhetoricians might draw upon specific rhetorical concepts (in an example from her own work, "litotes, hyperbole, hedges, metaphor, and metastasis") to help scientists communicate.[21] But as I suggested above, the *oratorical* resources of rhetoric (in Ceccarelli's case, rhetorical figures) may not be the only—or the most—appropriate way to intervene in today's science policy debates.[22] That none of the success stories catalogued in *Poroi* engaged the oratorical tradition with technical specificity might be seen as a testament to this point.

While I do not fully share Ceccarelli's optimism about the prospects of classical oratory in science communication, my project is inspired by her conviction that the rhetorical tradition has something important to offer these conversations. Ceccarelli's concern about the projects above is that they skillfully pursued the ends of rhetoric without an apparent need for rhetorical means. While I agree, I want to suggest that the most appropriate remedy may not be, in some

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[19] Rief, "Building the Case," 4
[20] Ceccarelli, "Where's the Rhetoric?," 2
[21] "Where's the Rhetoric?," 6
[22] This is not to suggest that many scientists would not benefit from training in verbal eloquence.

cases, to draw upon a pre-established collection of technical means, but rather (or also) to theorize the relationship between the rhetorical tradition and the means the that each scholar identified as appropriate for their situation. To be clear, the aforementioned scholarship is impactful and illuminating even without the rigorous engagement of classical rhetorical means that Ceccarelli seeks. My argument is that it stands to gain considerable conceptual power by understanding the means it does employ in the historical, bipartite manner that McKeon and Struever articulate: as technical resources, imbued with and imparting rhetorical sensibilities, adapted for discovering and inventing the conditions of possibility for cooperative action in a particular moment.[23]

Drawing upon this perspective, I seek to move beyond the "restricted," largely technical sense of rhetoric derived from its classical vocabulary, as well as the more expansive conceptions, often associated with Kenneth Burke's notion of rhetoric as symbolic action, which benefit from rhetoric's flexibility—its "thinness"—rather than its specificity. [24] McKeon's conception of rhetoric offers a useful alternative to these views by illustrating how the lexical resources of rhetoric are themselves topical resources—not static terms imported from classical oratory, but sites of invention, memory, and possibility: the points at which rhetoric reinvents

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[23] Rief, to be clear, adopts an approach much like the one I've described, though he notes that "[t]he power of rhetoric to connect disparate elements of the healthcare system will need to be demonstrated"—an admission that Ceccarelli mentions in expressing her reservations about the apparently loftiness of his vision (Rief, "Building the Case", 6, quoted in Ceccarelli, "Where's the Rhetoric?," 5). Of course, the task of realizing this vision need not be Rief's alone. My project, in a general sense, is an attempt to contribute to such efforts by demonstrating, theorizing, and historicizing rhetoric's power to integrate as manifest in early modern inquiry.

[24] On the "thinness" of rhetoric, see Dilip Gaonkar, "The Idea of Rhetoric in the Rhetoric of Science," in *Rhetorical Hermeneutics: Invention and Interpretation in the Age of Science*, ed. Alan Gross and William Keith (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997). On Burke specifically, see 31-32. As Gaonkar observes in this famous attack on RS and rhetorical hermeneutics more generally, the "globalization" of rhetoric has made it possible to see the terms of classical rhetoric in virtually anything. Consider, for example, his critique of Alan Gross's *The Rhetoric of Science*, "While Gross has little difficulty showing that one could profitably apply rhetorical categories in analyzing scientific discourse, one is left with a nagging suspicion that those categories are so capacious that it would be impossible not to find them in any discourse that is 'situated' and 'addressed'" (62).

itself by drawing from the past while steeped in the present.[25] These general terms have evolved in relation to the particular conditions of their deployment, allowing rhetoric to adapt to meet the needs of its current situation without losing itself in the process. A similar spirit, perhaps, motivates Jeanne Fahnestock's call for more "rhetorical histories of scientific discourse"— scholarship that traces "the rise, change, and occasional fall of argumentative practices, devices, methods, techniques, or of the commonplaces of [science, technology, and medicine]."[26] But while this dissertation has benefitted from work in this vein, its focus is less on the parallels between persuasive oratory and science than on the places where proto-scientific inquiry facilitated the work of rhetoric in ways that verbal interventions could not. Rhetoric, understood first in terms of its ends rather than its means, is not just the art of verbal persuasion; it is the inquiry into and production of the conditions under which persuasion becomes possible.

My hope is that the resulting investigation might serve as a point of entry for thinking of science as *itself* a rhetorical means, rather than as a field that relies upon rhetoric qua verbal persuasion to achieve and maintain consensus, cultural dominance, and the like. Such a perspective may be of use to two areas of inquiry within RS. The first concerns the ongoing theoretical conversation about the relationship between rhetoric and science—and in particular, work that understands this relationship historically. I share Fahnestock's position that historical work in RS offers important justification for its choice of subject matter—an answer to the question, *why science?* As she explains, "there is a historical reason for studying science rhetorically that stems from the origins of modern science in the sixteenth-century reform of the

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[25] In addition to "The Uses of Rhetoric in a Technological Age," see in particular Richard McKeon, "Creativity and the Commonplace," in *Rhetoric: Essays in Invention and Discovery*, ed. Mark Backman (Woodbridge, CT: Ox Bow Press, 1987), as well as Marshall, *Vico and the Transformation of Rhetoric*, 246-248; Struever, *Rhetoric, Modality, Modernity*, 25-34.

[26] Jeanne Fahnestock, "Promoting the Discipline: Rhetorical Studies of Science, Technology, and Medicine," *Poroi* 9, no. 1 (2013), 13. For an example of this kind of work, see "Forming Plants in Words and Images," *Poroi* 10, no. 2 (2014).

discourse arts, foregrounding rhetoric, and in the establishment of the conventions of scientific argument over the centuries by practitioners thoroughly trained in the art."[27] But because verbal persuasion and figural rhetoric fell into disfavor as proto-scientific inquiry ascended, it is not uncommon for RS scholars to view science as historically antagonistic and antithetical to rhetoric, replacing deliberation with method, probability with certainty, and public opinion with disembodied expert. As Nelson, Megill and McCloskey wrote in their introduction to the germinal collection, *The Rhetoric of Human Sciences*: "We suffer from seventeenth-century dichotomies of subject and object, which gave fresh force to opposing truth and rationality on the one side to conversation and rhetoric on the other… Capable of opinion only, the humble subject must submit to the rigors of Method in order to ascend the heights of Truth. This opposition spurns rhetoric and substitutes conviction for persuasion."[28] This view of science as the enforcer of a specious Cartesian dualism persists in a great deal of current RS literature, where scholars interrogate the "non-rhetorical" status of science and work to deconstruct its supposed values of objectivity, certainty, and naked truth—unadorned facts that speak for themselves.[29] My goal is not to diminish the importance of this work, but rather to ask what additional insights we might gain by adopting a different perspective. How, in other words, might we reimagine the rhetoricity of early modern proto-scientific inquiry if we recognize the latter as a major vehicle for constructing communities, as openly and inherently engaging societal "values," as resisting the allure of certainty, and as mediating the relationship between particular and general,

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[27] Fahnestock, "Promoting the Discipline," 6.

[28] John Nelson, Allan Megill, and Donald McCloskey, "Rhetoric of Inquiry," in *The Rhetoric of the Human Sciences*, ed. John Nelson, Allan Megill, and Donald McCloskey (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 6.

[29] Some recent examples include Randy Allen Harris, Introduction to *Rhetoric and Incommensurability*, ed. Randy Allen Harris (West Lafayette: Parlor Press, 2005), 15-16; Lawrence Prelli, Introduction to *Rhetorics of Display*, ed. Lawrence Prelli (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2006), 6; and Thomas Lessl, *Rhetorical Darwinism* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2012).

individual and collective—in short, as pursuing and realizing the ends of rhetoric through means other than verbal persuasion.

In addition, I hope to contribute to the aforementioned conversations about scholarly engagement in RS. In beginning with an exploration of Locke's commitment to rhetorical ends, before treating that commitment as reason to explore the means with which he pursued them, I seek emulate the rigorous commitment to tradition modeled by Ceccarelli, Fahnestock, and others. At the same time, I hope to address three limitations to publicly oriented rhetorical scholarship that arise when this commitment centers on the oratorical means of persuasion. First, I attempt to depart from what Celeste Condit describes as the "predominance of 'science bad' studies" in the field.[30] Writing in a 2013 review essay, Condit critiques her "rhetorical colleagues who time and again portray science as an evil enemy"—a tendency that she characterizes as "ill-considered and probably disadvantageous to [RS] interests, as well as those of humanity more generally."[31] The cynicism that Condit perceives in some areas of RS is arguably amplified by field's focus on classical means—on the technical vocabulary of classical rhetoric, as scientists deploy them. Means-centered approaches foreground the agent, focusing on the rhetorical strategies (rather than, for example, cultural norms or institutional factors) that they supposedly employed to embed, mask, and promote particular values.[32] Thus RS often becomes the rhetoric of *scientists*, where "rhetoric" takes on its popular, pejorative association with empty speech and ulterior motives.[33] In *Rhetorical Darwinism*, for example, Thomas Lessl defines rhetoric as "the

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[30] Celeste Condit, "Mind the Gaps: Hidden Purposes and Missing Internationalism in Scholarship on the Rhetoric of Science and Technology in Public Discourse," *Poroi* 9, no. 1 (2013), 4.

[31] "Mind the Gaps," 4.

[32] For a more detailed account of the agent-centric tendencies of the classical lexicon, see Gaonkar, "The Idea of Rhetoric."

[33] As David Marshall writes with regard to rhetoric generally, "The single most common misunderstanding of rhetoric is that it is an *art* of persuasion. As *techne* or *ars*, rhetoric appears like a body of precepts informing adepts of the means they must use in order to achieve their political ends by way of persuasion rather than naked

heading under which scholars typically categorize efforts of communication that work to establish or uphold institutional interests." [34] When operating through such a lens, many noteworthy and potentially informative rhetorical achievements are understood as accessories in a larger narrative of power and manipulation. In Lessl's work, the capacity for rhetorical transcendence that made Thomas Henry Huxley a consummate scientific rhetorician is attributed essentially to guile: the artful concealment of contradiction necessary to secure institutional and ideological dominance. Attending primarily to classical rhetorical means in this case promotes assumptions about the "rhetor's" ends that are almost by definition opposed to those of rhetoric. My contention is that we can bracket the matter of individual interest and intent by identifying rhetoric first by its ends and only then turning to the means employed to pursue them. In the case of Locke, the crucial question is not *why* he identified natural history as a path common ground, but rather *how* he conceived of it in this manner and whether this conception is a useful way to think about—or rethink—the rhetorical potential of scientific inquiry today.

Second, an ends-oriented approach offers some new and potentially useful ways of understanding the rhetorical potential of scientific inquiry. My efforts to read Locke as a rhetorical theorist departs from work in RS that views science (and rhetoric) textually.[35] While acknowledging the value in reading scientific texts rhetorically, I join those RS scholars who maintain that science cannot be fully reduced to the textual, and I seek to understand how the extra-textual, or perhaps pre-textual, elements of scientific inquiry might be understood in

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force. Small wonder, then, that rhetoric is commonly attacked as inherently deceitful and manipulative" Marshall, *Vico and the Transformation of Rhetoric,* 196.

[34] Thomas Lessl, *Rhetorical Darwinism* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2012), xi.

[35] See for example Ceccarelli's argument that rhetorical critics of science "illuminate intriguing structures of influence beneath the surface of the text (and we do so regardless of where the text originated)" Ceccarelli's parenthetical aside is aimed at critics of rhetoric of science (RS) who argue that science cannot be studied rhetorically—a position that her paper convincingly dismantles. Leah Ceccarelli, "Rhetorical Criticism and the Rhetoric of Science," *Western Journal of Communication* 65, no. 3 (2001), 324.

relation to rhetoric. What makes science interestingly and powerfully rhetorical, in my view, is not those elements that can be read as texts, but rather those that cannot.

Work that identifies the rhetorical by its correspondence to classical means arguably risks missing some of what is innovative, operative, and distinctive in the rhetorical features of scientific inquiry. Consider, for example, Lynda Walsh's *Scientists as Prophets*, a timely and important exploration of the relationship between science, authority, and societal values. The rhetoricity of the study lies in its use of *ethos* to describe a set of relatively consistent rhetorical strategies and associated motivations that, according to Walsh, have been used to secure the authority of prophets since antiquity and scientists since the Enlightenment. But for all its ingenuity, the work's focus on classical means—scientists' appeals to ethos—at times reduces the rhetorical achievements of science to effective argumentative strategy in a way that limits the returns of the analysis. When Walsh turns to contemporary science policy, her focus is entirely on the science advisor, understood as a kind of scientific orator. There is no question that Walsh's targeted approach is a fruitful one. Still, crediting the vibrant role of science in society to any element of persuasive argumentation perhaps misses some of the distinctive features of science—as a mode of inquiry and an institution—that give it its rhetorical power. In relation to this dissertation, we miss those features of proto-scientific inquiry that allowed it to do what language could not in early modernity—and, perhaps, today: its interweaving of fact and value, general and particular, community and individual through the process of inquiry itself. My point, put briefly, is that while aspects of the scientific enterprise may be productively understood textually or oratorically, we stand to deepen our understanding of the relationship(s) between science and rhetoric by approaching certain elements of scientific inquiry on their own terms: not as texts, but as objects, procedures, institutions. I offer this study of Locke in part to illustrate the

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extent to which rhetoric can be, and has long been, used to imagine, produce, and analyze such extra-textual elements.

Finally and relatedly, an ends-oriented approach allows us to identify and adapt rhetorical means that are appropriate for our moment by broadening our recognition of rhetorical means. RS efforts to inform science policy debates with argumentative and linguistic strategies should be celebrated for reinvigorating the rhetorical commitment to practice. Yet such efforts are imperiled by the incommensurable worldviews, cognitive dissonance, and bad-faith arguments that are endemic to so much contemporary political discourse. Fahnestock, for example (whose scholarship models an approach to RS that engages rhetoric with precision, history with responsibility, and science without cynicism), expresses the hope that her work on the underlying figural logic of arguments will "stimulate experts, who have the knowledge needed for important policy decisions, to have faith that basic patterns of reasoning can be used in communicating with the public."[36] But when the existence of "the public" and the persuasiveness of reason cannot be taken for granted, the challenge lies not only in improving communication strategies, but also—indeed, primarily—in making communication possible in the first place.

This dissertation explores this challenge at the intersection of Locke's political, epistemological, and natural historical work. Recognizing the inadequacy—and the peril—of using classical oratory and figural rhetoric to intervene in his politically and epistemically fragmented moment, Locke worked to theorize a civil society founded upon collective inquiry rather than persuasion or coercion. My position is that this rejection of persuasion should not preclude our consideration of Locke as a rhetorical theorist; rather, his investment in the ends of rhetoric warrants a closer look at the means by which he pursued them. And indeed, a closer

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[36] Jeanne Fahnestock, *Rhetorical Figures in Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 44.

examination of his work reveals that the mode of inquiry Locke held up as foundational to civil society was precisely the *topical inquiry* of the natural historical commonplacer. Locke, in other words, responded to a rhetorical exigency with a definitively rhetorical means, albeit a means that can only be recognized as rhetorical if we abandon our concern with oratory.

I turn to Locke as a striking and influential—though by no means unique—example of how proto-scientific inquiry *specifically* facilitated the defining ends of rhetoric in a moment where textual interventions were seen as falling short.[37] McKeon's conception of rhetoric as the "art of objectification and systematization in forming, and exploring the operations of [the] compositions of things, constitutions of communities, and constructs of communications" provides a basis for exploring the ways in which rhetoric lays the material, symbolic, and institutional foundations for collective life.[38] This perspective finds support in historical scholarship regularly cited by rhetoricians of science. For example, when Shapin and Schaffer write that the experimental community "offered [a] solution to the fundamental problem of liberty and coercion" by making it "possible to act freely and yet grant unconditional assent," they speak to a set of increasingly institutionalized practices or "technologies" that permitted inquirers to transcend the tension between the primacy of the individual interests on one hand and the need for community on the other.[39] Proto-scientific inquiry was, in this sense, embraced

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[37] The question of what a specifically rhetorical perspective contributes to broader work in science studies was made salient by Gaonkar's "The Idea of Rhetoric" and the ensuing debate. For Gaonkar, the answer was grim: an outdated critical vocabulary and an often misleading "ideology of human agency" (e.g. 33). This debate has reemerged on numerous occasions, particularly as scholars attempt to reformulate RS to more effectively study and intervene in our current political environment while retaining ties to the rhetorical tradition. See for example Keith et al. and Fuller in response to Herbert Simons; Miller in response to Herndl and Cutlip; and Ceccarelli in response to the essays collected in *Poroi* 10.1. Keith, "Taking up the Challenge: A Response to Simons;" Steve Fuller, "The Globalization of Rhetoric and Its Discontents," *Poroi* 2, no. 2 (2003); Carolyn R. Miller, "Audiences, Brains, Sustainable Planets, and Communication Technologies: Four Horizons for the Rhetoric of Science and Technology," *Poroi* 9, no. 1 (2013), 5; Ceccarelli, "Where's the Rhetoric?"

[38] McKeon, "Uses of Rhetoric," 57.

[39] Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 304.

for its capacity to perform the role of rhetoric: inquiring into and actualizing the conditions of the possibility for knowing, being, and acting together across diverse perspectives, phenomena, and experimental spaces.[40] For Locke, I argue, the commonplace book is just such a technology.

1.2 Contributions to Locke Studies

To read Locke as a rhetorical theorist of inquiry, I place his commentary on language in conversation with his views on natural inquiry. A few scholars have already made this connection explicitly. In rhetorical scholarship, John Durham Peters has argued that science was to Locke a means of communication that promised to reconcile the divide between private perception and public understanding (a divide that resulted, Peters says, from Locke's views on private property)—to ensure shared understanding without compromising individual sovereignty.[41] But Peters, while sympathetic to Locke's political concerns, attacks this sense of communication as the "supreme anti-rhetoric."[42] Citing Locke's distaste for rhetoric, he argues that the latter's ideal communication was not "a kind of speech, rhetoric, or discourse, but an alternative to them."[43] In his view, the sense of communication that emerged from Lockean thought "takes the politics out of speech" by making impassioned discourse about values a private rather than public matter.[44] Peters' investment in speech and deliberation as the defining rhetorical means leads to the standard interpretation of Locke as anti-rhetorician, wherein

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[40] This view of the changing rhetorical context in early modernity returns to Marshall's observations about the decline of the *polis* and the rise of the institution, understood, in Fisch's sense, as "any initiative that becomes the condition of possibility for some subsequent initiative." Marshall, *Vico and the Transformation of Rhetoric*, 9.

[41] John Durham Peters, "John Locke, the Individual, and the Origin of Communication," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 75, no. 4 (1989)

[42] "John Locke, the Individual, and the Origin of Communication," 399n30.

[43] "John Locke, the Individual, and the Origin of Communication," 394.

[44] "John Locke, the Individual, and the Origin of Communication," 397.

Locke's concerns about language disqualify him from more complex rhetorical consideration, in spite of his clear investments in rhetorical ends—that is, his investments in the conditions of possibility for knowing, being, and acting together, which shape and motivate his writings on epistemology, political philosophy, religion, education. Similarly, this means-oriented sense of rhetoric makes it difficult to appreciate scientific communication as a rhetorical innovation—as a foundation rather than a substitute for meaningful conversation.

In the history of science, by contrast, Peter Walmsley treats Locke's views on rhetoric, science, and society as complementary. While Locke was often critical of rhetorical embellishment and instruction, this understanding maintains that figures and tropes were integral to his efforts to conceptualize and articulate human cognition—and, therefore, to his accounts of how human knowledge might be extended through experimental natural philosophy.[45] Walmsley finds kinship with Philip Vogt and William Walker, who have presented Locke's understanding of mental activity as tropological, his representations of the mind as figurative.[46] In the context of early modern science, this perspective leads to the conclusion that Locke's rhetorical understanding of science (for example, the centrality of analogous reasoning to Locke's notion of hypothesis[47]) complemented his political investment in toleration.[48] This account is refreshing in its optimism, but perhaps too quick to dismiss Locke's concerns with language as superficial.

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[45] Peter Walmsley, *Locke's Essay and the Rhetoric of Science* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2003), 96-117.

[46] Philip Vogt, *John Locke and the Rhetoric of Modernity* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008); William Walker, *Locke, Literary Criticism, and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). For example, Walker suggests that because Locke saw all ideas as having origins in sensation, "all terms which stand for ideas of reflection are, or at least originally were, tropes." Tropological "borrowing and transferring" describes the process by which abstract ideas take shape in the mind through reference to sensible things (117-118).

[47] For example, Walmsley writes, "[M]etaphor and analogy play a crucial, indeed an explicit role in Locke's probabilistic inquiry; analogy is the best help we have in coming to a comprehension of the elusive objects and processes of mind. More than this, wit's insistent disruption of established categories is critical to Locke's project of seeing mental life directly, free of the filters of custom and tradition. Deployed by Locke against the innatist, and even against himself, wit serves as a regular and diligent reminder of the readiness with which we fall into error and absurdity" (117).

[48] Walmsley, Locke's Essay and the Rhetoric of Science, especially 146-152.

Further, the ease with which Walmsley's science accommodates rhetorical figures and tropes draws attention away from rhetorical activities that are not as conducive to classical comparisons.

Hannah Dawson works against these opposing perspectives on Locke, showing how Locke's conception of language both deals a potentially lethal blow to his political project and defies efforts to categorize him as an individualist.[49] On one hand, Dawson observes, "the very genesis of political life depends on linguistic actions which are themselves dependent on a common understanding which Locke denies."[50] On the other hand, she finds in Locke's writing a strong basis for a sense of meaning that is deeply communal: Locke's language is constructed from simple ideas—the basic units of sense perception—that are common to all. This construction is in turn shaped by societal norms and habits, which we adhere to out of what Locke sees as our very human desire for acceptance.[51] In the end, Dawson allows Locke to reside in the inherent imperfections of language and human understanding—and the societies built upon them—with a patience that few of his other readers have. She concludes: "Bravely treading the path between hope and experience, Locke shows us that though we are proud, unfaithful and insular, *still* we must judge, trust, and interact. Locke's gift was not only the splendid architecture of his state…but also the clear-sighted perception that it can only be built with frail men. His poignant meditation on language helps us feel the captivating warmth of his imaginative arc and the brittle nature of its parts."[52] This reading of Locke as deeply ambivalent—as a cautious and conflicted visionary, hopeful, handwringing, determined to act— brings out his rhetorical heart. The question that drives his political and epistemological works

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[49] Dawson, Locke, Language and Early-Modern Philosophy, 277-340.
[50] Locke, Language and Early-Modern Philosophy, 292.
[51] Locke, Language and Early-Modern Philosophy, 293-298.
[52] Locke, Language and Early-Modern Philosophy, 304, emphasis in original

alike is the question of how we might see, be, and act together when confronted with the limitations of human understanding, the ineluctability of human foibles, and, above all, the profound diversity of human experience and ideation. At the same time, one might pause before judging Locke defeated—or even, in this case, resigned. While his failure to resolve the problem of language in Book III of the *Essay* destabilizes the *Second Treatise*'s vision of governance as legitimized by consent, his theory and practice of commonplacing suggest an alternative approach. The *Conduct*, as a treatise on both object formation and commonplacing itself, offers the practical guidance lacking in Locke's political works, and it serves as a theoretical complement to his wholly technical essay on commonplacing, *Méthode nouvelle de dresser des recueils* (1686). Read together, Locke's political works, the *Conduct*, and his direct contributions to commonplacing (his *Méthode nouvelle* and note-taking practices) constitute a political theory and praxis that no longer falters over the paradox that Dawson rightly perceives when considering the *Essay*'s implications for the *Two Treatises*.

While Dawson's project does not discuss Locke's involvement with natural philosophy at length, it provides an important point of departure for investigating the ways in which he worked to overcome the shortcomings of language—and the resulting challenges to community—through an engagement of the sensible world. My project takes up this sort of investigation from a rhetorical perspective. Precisely how did natural history offer, in Locke's eyes, a means of engaging and acting within the sensible world together? And how might we understand these means as technical resources for early modern rhetoric—as specific habits, institutions and interventions that engaged experimentalists in exploring and creating the conditions of possibility for civil society? Finally, how might appreciating the rhetorical power of these resources reinvigorate contemporary science communication efforts? Could Locke's treatment of

natural history provide a basis for reconceptualizing science as a foundation for—rather than exclusively a product of—verbal persuasion?

1.3 Overview of Study

This dissertation approaches Locke not as a rhetor or historical figure, but rather as a conceptual resource for rhetoric of science, as well as science communication efforts more broadly. My intention is not to argue for the comparative veracity or superiority of my chosen perspective; to do so would require a much more exhaustive engagement of secondary scholarship than the scope of this dissertation permits. Rather, I am interested in how reading Locke political vision through the lens of his commonplace books might be *useful* to rhetoricians studying the relationship between inquiry and society in our own moment.

This dissertation identifies the commonplace book as a crucial link between Locke's epistemological and political efforts—as his rhetorical solution to the rhetorical problem upon which those efforts appear to falter. Commonplace books, I argue, are precisely the kind of instrument that allows the individuals theorized in his *Essay*—free and equal proprietors of their respective understandings—to live and know together without unauthorized imposition, as he envisions in his *Two Treatises*.

To read Locke as a rhetorical theorist, I approach his corpus in two different ways, attending first to his pursuit of rhetorical ends, and then turning to his adaptation of rhetorical means for that purpose. I read his lifelong concern with seeing together as a concern with rhetorical ends by identifying a common thread in his epistemological and political projects—the view of common standards as both the necessary foundations of civil society and its primary

threat—and attempting to trace its development over his career. In Locke's epistemological works, his ambivalence toward standards develops into Book III of the *Essay*, where he lays out the relationship between language and understanding—and wages his best-known attack on (figural) rhetoric. In his political writings, he articulates this ambivalence in terms of authority—a concern that drives not only his *Two Treatises*, but also many of his unpublished writings. I trace the development of this ambivalence in works that are most clearly aimed at defining and demarcating the authority of the state: his *Two Tracts on Government* (a seemingly anomalous pair of essays wherein a young Locke champions absolutism in the aftermath of the English Civil War) and his *Essay on Toleration*. While ideologically disparate, these works turn upon a central problematic—the same problematic that appears at the crux of his concerns about language: the question of how we might we see for each other while still seeing for ourselves. When read through the lens of Locke's epistemology and political vision, this question may be understood as an early modern rearticulation of rhetoric's defining problematic, established earlier in this introduction: the question of knowing, being, and acting together amidst fragmentation and uncertainty.

Having established Locke's investment in this rhetorical question, I turn to the solution he proposes and its rhetorical heritage: collective inquiry, conducted via the commonplace book. This solution emerges over the course of the political writings above, albeit with minimal practical guidance. Accordingly, I turn to the texts where Locke theorizes and engages in this kind of inquiry himself: for theory, the *Conduct* and two unpublished medical writings, *De Arte Medica* and *Anatomia*; for Locke's own inquiry practices, his natural historical commonplace books and associated correspondence.

What becomes apparent in these texts is that Locke's pursuit of the conditions of possibility for community is not merely rhetorical in spirit, but rather guided directly by technical resources that he inherited from rhetoric via his practice of commonplacing. Although Locke was an outspoken critic of humanist commonplacing (which he viewed as blind regurgitating impressive arguments rather than reasoning for oneself), he followed Bacon in using topically organized commonplace books not to gather texts, but to collect, organize, connect, and even transmit observations about the natural world and human intersections with it: meteorological measurements; long lists of olive and plum varietals; descriptions, uses, and specimens of plants; the symptoms, histories, and treatments of ailments ranging from fever to melancholy.

The "heads" that Locke used to organize his commonplace books are adaptations of the rhetorical topics. They indicate both a subject matter and an empty place in which ideas might intersect—an evolving schema for focusing perception and selecting, collecting, and differentiating a vast range of observations. Further, Locke used his commonplace books to quickly locate all that he had learned about a particular topic (a certain disease, for example, or an alchemical practice) and transmit the salient pieces to his correspondents. Indeed, his meticulous and methodical approach to commonplacing, explained in 2.2.6, made him a hub for natural historical knowledge for much of his adult life.

In the *Conduct*, the natural historical inquiry that Locke performed in his commonplace books emerges as a crucial antidote to the epistemic—and therefore political—fragmentation he feared. For Locke, the primary challenge for the human understanding is not reasoning well (something most humans can do naturally, in his view), but rather establishing clear, distinct—and, I argue, common—*ideas* upon which to reason. Owing to his empiricism—his insistence

that all ideas are built from our perception of the material world, I read the *Conduct* as a treatise on object creation, wherein Locke outlines the habits of mind with which individual inquirers may contribute to the formation of shared objects of understanding.

Locke put this guidance into practice in his commonplace books, where he gradually amassed a collective view of a range of natural phenomena. He was quite proactive about gathering information: in several cases, he developed and distributed lists of "queries"—questionnaires designed to amass natural histories about poisonous fishes, new countries, and the workings of air.[53] These activities, topical through and through, demonstrate Locke's rhetorical inheritance, and they illustrate how commonplacing, as topical inquiry, made it possible for individuals to arrive at the shared ways of seeing so elusive at the time.

The dissertation proceeds as follows: Chapter 2 traces the development of topical inquiry from Aristotle's *Topica* and *Rhetoric* to its emergence as the conceptual framework for accumulation and selection in the literary commonplace books of the Renaissance—and, finally, the natural historical commonplace books prescribed by Bacon and adapted by Locke. My goal in this chapter is not to offer a comprehensive history of commonplacing, but rather to discern the features that unite the wide-ranging articulations of topical inquiry observable in the tradition—including Locke's. Locke engages the topical tradition via Bacon, adapting these features for use in a milieu where the eloquence and authority prized by Renaissance humanists are viewed with suspicion. The Lockean commonplace book, I argue, comes to constitute a space of commonality that makes collective inquiry an end in itself, rather than a preparation for eloquence, as it was for the humanists, or induction, as it was for Bacon.

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[53] Boyle, at the end of his life, entrusted Locke with the publication of his *General History of Air*. Locke spent a great deal of time rearranging the snippets of observations from Boyle's notes and, more importantly, revising the queries that structured the text. I discuss this effort in depth in section 6.4.

Chapter 3 turns to Locke's relationship with commonplacing (and rhetoric more generally), attempting to reconcile his explicit attacks on the practice with his reputation as one of the most devoted and influential commonplacers of his time. I work to distinguish the kind of commonplacing that Locke embraced from the kind he rejected, ultimately tracing the distinction to two sources of ambivalence that run through much of his writing: ambivalences toward language and toward authority. Language and authority, I argue, represent the foundations of Locke's civil society—as well as its greatest threats. The remainder of the chapter centers on his concerns about and begrudging reliance upon words as vehicles for shared understanding in Book III of the *Essay*. My aims in this section are, first, to draw out his rationale for turning from eloquence to inquiry in his commonplace books, and second, to provide a basis for understanding his engagement with rhetoric as a matter of object formation rather than oratory or argumentation.

Chapter 4 turns to Locke's ambivalence toward authority as expressed in his political writings. While Locke is famously resistant to received or imposed authority, I argue that he embraces authority as a necessary technology for producing standards to guide collective life. The key question—and rhetorical challenge—that emerges from this tension is: *how might we see together while still seeing for ourselves?* The answer that is incipient even his early, "authoritarian" writings and fully realized in his *Second Treatise* is an authority that resides in collective inquiry.

Chapter 5 provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the Lockean commonplace book as the site of this collective inquiry. I approach Locke as a rhetorical theorist who reconciles the supposed divide between subject and object, human and nature, rhetoric and logic—by arguing that his ideal subject, the "man of reason," is, above all, a sensing, situated,

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reasoning body who explores the world via the natural historical inquiry conducted in the Lockean commonplace book.

Chapter 6 argues, first, that the habits of the natural historical inquirer are to Locke the civic virtues necessary to sustain his civil society, and second, that these habits derive from and facilitate the two principal activities of the commonplacer: accumulation and selection. I read the *Conduct* alongside two of Locke's early medical writings to provide a detailed, usable account of these habits, working to link them to—and illustrate them with—his personal commonplacing practices.

Together these chapters offer a picture of Locke as a rhetorical theorist of inquiry: as one who shared the defining investments of rhetoric but saw his moment's available means (verbal persuasion and figurative speech) as antagonistic to them—and thus set out to conceive of an alternative approach. For Locke, I argue, the collective inquiry through which free and equal individuals discover the conditions of possibility for consensus is *topical inquiry*. In his natural historical commonplace books, such inquiry becomes a means of forming shared objects of understanding through the collection of perspectives, and of cultivating a rhetorical capacity to judge what is common, salient, appropriate from such collections. These two activities constitute, respectively, the common ground and the civic virtues upon which Locke's vision of civil society depends.

With this picture so established, Chapter 7 returns to the challenges faced by RS scholars working at the intersection of science and publics and/or politics. I offer three potential reorientations (or, perhaps, expansions) of the field that are supported by my study of Locke and aimed at addressing these challenges: first, a turn from means to ends as the primary grounds for recognizing rhetoric; second, a reconceptualization of rhetoric as a mediatory rather than

subjectivist enterprise; and third, a recognition and theorization of object formation as a crucial site for rhetorical production that is *prior* to verbal persuasion and argumentation. Locke, I argue, offers one such theorization, and he offers rhetoricians a host of conceptual, practical, and inventional resources for approaching contemporary scientific inquiry—particularly at the level of object formation—as a site for forming, broadening, and reimagining communities.

2.0 The Rhetorical Heritage of the Commonplace Book

This chapter examines the origins of Renaissance commonplacing practices in topical inquiry, a rhetorical and/or dialectical practice formalized by Aristotle for argumentative invention, and subsequently rearticulated for a range of purposes: in Cicero for practical argumentation, primarily in law courts; in Quintilian for rhetorical education; in medieval *florilegia* (compilations of moral wisdom) as organizational and exegetical aids that in the Late Middle Ages become central to composing sermons. Renaissance humanists embraced and extended the topical tradition—as the heads of humanist commonplace books, the topics directed the exploration and expansion of ideas through the accumulation and selection of literary *exempla*. In the commonplace books of early modern historians, topical inquiry was reoriented toward the "natural" rather than the literary realm. In the notebooks of John Locke, the complementary practices of accumulation and selection became resources for generating common objects of understanding. While my focus throughout is predominantly on the role of the topical tradition within rhetoric, the rhetorical and dialectical strands of the tradition are not, we will see, easily disentangled.

I begin with a brief account of Renaissance commonplace books, before turning to the tradition of topical inquiry and attempting to trace in it four features relevant to the rhetorical function of commonplacing: the role of the topics and commonplaces as *mediatory, heuristic, evolving, and generative* means of discovering common ground. This targeted tracing is offered not as a history but as an articulation of what is distinctly rhetorical in the commonplace book, setting out the tradition from which Locke was working when he appropriated the topics for the production of common objects. My assessment of this tradition, while not itself a history, is

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indebted to the accounts and insights of historians of the topics and commonplace books—in particular Ann Moss, whose authoritative and comprehensive *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (1996) provides this chapter with much of its historical texture.

2.1 Renaissance Commonplace Books

The term "commonplace" can be traced to antiquity.[1] Tied terminologically, if not always theoretically, to the rhetorical and/or dialectical topics, commonplaces have long served as aids for argumentative invention by attuning the rhetor to the range of possible forms, concerns, and truisms upon which arguments might be built.

Commonplace books, however, were an invention of the Renaissance—perhaps the most celebrated and institutionalized of the early modern note-taking practices. They aimed to harness, focus, and retain the vast amounts of information made available by print technology.[2] The Renaissance marked a turn to what Ann Blair calls the "stockpiling approach" to note taking: regarding virtually all information as potentially relevant, note-takers amassed it in large quantities, with little regard for immediate utility. Given the abundance of information available and this relatively indiscriminant approach to recording it, organizational and finding schemes became crucial to scholarship and education.[3] Commonplacing emerged as a genre of note taking

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[1] Aristotle's *koinoi topoi* and Cicero's *locus communis* are both often translated as "common places" in English, though, as I discuss later in this chapter, they designate very different kinds of places and play very different roles in topical invention.
[2] Ann Blair, Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age: Yale University Press, 2010), in particular 62-117.
[3] Too Much to Know, 63.

that addressed these needs. Unlike other notebooks containing ledgers, personal thoughts, reading notes, and so forth, commonplace books were designed to gather and categorize excerpts from texts—predominantly classical works—that the collector deemed worthy of retention and repetition, and that could serve as a resource for future arguments. These notebooks varied considerably in their organizational schemes; what unified the genre was the practice of recording excerpts under topics or "heads," allowing the user to quickly locate all that they had read and recorded about a particular subject and expound upon it as needed.

Commonplacing provided Renaissance scholars and pupils with a crucial means of managing an ever-expanding bounty of information—and of building upon it in way that was legible to fellow inquirers. This practical applicability, alongside its classical heritage and continuity with medieval excerpting practices, contributed greatly to its rise as a cornerstone of humanist education, as well as its influence on Renaissance culture more broadly.

By the early 1600s, commonplace books had assumed a central role in European classrooms as the dominant means of teaching reading, textual analysis, and eventually composition—predominantly through a process of creative imitation. Excerpts from the "best authors" (predominantly ancients), carefully selected and ordered by instructors, served initially as models of grammar and style; later as sources of wisdom, eloquently articulated and ripe for exploration; and finally as inspiration for students' own arguments.[4]

While the contents of these books, with their renewed emphasis on classical thought, certainly shaped the kinds of knowledge that students valued, the habits of mind they cultivated were arguably more influential. The organizing principles of commonplace books were internalized by generations of young minds, who went on to explore, catalog, and write about the

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[4] Variations of this program of study appear in the educational works of numerous Renaissance scholars, most notably Agricola and Erasmus, in *De formando studio* and *De ratione studii*, respectively.

world through the habits that it inculcated.[5] Commonplace books instilled in the user a rhetorical facility for drawing connections between general and particular that made it possible to juxtapose the ancient wisdom with one's own observations and ideas. Through such classroom training, Moss argues that the commonplace book became the "technical support system" of Renaissance culture more generally, and thus constitutive of the era's dominant intellectual paradigms.[6]

Commonplacing thus served a number of crucial cultural and epistemological purposes outside of the classroom. Perhaps the best known is its role as an aid for memory. The very act of excerpting—of simply writing down passages of interest—was celebrated as a mnemonic device. A number of prominent commentators, Francis Bacon among them, had argued that the primary value of humanist commonplace books lay in this practice of internalizing by recording—or, by the seventeenth century, in the their role as artificial memory repositories, capable of storing far more information than the mind could manage.[7] But while commonplace books assisted many individuals in storing what they read, their printed counterparts played a significant role in knowledge production as well. Such pre-assembled collections assisted the lettered in collectively accessing and sharing those bits of wisdom and turns of phrase that were deemed most worthy of recollection and emulation. The excerpts stored in both private and printed

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[5] Ann Moss, Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 153.

[6] Printed Commonplace-Books, 134.

[7] For a general account of commonplaces as mnemonic devices, see Richard Yeo, "John Locke's 'New Method' of Commonplacing: Managing Memory and Information," Eighteenth-Century Thought 2, no. 1 (2004), 8-9. Bacon's mnemonic view of traditional commonplace books appears in De augmentis scientiarum (V.5): "But not to speak of the interpretation of nature, which is a new doctrine, there can hardly be anything more useful…than a sound help for the memory; that is a good and learned Digest of Common-Places" Francis Bacon, "Of the Dignity and Advancement of Learning (De Augments Scientiarum)," in The Works of Francis Bacon ed. Robert Leslie Ellis James Spedding, and Douglas Denon Heath (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1882), V.v, 108. One should note, however, that Bacon's appropriation of the commonplace book (described in detail near the end of this chapter), requires a transformation of the topical heads, or "titles" as he called them, therein—he seeks to reinvent the topics to better reflect the natural world, so that they might aid in the pursuit of knowledge. On commonplace books as artificial memory, see Richard Yeo, "Between Memory and Paperbooks: Baconianism and Natural History in Seventeenth-Century England," History of Science 45, no. 1 (2007). For a mediation of these two approaches to memory see Blair, Too Much to Know, 72-80.

commonplace books served as models for imitation as well as foundations for invention. Users studied these excerpts closely, often either replicating or expounding upon them, as a way of internalizing a sense of eloquence—both elegant phrasing and appropriate usage—through immersion and imitation. After developing such a sensibility, the practiced commonplacer could refashion and redirect the excerpted arguments in their own words and for their own purposes.

The commonplace book, then, was not simply a mnemonic tool. It was a technology that shaped the way people selected, processed, stored, and (re)produced knowledge—that shaped, in other words, the way that their users saw and engaged with the world. It initiated its users into literary culture, instilling them with a sense of not only what was eloquent, but also what was important, authoritative, and worthy of mention—while at the same time urging users to repurpose what they read in novel situations and conversations.

Commonplacing, in short, was a collective yet independent practice that served to build and sustain a literate culture, while training individuals in making common knowledge one's own taking—in taking was known and said by others and personalizing it through creative imitation. As a technology, the commonplace book had the effect of gathering people—spatially and temporally distant—around a single topic of interest, producing not a single text but a constellation of texts, independently conceived, yet conversant with one another. Put differently, commonplaces were points from which to build out a full picture of how a particular community understood a given topic. They did not offer consensus, stable and final, but a common ground upon which discourse and debate could *begin*.

In this sense, commonplacing served in the same capacity as the ancient rhetorical technology, oratory: creating the conditions of possibility for being, knowing, and acting together in the face of uncertainty and fragmentation. And, just as the product of classical

rhetoric was not the speech but the habits of the speaker, the product of commonplacing was not the commonplace book itself, but, as we will see, a set of habits aimed at generating common ground through creative perception and mediation. These parallels between classical oratory and Renaissance commonplacing are not coincidental; the progenitors of the commonplace book drew upon ancient theorizations of topical inquiry and their medieval rearticulations to facilitate a highly productive mediation of general and particular, self and other that had long been the hallmark of rhetoric. This rhetorical heritage is crucial to understanding the roles that commonplace books played in their moment, as well as how the iterations that followed retained—or failed to retain—the productive, meditational spirit of rhetoric.

2.2 Topical Ancestry

Recognizing the commonplace book as a rhetorical technology requires some acquaintance with the tradition of topical inquiry from which commonplacing emerged. While the topics have been reinvented countless times in relation to different contexts and purposes, they have in every case entailed a particular a way of approaching, perceiving, and metabolizing arguments—or more generally, the positions of others—that cultivates a distinctly rhetorical capacity for constructing common ground. What follows, then, is not a history of topics but rather a targeted attempt to follow four embedded assumptions that are particularly relevant to the practice of commonplacing—features that emerged in Aristotle's germinal account of the topics and persisted across subsequent iterations, eventually shaping the kind of work that Locke's natural historical commonplace books performed. First, topics are agents of mediation,

most notably between self and other and general and particular.[8] Second, they are organizational and mnemonic aids that in rhetorical applications become heuristics that train the user to interpret and categorize the world in specific, shared ways. Third, they are best understood as evolving and open-ended collections, rather than a universal or comprehensive system. Fourth, owing to the three aforementioned features, topics are generative, in the sense of generating both new argumentative content and new topics themselves: as heuristics that mediate productively between self and other, general and particular, the topics are an art that constantly remakes itself in response to experience. They are, in short, provisional collections of common themes that emerge and are remade out of extensive practice, in a way that is nascent in Aristotle, explicit in Quintilian, and foundational to the art in humanistic accounts.

The precise nature of the topics varies between and within rhetorical theorists, ranging from argument structures to one-word titles beneath which to collect content. But in every case they are "finding places" for rhetorical possibility, discovered by an eye that has been trained to discern what is salient, what is essential—indeed, what is common—across a range of arguments and, in a deeper sense, across a range of people. As Nancy Struever writes, "the topics provide a central location for inquiry into discursive situation as civil event, the range of motivations and beliefs which invest discursive events. The most important characteristic of the *topoi* is the appeal to a common humanity."[9] The topics simultaneously inquire into and assert this common humanity via discursive production, adapting according to the response their discursive products garner. Topical inquiry, we will see, cultivates a capacity for *recognizing what is common*, where the common is understood as resting upon shifting ground. I will argue in subsequent chapters

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[8] On the role of the topics in connecting general to particular, see Struever, *Rhetoric, Modality, Modernity*.
[9] Struever, "Topics in History," *History and Theory* 19, no. 4 (1980), 69.

that this capacity is central to the kind of inquiry Locke championed, and it makes possible the common ground he pursued.

This section begins by locating the four features listed above in the Aristotelian topics—partially in dialectic and more fully in rhetoric—before considering how they were transformed and enriched at key points in rhetorical tradition: in Cicero, as resources for discovering argumentative opportunities in subject matter rather than form;[10] in Quintilian, as a flexible set of tools aimed at cultivating rhetorical habits; in medieval *florilegia* as an organizational structure in which to collect, analyze, and apply religious wisdom; in Renaissance commonplace books, as an "art of *copia.*"[11] In mapping the tradition in this manner, my goal, again, is not to present a history of the topical origins of commonplace books, but rather to draw out the features of the topics that allow them, across a wide range of instantiations, to promote the aims of rhetoric—and that remain operative in Locke's appropriation of the commonplacing tradition.[12]

2.2.1 Aristotle

Aristotle formalized topical inquiry in his *Topics* and *Rhetoric*, as a resource for inventing arguments. His primary work on the matter, the *Topics,* is a practical guide for training in dialectic. Concerned with debates that unfold as real-time exchanges, it teaches readers to change the minds of their opponents by detecting inconsistencies in their views and formulating arguments in response. Its stated aim is "to find a method by which we shall be able to construct

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[10] My decision to characterize Cicero's (early) topics as material and Aristotle's topics as formal follows Michael Leff—see Michael Leff, "Commonplaces and Argumentation in Cicero and Quintilian," *Argumentation* 10, no. 4 (1996), 446 and "The Topics of Argumentative Invention in Latin Rhetorical Theory from Cicero to Boethius," *Rhetorica* 1, no. 1 (1983), 26-30.

[11] This phrase is Terence Cave's and is explained in section 2.2.5.

[12] The key historical text on commonplacing is Ann Moss's *Printed Commonplace-books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought*, upon which this chapter draws extensively.

deductions (*sullogismos*) from acceptable premises (*endoxa*) concerning any problem that is proposed and—when submitting to argument ourselves—will not say anything inconsistent."[13] Aristotelian dialectic, in other words, aims to convince an interlocutor by building an argument upon premises that they will accept—ones that they themselves submitted, as well as ones that are generally accepted. This commitment to the acceptable, in conjunction with a focus on argumentative (in)consistency, marks out a field of inquiry—one that looks to the structure of discourse itself, rather than its subject matter—to identify opportunities to respond. If logic begins with what is true and primary, dialectic begins with the discourse of an other.

But what exactly are the topics? In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle defines *topos* in passing as "a head under which several enthymemes are included," indicating their generality, their investment in argumentation, and, it seems, their organizational (and perhaps mnemonic) role.[14] In the *Topics*, meanwhile, he does not provide an explicit definition, though he offers a litany of examples in Books II-VII, all of which point to a view of *topos* as concerned with argumentative *form*—or, more specifically, as identifying places in the arguments of others that invite specific forms of rebuttal. Indeed, Aristotle's topics are "attack locations"—points in an opponent's argument that offer the dialectician a chance to strike.[15] For each of the *topoi*, he first explains how to interpret or classify an opponent's proposition according to its form; he then enumerates the ways in which a proposition *of that form* could be rendered inconsistent. So for example, in the third chapter, where he addresses arguments that hold one thing to be better or worse than another, he writes:

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[13] Aristotle, *Topics. Books I and VIII*, trans. Robin Smith. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997, I.1.100a
[14] *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civil Discourse*, trans. George A. Kennedy. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), II.26.1.1403a.
[15] Smith frequently translates "*topoi*" as "attack locations"—for example, VIII.1.155b.

Now, if the problem is indefinite, then it will only be possible to refute it in one way, e.g. if <your opponent> were to say that pleasure is a good, or not a good, and made no further distinction. For if he said that *some* pleasure is a good, then you would have to prove universally that none is…

…

If [however] a determination has been added to the thesis, it will be possible to attack it in two ways, e.g. if it was supposed that being a good belongs to some pleasure and does not belong to another: for if either every pleasure or none is shown to be a good, what was proposed will have been rejected." [16]

The four features of topical inquiry that will go on to shape the work of commonplace books are already apparent in this example, though in some cases only incipiently. First, the dialectical topics mediate between self and other by taking the argument of an other as their starting point. More than simply list the forms that an argument can take, they instruct us to look closely at what has been said and locate in it what is useful for mounting our own argument. The topics are less argumentative templates than they are finding places for arguments—almost literally, places to look for argumentative opportunities in the propositions of one's opponent. Further, they mediate between general and particular, allowing one to see any proposition as an instance of a general argumentative form, and to find in that form the possibilities for a focused response.

Second, the dialectical topics serve as headings under which one may find a number of possible arguments, collectively serving as a kind of organizational scheme. The topics lead the user in categorizing what they encounter and, through that categorization, discovering their options for response: *If the proposition looks like this, you may refute it in these ways*. Subsequent adaptations of the topics will offer a much wider range of ways to engage with a proposition or subject, but in Aristotle as in these later iterations, the topics constitute a program for inquiring methodically into argumentative or persuasive possibility.

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[16] Aristotle, *Topics*, III.6.120a

Third, and relatedly, the dialectical topics are a collection of ways to inquire. In Aristotle, however, they are presented as a universal and comprehensive system, capable of addressing every argument that one might face—distinguishing them from most of the other topical approaches discussed in this chapter. Aristotle organizes these *topoi* according to his four predicables—the four relationships a predicate may have with its subject and thus the four general forms that a proposition might take: accidents, genera, unique properties, and definition.[17] The *topoi* under each predicable are, for the most part, grouped according to three subdivisions: opposites, coordinates and cases, and more or less equal.[18] Taken as a whole, then, the dialectical topics purport to cover all of the propositional formulations one might encounter—as Aristotle puts it, "the number and variety of things arguments are about and are made from."[19] This characterization overstates the stability and completeness of his collection, as evidenced by the variety of dialectical topics that collection inspired. Nevertheless, it points to a common thread that runs through these variations as well as the many (and much more variegated) lists of *topoi* produced in the service of rhetoric: Every collection is an attempt to lay out all of the (formal, useful, effective) ways in which one may approach a subject matter or statement; each *topos* is a way of discerning a relationship between the position of an other and one's argumentative aims.

Finally, the dialectical topics are generative, though not in the sense of generating new topics—a possibility that is only available to collections that do not claim to be exhaustive. Still, as tools for argumentative invention, they are engaged in generating new arguments by outlining

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[17] For Aristotle's discussion of the predicables in the *Topics*, see I.4 101b - I.9 104a.
[18] Robin Smith, "Introduction," in Aristotle, *Topics. Books I and VIII* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), xxxi.
[19] Aristotle, *Topics*, 1.9 104a.

the forms that a rebuttal may take, which may then be fleshed out with content of one's choosing.

In the *Topics*, content is both crucial to the inventional process that the topics facilitate and yet seemingly separated from the work that the topics themselves do. Consider Aristotle's treatment of the second case above, concerning determined statements: our opponent asserts that a particular pleasure is good, while another is not. Aristotle leads us first in characterizing the proposition (in this case, as determined, or definite, rather than indefinite), then in considering the ways in which such a proposition could be rendered logically inconsistent—in his example, by showing that either all pleasures or no pleasures are good. But how exactly we make our case is entirely up to us—and, of course, dependent upon the matter being debated. Topics outline the range of possible forms that our rebuttal might take, but we must supply the content.

That the *Topics* does not give us an art of inventing content is perhaps not surprising when we recall that dialectic consists in arguing from the premises of an other. Further, what supplementary content is required should consist of commonly accepted premises—*endoxa*. Aristotle's emphasis on *endoxa* over universal truths is largely pragmatic, aimed at mediating effectively between the position of the speaker and the investments of the audience—at locating the common ground upon which a persuasive argument might be built.[20] The same aims motivate Aristotle's treatment of contact in the *Rhetoric*, where he explains:

> even if we were to have the most exact knowledge, it would not be very easy for
> us in speaking to use it to persuade [some audiences]. Speech based on knowledge
> is teaching, but teaching is impossible [with some audiences]; rather, it is

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[20] Though, in Rubinelli's interpretation, Aristotle's topics are an attempt to formalize Socratic debate, and the use of *endoxa* should thus be viewed less as a strategic decision by Aristotle than as an inheritance from the older method. Sara Rubinelli, *Ars Topica: The Classical Technique of Constructing Arguments from Aristotle to Cicero*, vol. 15: Springer Science & Business Media, 2009), 35-37.

necessary for *pisteis* and speeches [as a whole] to be formed on the basis of common [beliefs], as we said in the *Topics* about communication with a crowd.[21]

In the passage from the *Topics* referenced above, Aristotle writes that training in dialectic

> is useful for encounters because, once we have reckoned up the opinions of the public, we shall speak to them, not from the beliefs of others, but from their own beliefs, changing their minds about anything they may seem to us not to have stated well.[22]

Here we see two complementary activities that are shared by the rhetorician and dialectician and that may be approached through inquiry into subject matter or into argumentative form: building arguments upon what others already accept and locating opportunities for intervention in their stated positions. Topical inquiry is in this sense an exercise in careful listening. More precisely, it is an exercise in listening for what is common, both in form and in content—in apprehending the formal features of a proposition that connect it to a more general type of argument, as well as the beliefs and investments that are shared by a community.

In rhetoric and dialectic alike, then, the speaker does not create argumentative content, as much as they discover it. In the *Topics*, Aristotle provides only the most general suggestion for where to look for such content, directing the dialectician to the opinions of everyone, most people, or the wise.[23] But one striking exception exists: in his discussion of gathering *endoxa* from books, he gives a tantalizing recommendation for a practice that appears to closely parallel Renaissance commonplacing:

> [M]ake up tables, listing [premises] separately about each genus, e.g. about good or about animal (and about every <sense of> good), beginning with what it is. One should also make marginal notes on the opinions of particular people, e.g. that it was Empedocles who said that there are four elements of bodies (for someone might concede what was said by a famous person).[24]

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[21] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I.1.1355a, brackets Kennedy's. "*Pisteis*" here might be read as persuasive appeals.
[22] *Topics*, I.1.101a
[23] *Topics*, I.14.105b
[24] *Topics*, I.14.105b, brackets Smith's.

Just as the topics serve to collect and organize different forms of argument, these tables collect and organize subject matter—in particular, *endoxa*—for future use.[25]

In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle engages with subject matter more deeply through his discussion of *idia,* sometimes referred to as "specific topics" in rhetorical scholarship (a contested designation to which I will return momentarily). Aristotle presents the *idia* as "more or less agreed upon" premises from which syllogisms may be drawn, supporting Sara Rubinelli's characterization of them as *endoxa* rather than *topoi*.[26] The *idia* are, for the most part, widely accepted propositions that are relevant to specific species of rhetoric (e.g. in judicial rhetoric, "[T]he more brutal the crime, the greater the wrong"), though they also appear as lists of the kinds of subject matter a rhetor should know before speaking on a particular subject to a particular community (e.g. in Aristotle's discussion of deliberative rhetoric: "Thus one who is going to give advice on finances should know what and how extensive are the revenues of the city…and all the expenses of the city as well.")[27] In these latter cases, the *idia* are presented not as propositions, but as categories of subject matter.

Aristotle first introduces the *idia* in relation to the *topoi*.[28] The nature of this relationship—and the active scholarly debate surrounding it—offers considerable insight into the relationship between form and content in the topics.[29] George Kennedy translates *idia* as

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[25] An example of this kind of table appears in *Eudemian Ethics*, II.3

[26] *Rhetoric*, I.6.17 1362b. Aristotle presents *idia* as premises in I.2.21 1358a, though the actual *idia* are not always presented as propositions (e.g. in his discussion of "good," he simply lists off different things that are generally viewed as good—pleasure, the virtues, the ability to speak and act, and so forth (I.6.6-17 1362a-b); Rubinelli, *Ars Topica*, 59-72.

[27] *Rhetoric*, I.7.5 1375a; I.4.8 1359b.

[28] *Rhetoric*, I.2.21 1358a: "I am saying that dialectical and rhetorical syllgisms are those in which we state *topoi,* and these are applicable in common [*koinēi*] to questions of justice and physics and politics and many different species [of knowledge]…But there are "specifics" [*idia*] that come from the premises of each species and genus [of knowledge]; for example, in physics there are premises from which there is neither an enthymeme nor a syllogism applicable to ethics; and in ethics [there are] others not useful in physics."

[29] For a detailed account of this debate, see Rubinelli, 61-65.

"specificities, specific or particular things," noting the tendency in rhetorical scholarship to treat the *idia* as "'special, specific, particular, material' topics belonging to the separate disciplines, in contrast to "common" or "formal" topics, which are rhetorical or dialectical strategies of argument."[30] Rubinelli, suggesting that the relationship of *topoi* and *idia* remains "the most controversial issue in the *Rhetoric*," rejects these "traditional" interpretations of Aristotle as presenting two kinds of topics, specific and common, in the *Rhetoric*.[31] Rubinelli objects to the widespread use of "common topics" ("*koinoi topoi*") to name Aristotle's formal topics and implicitly distinguish them from some other sort of *topoi*. *Koina*, she argues, appears alongside *topos* only periodically to draw attention to a difference between two different kinds of *topoi*. Similarly, she observes a "bright" distinction between *topos* and *idia*, noting that the former "never occurs when [Aristotle] introduces the *idia* in the *Rhetoric*."[32] In Rubinelli's reading, "*topos*" refers exclusively to "argument schemes of universal applicability," whereas *idia* are discipline-specific premises that may be used in discipline-specific syllogisms—in her words, *endoxa*.[33] Thus, "the *topoi* guide the speaker on how to organise certain contents into an argument, the *idia* only provide contents that need arrangement."[34] The difference between the *topoi* and *idia* is, in this view, the difference between form and content.

By contrast, Christof Rapp resists the interpretation of *idia* as premises, pointing out that many of the *idia* given are "not only isolated sentences," as such interpretations might suggest, "but also certain sentences together with a reason or a justification."[35] Aristotle's view of *idia*

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[30] George A. Kennedy, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 45n68.
[31] Rubinelli, 59-72.
[32] Rubinelli, 69.
[33] Rubinelli, 70; 60; 66.
[34] Rubinelli, 66.
[35] Christof Rapp, "Aristotle's Rhetoric," ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2010 ed., *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford University: Metaphysics Research Lab, 2010), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2010/entries/aristotle-rhetoric/.

thus appears quite expansive, encompassing premises, categories of premises, and, in some cases, full arguments. Further, and more seriously from Rapp's perspective, the "*topoi*" presented in I.6-7 of the *Rhetoric* also appear in Book III of the *Topics*, where Aristotle calls them *topoi* and treats them much as he does the other topics in the work—a point to which I will return momentarily.[36]

My own view is that we can accept Rubinelli's reading of the *idia* as *endoxa* without insisting upon a strict divide between the *idia* and the *topoi*. The persistent debate concerning the nature of these terms speaks, perhaps, to the at-times fluid relationship between the topics, as openings for subject matter, and the subject matter itself—between form and content, collector and thing collected, inventor and thing invented.

Rubinelli's careful analysis of the *idia-topoi* relationship appears to leave an opening for such a reading. Acknowledging that Aristotle refers back to certain *idia* as *topoi* later in the *Rhetoric*, she argues that he is, in those cases, using "*topos*" in the pre-Aristotelian sense of "'*subject-matter* indicator': *idia* are indications of topics to be used in argumentation."[37] This usage of *topos* appears, for example, in Isocrates's *Philip:*

> [A]ll others who praise [Heracles] harp endlessly on his valour or recount his labours; and not one…will be found to have commemorated his other excellences – I mean those which pertain to the spirit. I, on the other hand, see here a subject matter [topos] peculiar to him and entirely unworked.38

In this passage, Rubinelli argues, Isocrates presents Heracles' virtue as "unworked *topos* that would be appropriate for praising the hero."[39] "*Topos*" in this usage seems to denote a finding place for subject matter (similar, she later notes, to the *loci* of Cicero's *De Inventione*), rather

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[36] Rapp, "Aristotle's Rhetoric."
[37] Rubinelli, 69, emphasis in original.
[38] Isocrates, *Philip* 109, quoted in Rubinelli, 69.
[39] Rubinelli,, 170.

than an argument structure.[40] Aristotle appears to use "*topos*" in this way when he touches upon virtue at the end of I.5:

> Virtue, since it is a *topos* most closely connected with forms of praise, must be left for definition when we given an account of praise.[41]

As promised, Aristotle returns to the subject of virtue in his discussion of epideictic, where he presents the subdivisions of virtue (justice, courage, magnificence, and so forth) and their opposites, vices, as "points of reference for one praising or blaming" and "those things form which we [as speakers] shall be able to make both ourselves and any other person worthy of credence in regard to virtue."[42] Virtue here appears to straddle the two kinds of *topos*—the designations of "subject matter indicator" and argument strategy: While "virtue" serves as a heading under which to collect the individual virtues, the virtues themselves are not so much subject matter indicators (headings under which to gather content) as they are strategies for praising and blaming—for arguing. At the same time, these argument strategies derive from subject matter rather than structure.

Thus the distinction between form and content—between the *topoi* on one hand and the *idia* (and, as I now will address, *koina*) on the other—is perhaps not as so straightforward. Consider Rapp's observation that the "specific topics" listed in I.6-7 of the *Rhetoric* are presented as *topoi* in the *Topics*. In some respects, Kennedy's reading of I.7 appears to offer an explanation: Noting that the propositions presented in I.7 (concerning degree of magnitude, "more or less," as it pertains to questions of what is advantageous or good) are better understood as *koina*—premises that function much as *idia* except that they are "common to all species…of

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[40] Rubinelli, 104. What distinguishes Aristotle's *idia* from the *loci* in *De Inventione* is, Rubinelli argues, their role as "propositions acting as premises of enthymemes." Cicero's *loci* meanwhile "are only intended as 'topics' which can be addressed while pleading cases" and lack an investment in the "those theoretical aspects [of the Aristotelian topics] more closely connected to the internal structure and the composition of arguments" (102).

[41] *Rhetoric*, I.5.18 1362a, quoted in Rubinelli, 70.

[42] *Rhetoric*, I.9.4-5, 1366a-b.

rhetoric," rather than specific to one—Kennedy argues that Aristotle uses both of these designations, *koina* and *idia*, to distinguish the formal *topoi* from strategies rooted in subject matter:[43] "The topic of "the more and the less," mentioned in 1.2.21, is a logical strategy applied to a particular argument, whereas the *koinon* of degree, although sounding much the same, is an aspect of the subject being discussed."[44] What distinguishes the *koina* from *topoi*, in Kennedy's view, is not necessarily a difference in appearance, but rather a difference in orientation, again falling along the supposed divide between form and content.

In practice, however, the distinction can be extremely subtle. In the *Topics*, one argues in terms of the more or less desirable when the goal is to win support for something that initially appears interchangeable with the other options available. The associated argument forms assist the speaker in setting up a decisive comparison—these *topoi* offer a selection of axes along which to measure and compare desirability so that we may find one in which our preference comes out ahead. In the *Rhetoric*, the framing is quite similar: "Since both sides in a debate often agree about what is advantageous but disagree about what is more advantageous [among possible courses of action], something should next be said about greater good and the more advantageous."[45] Aristotle proceeds to show, again, all of the ways in which we might establish what is more or less good or advantageous. While we could read these *koina* as explorations of the subject and the *topoi* as argument strategies, it seems clear that the argument strategies pertaining to more and less derive from our exploration of the subject matter, and that, in the case of the *koina* in 1.7, we explore the subject matter with the express intent of generating

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[43] While Aristotle does not give a "technical name" to the propositions listed in I.7-9, Kennedy explains, he later classifies these "forms of argument" (Kennedy's phrasing) as *koinon* in II.18.2 (65 and 157n80).

[44] Kennedy, *On Rhetoric*, 65; see also 45.

[45] *Rhetoric*, I.7.1 1363b.

argument strategies. It is not surprising, then, that the *topoi* and *koina* at times appear almost

interchangeable:

> Also, that which is desired for itself is more desirable than that which is desired
> for something else; e.g. health is more desirable than gymnastics: for the former is
> desired for itself, the latter for something else (*Topics* III.i).[46]

> And what is more preferable in itself [is a greater good] than what is not, for
> example, strength [is a greater good] than what is wholesome; for the latter is not
> sought for itself, while the former is, which was the meaning of good [established
> in I.7.3] (*Rhetoric* I.7.8).[47]

Both *koinon* and *topos* are full arguments that furnish the reader with both argumentative form

and content—not only a structure in which to argue that one thing is preferable to another, but

also the reason *why* it is preferable. So while *topoi* and *idia/koina* may originate in concerns with

form and content respectively, it is clear that the two pursuits are not inherently distinct and may

easily converge.

But blurred distinction notwithstanding, the *idia* and *koina* perform an important role in

the *Rhetoric* that is distinct from the work of the *topoi* and crucial to understanding the rhetorical

foundations of the commonplace book. The most obvious difference between the *topos* and the

koinon above is the latter's recourse to a definition of "good" established in I.6 and restated,

somewhat less clearly, near the start of I.7—a move that rearticulates what is otherwise an

argument strategy into an expression of rhetorical concern. When Aristotle distinguishes the

three species of rhetoric by their ends, he presents these ends as a set of terms that give rise to the

idia for each species: for forensic rhetoric, the just and the unjust; for epideictic, the honorable

and the shameful; for deliberative, the advantageous and the harmful, which he elaborates

through the exploration of two addition terms, "happiness" and "good" in I.5 and I.6

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[46] *Topics*, III.i.
[47] *Rhetoric*, I.7.8 1364a.

respectively.[48] Taken together, these terms map the sites of human motivation—they are, in the broadest strokes, the classes of reasons why people might choose one option over another.

Aristotle devotes a sizable portion of the *Rhetoric* to cultivating an understanding of these concepts by breaking them down into their constituent parts and discovering in them more specific reasons that the orator may use as the foundations of persuasive arguments—the *idia*. In the case of happiness, for example, the orator must "grasp what happiness is…and the sources of its parts: for all forms of exhortation and dissuasion are concerned with this."[49] Aristotle proceeds to define happiness in a fairly unsystematic way that nevertheless attempts to capture, as comprehensively as possible, the range of ways in which people understand happiness—as "success combined with virtue, or as self-sufficiency in life, or as the pleasantest life accompanied with security, or as abundance of possessions and bodies, with the ability to defend and use these things; *for all people agree that happiness is pretty much one or more of these*."[50] Having defined happiness according to common sentiment, Aristotle lists its "parts"—those things that commonly bring about happiness so defined: good birth, good and numerous children, wealth, good reputation, and so forth. He then moves through each of these parts, again considering the nature of each in terms of popular sentiment, often by subdividing it further into its constituent parts—or, in a few cases, by considering differences in meaning produced by gender or age.[51] Thus one sees how the process of inquiring into these central terms comes to serve as the creative engine behind Aristotle's lists of *idia* and *koina*. One defines a term

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[48] *Rhetoric*, I.3.5 1358b. See also Rubinelli, 60-61 on the importance of this point.
[49] *Rhetoric*, I.5.2 1360b.
[50] *Rhetoric*, I.5.3 1360b, emphasis added. See also Kennedy, *On Rhetoric*, 57n99.
[51] For subdivision into constituent parts, see for example "Wealth," (I.5.7 1361a). The criteria for "good children" depends on whether one has sons or daughters (I.5.6 1361a); the criteria for beauty changes at each stage of life (I.5.11 1361b).

according to common sentiment and then articulates it, through a series of subdivisions derived from this common definition, into a collection of *endoxa*.

The crucial distinction between the *idia* and *koina* of I.6-7 and the *topoi* of Book III in the *Topics* thus appears to lie in the process by which one generates them. While the dialectical *topoi* derive from Aristotle's methodical engagement with predication, the *idia* and *koina* proliferate out of his inquiry into the common sources of motivation—a different kind of topical exploration that appears to be rooted in something closer to the pre-Aristotelian sense of *topos*—as in Rubinelli's example of virtue. The *idia* and *koina* function, in this sense, as both collectors and things collected—as both subject matter and its indicator. The *idia*, insofar as Aristotle aligns them with this older conception of *topos*, are both subject matter and a focused opportunity for invention not unlike the formal *topoi*.

In most cases, Aristotle organizes the *idia* methodically, much like the *topoi*, allowing the rhetorician to run through all of the possibilities for building an argument upon premises that are accepted by the audience and pertinent to the matter at hand.[52] What emerges is a kind of proto-commonplace book: a thematically organized collection of *endoxa* that the user may repurpose for new arguments.[53]

The fuzzy but still useful distinction between form and content also helps to parse a similar distinction between rhetoric and dialectic. First, the differences: Whereas the subject matter of dialectic tends towards the philosophical and general, rhetoric is deeply embedded in the political and the practical. The material and particular considerations that are central to

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[52] In Book I, these lists are organized under the three species of rhetoric and comprise the matters most relevant to each—for example, under deliberative rhetoric, "The most important subjects on which people deliberate and on which deliberative orators give advice in public are mostly five in number, and these are finances, war and peace, national defense, imports and exports, and the framing of laws." *Rhetoric*, I.4.7 1359b.

[53] I am grateful to Tim Barr for this insight.

rhetoric invariably exceed the tidy lines of the dialectical topics. Similarly, in rhetoric, where the aim is not besting others in argument but rather persuading them, what is relevant about those others is not only the propositions that form the basis for their beliefs, but also their emotional state and their assessment of the rhetor.[54] The rhetorical topics thus encompass a much broader range of argumentative strategies and, as a result, appear as a rather motley collection of considerations whose lack of coherence is striking in comparison to the more systematically organized topics of dialectic.

What seems to unite the *topoi* in the *Rhetoric* is their utility in identifying argumentative opportunities that are common across a range of rhetorical situations.[55] So while some of the *topoi* come from dialectic,[56] many instead gesture at tried and true ways of turning the audience in one's favor: remedying a false impression by stating its cause,[57] presenting a better plan than what has been offered,[58] connecting someone to the meaning of their name.[59] Or, to give an example that is particularly relevant to commonplacing, consider the *topos* "from authority":

> Another [topic] is from a [previous] judgment [*ek kriseōs*] about the same or a
> similar or opposite matter, especially if all always [make this judgment]—but if
> not, at least most people, or the wise (either all of them or most) or the good; or if
> judges themselves [have so decided] or those whom the judges approve or those
> whose judgment cannot be opposed.[60]

Just as the dialectical *topoi* locate opportunities to intervene in the propositions of an other, this *topos* finds such points of departure in the rhetorical situation. When confronted with a

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[54] *Rhetoric*, II.1.1 1377b.

[55] Here I am referring primarily to the topics listed in II.23, though Aristotle provides a second list of fallacious topics in II.24. Kennedy, following Grimaldi, contends that the latter list aims to help the reader detect fallacies in the arguments of others rather than construct their own. Kennedy, *On Rhetoric*, 184.

[56] E.g. *Rhetoric*, II.23.13 1399a, which references *Topics* II.4 111a. "Another [topic] is from the parts [*ek tōn merōn*], as discussed in the *Topics*; [for example,] what kind of motion is the soul? For is it this or that."

[57] *Rhetoric*, II.23.24 1400a.

[58] *Rhetoric*, II.23.26 1400a-b.

[59] *Rhetoric*, I.23.29 1400b. Among Aristotle's examples: "[saying] of Dracon the lawgiver that his laws were not those of a human being but of a drakon [snake]; for they were harsh.)

[60] *Rhetoric*, II.23.12 1398b.

viewpoint on a particular matter, the orator may generate a response by turning to authorities on that matter whom the audience is likely to accept. Interventions of this nature are still quite general (one may always seek recourse to prior judgments, regardless of subject matter), but considerations of content bleed in. Indeed, when Aristotle directs us to the judgments of "at least most people, or the wise" he echoes his instructions for gathering accepted opinions in the *Topics*.[61]

The difference between rhetoric and dialectic cannot, then, be reduced to a turn from form to content. While rhetoric's place in the noisy world of politics and persuasion necessitates a deeper engagement with material, particular, and practical considerations, argumentative form remains at the heart of rhetorical invention. But while it is possible in dialectic to treat content as external and practical efficacy as extraneous, many of the rhetorical *topoi* are argument forms derived precisely from these considerations. In rhetoric, in practice, the boundaries of form and content are porous—so porous in some cases that the designations may be reversed.

Rhetoric's commitment to the material, the practical, and the particular necessitates a pragmatic reorientation of the topics that turns attention from formal validity to a more general and diffuse sense of efficacy—a sense that is developed, it seems, though experience. It is in rhetoric, then, that the topics are approached as heuristics. As with dialectic, rhetorical topics are strategies for interpreting and responding to any given situation. In rhetoric, however, the topics are not anchored in logic and thus seemingly watertight; they are rather drawn from ongoing observations of persuasive possibility, tested against experience, and perennially fallible—which is to say, provisional, open for revision.

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[61] See *Topics*, I.1 100b. Kennedy makes this observation as well (*On Rhetoric*, 177n158).

One could interpret these differences simply as inconsistencies in Aristotle's theory of topics and argue, on those grounds, that the accounts in the *Topics* and the *Rhetoric* should not be viewed as parts of a coherent whole.[62] Alternatively, and perhaps more promisingly, this shift might be taken as an early indication of the adaptability of the topics—that even in Aristotle they do not constitute a comprehensive or definitive system, but are rather an evolving collection of resources, attuned to the demands and practices of the contexts in which they are used.[63] In the dialectical *Topics*, Aristotle gives us a system for inventing arguments from a particular site of possibility—predication—which he attempts to treat exhaustively. The resulting topics, because they are strictly formal, are presented as universally applicable. But in the *Rhetoric*, we see 1) the extent to which form may be shaped by content and 2) that generally applicable forms may be derived from through practice rather than logic or theory. Subsequent iterations of the dialectical topics will further reveal that even strict adherence to argumentative form over content (to the extent that the two can be fully differentiated) and an insistence upon universality do not preclude significant revisions to the system.[64] What distinguishes rhetoric from dialectic in this respect is only the speed with which topical adaptation takes place—owing perhaps to the collective and explicitly adaptive nature of rhetorical inquiry. The rhetorical topics, as heuristics generated and/or tested through practice, are not only tools for rhetorical production, but also products themselves.

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[62] For a detailed explanation of the variation in Aristotle's account of topics in the *Rhetoric*, see George Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 76.

[63] On this view of the topics, see Marshall, *Vico and the Transformation of Rhetoric*, 88-89, and Struever, "Topics in History", 69.

[64] See, for example, Peter Mack's account of the transformations of the lists of topics—e.g. Boethius's adaptation of Aristotelian cause and effect, and so forth in Peter Mack, *Renaissance Argument: Valla and Agricola in the Traditions of Rhetoric and Dialectic*, vol. 43: Brill, 1993), 142-150.

What Aristotle's dialectical and rhetorical topics share is their investment in a process of guided perception and creative transformation—an investment that informs both the creation of the topics and their use. They are ways to understand the position of one's opponent or audience, and to generate arguments in response. In the *Topics* and in the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle presents topical inquiry as a resource for discovering arguments that the audience will accept among the details of a particular case—these are the matters on which debates turn, these are the points at which one may intervene. This defining feature of Aristotle's topics exemplifies the critical, creative reading practices apparent in later iterations, including the commonplace book: building upon what others have said to create something new, generating novel arguments from the words or beliefs of others.

With this general topical spirit in mind, I want to conclude this discussion of Aristotle by returning to the features of topical inquiry introduced above, with a particular focus on rhetorical topics. As general argument strategies that may be applied to a range of particular situations and subject matters—most notably, subject matter supplied by an other—the topics are *tools for mediating* between general and particular, self and other. They train us to look at a proposition put forth by our opponent or a belief held by our audience and to see in it all the places from which to mount an argument of our own. The rhetorical topics are also *heuristics*. They serve as headings under which to organize general arguments and produce specific ones, allowing the user to categorize whatever argument or information they encounter and, through that process, locate opportunities to intervene and transform. Further, as is particularly clear in rhetorical applications, topics are best understood not as a stable system, but as *evolving and incomplete collections* (or, perhaps, an evolving tradition of collecting) that may be adapted according to the exigencies of their environments and occasions for use. It follows, then, that the topics are

generative: by applying a range of mediatory heuristics to the particulars of a situation, they aid in inventing novel arguments that are rooted in the arguments and beliefs of another. And, as we will see in subsequent iterations, topical inquiry becomes an art of topics—of reinventing not only arguments, but also the topics themselves in response to new environments, observations, and rhetorical endeavors.

2.2.2 Cicero

How do the topics of Aristotle, aimed at locating argumentative opportunities in the propositions of others, become the topics of commonplace books—headings under which to collect exemplars of wisdom and eloquence? In the *Rhetoric*, the most obvious parallel to this sort of collection is the generation of *idia* beneath the "ends" of each rhetorical species (e.g. the end of deliberative rhetoric is advantage, which leads Aristotle to lay out the *idia* pertaining to happiness and the good.) Under Cicero, this process of finding and/or generating subject matter becomes explicitly topical.[65] Cicero reimagined the topics for uses that were primarily rhetorical, with a particular emphasis on the forensic rhetoric of Roman law courts. In doing so, he situated topical inquiry in a particular sphere of practice, giving it a distinctly material dimension, particularly in his earliest—and, within the context of the commonplacing tradition, most influential—treatment of the topics, *De inventione*.[66] In this work, Cicero offers two related

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[65] Again, see Leff's treatment of Cicero's early topics as material in Leff, "Commonplaces and Argumentation," 446, and "The Topics of Argumentative Invention," 26-30.

[66] On the comparative influence of *De inventione*, see Leff, "The Topics of Argumentative Invention," 31; Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, 6-7; Rubinelli, *Ars Topica*, 94. While Cicero's *Topica* works were taken up by Renaissance humanists who sought to rejoin rhetoric and dialectic (often by subordinating the former to the latter), the commonplacing tradition from which Bacon and Locke departed was more clearly shaped by Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* and medieval *florilegia*, whose engagement of topical inquiry is much closer to what appears in *De inventione*.

inventional resources that are important to the development of commonplace books: the *loci*, his Latin reformulation of the Greek *topoi*, and the *loci communes*—commonplaces. This section will briefly address both and examine their roles in developing the mediatory, heuristic, adaptive, and generative powers of topical inquiry.

Cicero's *loci* are effectively prompts aimed at discovering "all things that are called into question" in particular cases—things that, Cicero explains, "are found not in the endless number of individuals, nor in the infinite variety of circumstances, but in the subject matter (*causis*) and characteristics (*naturis*) inherent to the broad types (*generum*) [of people and circumstances]."[67] Here we see the characteristic maneuver of the Aristotelian topics: taming the infinite realm of the particular through a process of classification. When confronted with a particular argument, Aristotle's *topoi* locate in it what is general—what is common across a range of arguments—and offer strategies for arguing from that (common) place. The *loci* of *De inventione* proceed similarly but focus on argumentative content rather than form—*matters* that are common to all cases. In forensic rhetoric, for example, *loci* are organized according to the key variables of legal disputes, which he broadly categorizes as either *ex personis* or *ex negotiis*: attributes of the person or the act they were said to commit. Invention begins by considering not the structure of an argument, but instead what is known about the case; the *loci* draw our attention to those features of the case with the potential to influence the audience, such as the habits and education of the person on trial (*ex personis*) or the location and timing of the alleged act (*ex negotiis*).

What stands out in this materially oriented topics is the heuristic function of the classification scheme: because the material world necessarily exceeds the categories that Cicero lays out, we see how the *loci* do work upon the material they gather, making phenomena legible

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[67] Cicero*, De oratore*, II.145-6, translated by Daniel E. Mortensen in "The *Loci* of Cicero," *Rhetorica* 26, no. 1 (2008), 37.

and converting observation into evidence. Further, the *loci* are, at a general level, defined by the orator's purpose—Cicero stresses that each species of rhetoric has its own set of inventional resources, dictated by its "ends and purposes": in forensic rhetoric, what is just; in epideictic, what is honorable; in deliberative, what is honorable and advantageous.[68] So whereas Aristotle's dialectical *topoi* are organized under the predicables, resulting in an ostensibly comprehensive system capable of categorizing and addressing any argument that an opponent might put forth, the *loci* of *De Inventione* are divided according to the scene of their employment, more in the vein of the *idia*.

As in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, we see the enlarged responsibilities of a rhetorical topics: the necessity of attending not only to the argument itself, but to the suite of considerations that characterize the persuasive situation. While Aristotle loosely and not always consistently characterizes the first set of considerations as *topoi* and the second as *idia,* Cicero appears to offer something of a synthesis. On one hand, the *loci* of *De Inventione* serve in the same heuristic, mediatory capacity as Aristotle's rhetorical *topoi*, pointing us to general arguments that will likely speak to our audience. On the other hand, they are primarily concerned with subject matter and engage with particulars in a much deeper sense than Aristotle's *topoi*. Put differently, the kinds of arguments that Cicero's *loci* identify are rooted in features of the case that will resonate with the audience—shared points of investment. For example, consider the *locus* of *victus*, or way of life:

> And many suspicions may be suggested by a man's way of life when the question
> is asked how and with whom and by whom he was reared and educated, and with
> whom he lives, what his plan or purpose in life is, and what his home life is like.[69]

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[68] Cicero, *De Inventione*, trans. H.M. Hubbell. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), 2.12-13.
[69] De Inventione, 2.29.

While this *locus* bears almost no resemblance to the Aristotelian *topoi*, there is in fact significant continuity between the two topical approaches. First, both serve as organizational and mnemonic aids that guide us in making sense of the argumentative challenge before us—generalizations with which to interpret the particulars of a case and generate arguments in response. Further, both mediate between self and other by assisting the orator in building arguments upon premises that are acceptable to an other—whether they are submitted by an interlocutor, accepted by the audience, or derived from known attributes of a case.

What is unique in Cicero's early revision of the topics is, again, its focus on kinds of argumentative content—a shift that anticipates their role as headings in the commonplace book. For our purposes, this situated, material transformation had two important effects. Most importantly, as discussed above, it refashioned the topics into tools for generating arguments by gathering information. But it also generated specific kinds of topics that in some cases proved quite lasting—in particular, the moral topics of deliberative rhetoric. While the topics most often associated with *De inventione* are those of forensic rhetoric—attributes of the person (*ex personis*) and the act (*ex negotiis*)—Cicero also provided a reasonably developed list of deliberative topics at the end of Book II. He divided this list according to the ends he previously ascribed to deliberative rhetoric—the honorable and the expedient—where the former are, in essence, a list of virtues (wisdom, courage, temperance, and the like). While these moral topics appeared little more than an afterthought for Cicero, they were instrumental to the medieval appropriation of the topics as headings under which to collect moral wisdom—a role that they maintained into the Renaissance.

Cicero's *Topica*, his mature treatise on topical inquiry, brings the material investments of *De Inventione* to bear on the formal topics. He frames the work as summary of Aristotle's

Topics, written up from memory while traveling in Greece, at the behest of the jurisconsult Trebatius.[70] There are, admittedly, some similarities between the two works: both are attempts to lay out a universal system of argumentative invention, and Cicero draws upon Aristotle's list of dialectical topics. But the *Topica* ultimately moves beyond the dialectical topics to include a number from the *Rhetoric* as well as non-Aristotelian sources. As Leff observes, Cicero largely ignored the proposition, and organized his *loci* around the subject of under discussion, rather than the predicables.[71] While the predicables themselves appear in Cicero's list of *loci*, their primary role is to place the subject among others by exploring its relations, rather than placing it in a proposition for use in an argument. Consider his example of argument from species:

> If Fabia's husband has bequeathed her a sum of money on condition that she be *mater familias*, and she has not come under his *manus*, nothing is due to her. For "wife" is a genus, and of this genus there are two species; one *matres familias*, that is, those that have come under *manus*; the second, those who are regarded only as wives. Since Fabia belonged to the second class, it is clear that no legacy was made her.[72]

Having established that Fabia is of the genus "wife" one considers the species of that genus (following a distinction in ancient Roman marriages)—wives who have "come under *manus"* (that is, joined their husband's family) and those who have not (and thus remain in their father's)—and determines the species to which Fabia belongs. Given that only one species of wife meets the conditions for inheritance, the determination of whether she should receive an inheritance is a logical consequence of the species to which she belongs. Cicero appears to provide the reader with a form for generating arguments from species—and indeed, the *Topica* is much more formulaic, much more concerned with patterns of reason, than *De Inventione*. But the

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[70] Cicero, *Topica*, trans. H. M. Hubbell Loeb Classical Library 386. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949), I.1-5.

[71] Leff, "The Topics of Argumentative Invention", 30-31.

[72] Cicero, *De Inventione*, III.14.

structure is not what guides the invention. The Ciceronian *loci*—even those with analogs in Aristotle's *Topics*, are not themselves argumentative structures in which to insert subject matter; they are a list of ways in which to articulate the *subject*, Fabia, by inquiring into her genus, species, parts, *differentia*, effects, and so forth.

Of course, the *loci* of *De Inventione* would guide the rhetor through a very similar process, looking for potential arguments in, for example, the name, nature, and habits of the person, Fabia, and, if were it applicable, the place, time, manner and so forth of the act in question. But the *Topica* differs from the earlier work in two particularly relevant ways: First, it turns from *loci* that are specific to rhetoric (or a particular species thereof) to ones that are universally applicable. While *De Inventione*, with its focus on forensic rhetoric, requires a person and an act, the major division of *loci* in the *Topica* is between matters internal and external to the subject, making it possible to explore any subject at all. Second, in placing the subject in a unified system rather than an open collection, the kind of inquiry recommended by the *Topica* has a very different effect on that subject and our understanding of it. Running through arguments that turn on Fabia's name or her habits, for example, draws our attention to those features of the person and invites us to consider those features as more operational, more germane to the case than others. The *loci* of the *Topica*, by contrast, articulate the subject into the topical system laid out in the work, building an understanding of the subject in terms that relate it to others. Every subject may be expressed and thus compared via the same general categories, and it is through these comparisons, rather than strictly the features themselves, that the argument is made. It is not just that Fabia did not meet the criterion for inheritance; it is that she does not belong to the *species* of wife who would. Or, as we see in the *locus* "Conjugates" (arguing from closely related words, very similar to etymology):

> [I]f we were defining rain-water as only that which we see collect from showers, Mucius would come to argue that because rain-water (*pluvia*) and rain (*pluere*) are "conjugate" words, all water which has risen because of rain should be excluded (from a neighbour's property)[73]

Even more clearly in this example, the argument turns not on the properties of the subject itself, but rather its relationship to others.

Both topical treatises lay out a program for inquiring into a subject in order to generate material for arguments. The *loci* of *De Inventione* focus on gathering potentially useful material on the features of the subject itself; the *loci* of the *Topica* formulate arguments in a way that places the subject in relation to others. The latter does not replace the former: *De Inventione* offers an openness that the more systematic *Topica* does not, allowing for the proliferation of new *loci* under which to collect material and thereby promoting a more adaptive and reciprocal engagement with the rhetorical realm of practice and particulars. The commonplace book, we will see, adopts both kinds of topics as resources for discovering, organizing, and enlarging subject matter.

While the *loci* served as resources for inventing arguments, Cicero assigned the *loci communes*—commonplaces—to a somewhat different inventional role: amplification.[74] The *loci communes* are neither prompts used to generate content, nor are they universal argumentative forms; they are complete arguments that are applicable to many different situations and that point to matters on which broad agreement (or ambivalence) is acknowledged.[75] Like the *loci*, they articulate shared investments, but they engage such investments not to search for argumentative content but to solidify the audience's support after the argument has been made. Thus, Cicero

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[73] De Inventione, VIII.38.

[74] "[I]n arguments the end is to give what is said the appearance of truth; in [commonplaces] (*loci communes*) although this should also be an object…the chief end is amplification." *De Inventione*, 2.51.

[75] De Inventione, 2.48.

relegates them to the conclusion.[76] As Sara Rubinelli explains, the *loci communes* are not a

source of new information, but rather a way to "put the audience in a favourable frame of mind

by presenting evaluations and interpretations of the facts at issue."[77] The *loci communes* are in

this sense a means of mediating between general particular, drawing from reservoirs of common

sentiment to lend force to arguments about particular cases.

Quite often, however, much of the inventional work is already done. Many *loci*

communes are, in effect, prefabricated arguments that the orator ostensibly need little more than

recite—for example, at the end of Cicero's discussion of disputes concerning whether the

defendant's actions were due to forces outside of their control:

> The defendant may lament the misfortune which has befallen one not because of
> his fault but from *force majeure*, enlarge on the power of fortune and the infirmity
> of mankind, and beg the jury to consider his intent and not the result. With all of
> which there should be combined a lament over his own tribulations and a
> denunciation of the cruelty of his opponents.[78]

While one could conceivably embellish this argument with details from the case, it could just as

easily be delivered as is. In fact, its general applicability leaves comparatively little room for

personalization: the orator is called upon to "enlarge on the power of fortune and the infirmity of

mankind" in order to draw attention *away* from the specifics of the case and the role of the

defendant.

In other instances, however, Cicero's recommendations are far more open-ended. In cases

where the defendant's action may be justified by its ends, for example, he offers a number of *loci*

communes to the defense, including one in which

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[76] *De Inventione*, 2.49: "In fact that is certainly the moment when it is permissible to say something when
some passage peculiar to the case has been developed with great care, and the spirit of the audience is being
refreshed for what is to come, or is being roused to passion now that the argument has been concluded."
[77] Rubinelli, 107.
[78] De Inventione, 2.102.

by a vivid verbal picture the event is brought before the eyes of the audience, so that they will think that they too would have done the same if they had been confronted with the same situation and the same cause for action at the same time.[79]

Here, Cicero leaves it to the orator to draw upon the details of the case and conjure a "vivid verbal picture" that renders the audience empathetic—a feat of which only a few are capable. As he writes in his introduction to the *loci communes*:

> [A]ll the ornaments of style…are lavished on [commonplaces] (*loci communes*), as well as everything which in the invention of matter or thought contributes to weight and grandeur. Therefore, though these topics are 'common' to many cases, they are not common to many orators. For they cannot be treated with elegance and dignity, as their very nature requires, except by those who through long practice have acquired a vast store of words and ideas.[80]

In this manner, Cicero conceives of the *loci communes* as facilitating a kind of invention that centers on eloquence—the skilled transformation of a generally applicable argument into one that is appropriately adorned for the situation. Like the *loci*, they offer points of departure, but the orator must draw from his or her "vast store of words and ideas"—and, in many instances, the particulars of the case—to produce an argument capable of moving the audience. And importantly, the key to such eloquence is *accumulation*: the store of words and ideas provides not only the materials, but also the verbal agility that makes such invention possible. The Renaissance commonplace book, we will see, becomes a tool for facilitating exactly this kind of accumulation, invention, and habit formation.

The *loci communes* should not, then, be dismissed as facilitating the simplistic regurgitation of prefabricated arguments that Aristotle associated with the sophists.[81] Like the

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[79] De Inventione, 2.78.
[80] De Inventione, 1.211.
[81] In *Sophistical Refutations*, an accompaniment to the *Topics*, Aristotle is at pains to distinguish his art of the topics from "sophistical" methods of teaching argumentation: "[T]hey would each give arguments…to be committed to memory, into which they thought arguments of their respective kinds could most often be fitted. That

loci, they serve in an adaptive, mediatory capacity—even more so when reconceptualized by Quintilian, as we will see in the following section. For now, it should simply be noted that the *loci* and the *loci communes*—the topics and the commonplaces—are distinct but related resources in Cicero that facilitate invention through mediation.

In summary, the Ciceronian *loci* are, like their Aristotelian counterparts, heuristics that mediate productively between self and other—the aims of the orator and the position of the audience—to generate effective arguments. But their material reorientation in *De inventione* (and their subsequent integration with the formal topics in *Topica*) makes them a more obvious predecessor to Renaissance commonplacing, illustrating how the embedded commitments of topical inquiry transform the practice of gathering content into a highly innovative and productive practice. Further, this focus of the material demands a more situated and incomplete conception of the *loci*—a requirement that, in Quintilian, becomes the basis for a more explicit view of the topics as an evolving, pragmatic set of heuristics. The same is true of the *loci communes*, complete arguments, gathered through inheritance and experience, which may be transformed to meet the needs of particular situations—a role that Quintilian expands upon as well.

2.2.3 Quintilian

It is in Quintilian that we begin to see the emergence of a *commonplacer*—one who is, through the cultivation of habit, proficient in adapting what is generally accepted to the details of

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is why the instruction they imparted to those who learned from them was quick but without art: for they believed the could educate by giving, not an art, but the products of the art" (34, 183b-184b).

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a particular case, facilitating—through a topically guided process of perceiving, mediating, and composing—the cooperative construction of common ground. While sometimes diminished as merely a teacher of rhetorical theory rather than a contributor,[82] Quintilian is crucial to Renaissance commonplacing precisely because he explicitly transformed topical inquiry (under which, after Cicero, one may include both the topics and the commonplaces—*loci* and *loci communes*) into a tool for educating—and, indeed, creating—ideal orators.[83]

Topical inquiry was useful to Quintilian principally because of the habits it engendered—most notably, responsiveness to the particulars of a given situation. Indeed, he argued "the all-important gift for an orator is a wise adaptability," for the rules of rhetoric are almost always dictated by the circumstances at hand.[84] In cultivating such adaptability, he identified not only the *loci* but also the *loci communes* as crucial tools. His treatise on rhetorical education, the *Institutio oratoria*, recommends both of these inventional resources, in each case with some reservations, as tools for teaching eloquence and wit through accumulation and creative imitation—an approach that laid the foundations for using commonplace books to teach composition in the Renaissance.

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[82] Bizzell and Herzberg summarize this view of Quintilian in their observation that his *Institution oratoria* "is often praised faintly as a masterful synthesis that adds little of importance to classical rhetorical theory" *The Rhetorical Tradition*, ed. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martins, 2001), 360.

[83] In his efforts to create ideal orators, Quintilian viewed himself as doing something entirely new. Quoting the Aeneid, he writes "Nothing before and nothing behind but the sky and the Ocean." While he sees Cicero as his closest consort in this quest, "even he, though the ship in which he entered these seas is of such size and so well found, begins to lessen sail and to row a slower stroke, and is content to speak merely of the kind of speech to be employed by the perfect orator. But my temerity is such that I shall essay *to form my orator's character* and to teach him his duties. Thus I have no predecessor to guide my steps and must press far, far on, as my theme may demand." Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria,* trans. Harold Edgeworth Butler. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1922), 12 pr 4, emphasis added.

[84] Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 2.13.1-3: "Let no one however demand from me a rigid code of rules such as most authors of textbooks have laid down, or ask me to impose on students of rhetoric a system of laws immutable as fate…If the whole of rhetoric could be thus embodied in one compact code, it would be an easy task of little compass: but most rules are liable to be altered by the nature of the case, circumstances of time and place, and by hard necessity itself. Consequently the all-important gift for an orator is a wise adaptability since he is called upon to meet the most varied emergencies."

To appreciate what is new in Quintilian, we may return to the four features discussed above—and, in particular, to the adaptive and generative nature of the topical inquiry. On one hand, Quintilian's *loci* are quite close to Cicero's in *De inventione*—they are similarly divided into attributes of person and act,[85] and they serve as mediatory heuristics for analyzing the case at hand and discovering arguments therein. But while Cicero's collection of *loci* was only implicitly incomplete, Quintilian, we will see, is adamant that the *loci* he lists *must* not be viewed as a comprehensive system, but as incomplete, adaptive, evolving. Further, while topical inquiry has helped to cultivate the faculties of rhetoric and dialectic since its inception,[86] Quintilian makes habit formation the centerpiece of his educational treatise, as well as the treatment of the topics and commonplaces therein. Consequently, we get a very different picture of what the topics generate. If Aristotle and Cicero's first commitment was, at least ostensibly, to generating arguments, topical inquiry as a means of generating arguments, Quintilian presents it as a means of generating habits and orators, *loci* and *loci communes*.

As vehicles for habit formation, Quintilian's *loci* train the eye and focus the gaze—a point he illustrates with a naturalistic metaphor that presages the role of the topics in early modern natural history:

> For just as…you will not succeed in finding a particular bird or beast, if you are ignorant of the localities where it has its usual haunts or birthplace…so not every kind of argument can be derived from every circumstance, and consequently our speech requires discrimination.[87]

Taken together, the *loci* constitute a kind of field guide that shows us both the places where we may look for arguments and the argumentative species we are likely to find there.

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[85] *Institutio Oratoria*, 5.8.4. See also Quintilian's own summary of the *loci* of *Institutio oratoria*: 5 10.94. For a more detailed and contextualized comparison of Cicero and Quintilian's *loci*, see Leff, "The Topics of Argumentative Invention", 32-33.

[86] E.g. Aristotle, *Topics*, VIII.14 164b.

[87] Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 5.10.21.

A corresponding critique quickly follows. Applying all of the *loci* to every situation—looking for suitable arguments in every place listed—facilitates not discrimination but its opposite. Such an approach is not only time-consuming, impractical, and even paralyzing; it also deludes students into "regarding themselves as having a perfect and absolute knowledge of the whole subject."[88] Collections of *loci* are necessarily incomplete, and for this reason Quintilian discourages his readers from relying too heavily on the theory of topics, pointing to instances in which the best argument originates from the details of the case itself, rather than one of the generally applicable *loci*.[89] His concern is that pupils will become consumed with the theory and neglect the far more important considerations of practice. There is a real danger, he maintains, in becoming so overwhelmed with the theory that one loses touch with one's natural faculties for observing what is relevant in a given situation.[90]

Quintilian's skepticism about the enterprise of topical inquiry closely tied to his overarching aim of cultivating "wise adaptability" in the budding orator. For, he states,

> the majority of proofs are to be found in the special circumstances of individual cases and have no connexion with any other dispute, and therefore while they are the strongest, are also the least obvious, since, whereas we derive what is common to all cases from general rules, *we have to discover for ourselves* whatever is peculiar to the case which we have in hand.[91]

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[88] Institutio Oratoria, 5.10.119.

[89] In the examples that Quintilian provides, arguments are found by turning to laws that pertain to the details of the case. (e.g. "For instance, in the case of the priest who having committed adultery desired to save *his own* life by means of the law which gave him the power of saving *one* life, the appropriate argument to employ against him would run as follows: 'You would save more than one guilty person, since, if you were discharged, it would not be lawful to put the adulteress to death.' For such an argument follows from the law forbidding the execution of the adulteress apart from the adulterer" (5.10.104). As the translator, Butler, notes, these laws are hypothetical, invented for pedagogical purposes.

[90] *Institutio Oratoria*, 5.10.101: "Consequently the majority of students, finding themselves lost in an inextricable maze, have abandoned all individual effort, including even that which their own wits might have placed within their power, as though they were fettered by certain rigid laws, and keeping their eyes fixed upon their master have ceased to follow the guidance of nature."

[91] *Institutio Oratoria*, 5.10.103, emphasis added.

Because particulars so often dictate the best approach to a situation, the goal of topical training cannot be merely to internalize a specific list of topics, but rather to acquire the *habits of inquiry* that make it possible to "discover for ourselves" the best places to begin.

In this manner, Quintilian states explicitly what is arguably implied in the disparity between Aristotle's dialectical and rhetorical topics: rhetoric's investment in the particular precludes the possibility of a universally applicable topical *system*. Topical theory, Quintilian reminds us, emerged out of practice and observation—the *loci* are both product and producer of a history of argument. When the focus is on practice rather than theory, training in the *loci* instills the student with a useful sense for this history, encouraging an inventive, contributory relationship with it:

> For the discovery of arguments was not the result of the publication of text-books,
> but every kind of argument was put forward before any rules were laid down, and
> it was only later that writers of rhetoric noted them and collected them for
> publication.[92]

The *loci* are argument strategies that have proven, *in practice*, to be relevant to a wide range of argumentative situations. They are not, in other words, drawn from the laws of nature; rather, they are an evolving and incomplete collection of points upon which debates often turn, drawn from the experience of rhetoricians whom the student is preparing to join.

This modest account of the topics is in some ways even more situated than Cicero's. Because *loci* claim general applicability, they cannot—and should not—identify every relevant aspect of each situation. In keeping with Quintilian's educational philosophy, value is placed first and foremost on flexibility and adaptation—on habits of inquiry rather than "a rigid code of rules."[93] Put briefly, what the *loci* offer are the habits that constitute rhetoric itself—in Aristotle's

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[92] Institutio Oratoria, 5.10.120.
[93] Institutio Oratoria, 2.13.1.

very familiar account: a facility for seeing in every situation the available means of persuasion. Thus, Quintilian writes:

> But it is only by constant practice that we can secure that, just as the hands of the musician, even though his eyes be turned elsewhere, produce bass, treble or intermediate notes by force of habit, so the thought of the orator should suffer no delay owing to the variety and number of possible arguments, but that the latter should present themselves uncalled and, just as letters and syllables require no thought on the part of a writer, so arguments should spontaneously follow the thought of the orator.[94]

The source of argumentative ingenuity is not an external system, but rather the orator's own faculties of perception, honed and made second nature through practice.

In addition to these rhetorical habits, Quintilian's ideal orator must acquire a "copious supply of words and matter" (respectively, *copia verborum* and *copia rerum*) from which to draw as different situations demand.[95] The practice of *copia*—which will become essential to Renaissance commonplacing—is the means by which the orator builds such a store of argumentative possibility. Memory is, of course, essential to this practice, but it should not be seen as the aim. Indeed, rote memorization impedes flexibility—as Quintilian puts it, "this practice is childish and involves thankless labour…it merely results in the assembly of a disorderly crowd of words, for the speaker to snatch the first that comes to hand."[96]

How, then, should one acquire a copious supply of words and matter? Quintilian addresses the acquisition of matter in a single clause—"the matter is necessarily either peculiar to the individual case, or at best common to only a few"—indicating that one cannot prepare their store in advance, but must instead populate it with the details of the case at hand.[97] His reticence, perhaps, is permitted by the handiness of Cicero's *De inventione* (which Quintilian

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[94] Institutio Oratoria, 5.10.125.
[95] Institutio Oratoria, 10.1.5.
[96] Institutio Oratoria, 10.1.7.
[97] Institutio Oratoria, 10.1.6.

covers in Book V), which facilitates exactly this kind of inquiry into the matters relevant to a particular case.[98] From this perspective, *copia rerum* may be seen as a means of discovering and amassing oratorical resources from a given situation—again, locating argumentative possibility in materials provided by an interlocutor or occasion.

Words, meanwhile, are considerably more flexible and may be gathered through proper training so that the orator has ready access to them, regardless of the situation. Such training, consistent with Quintilian's views on the merits of creative imitation, consists primarily of "reading and listening to the best writers and orators," so that students not only learn new words and their meanings, but also gain a sensibility about when and how to use such words.[99] As he explains,

> since some words are more literal, more ornate, more significant or euphonious than others, our orator must not merely be acquainted with all of them, but must have them at his fingers' ends and before his very eyes, so that when they present themselves for his critical selection, he will find it easy to make the appropriate choice.[100]

Here the dual emphasis on copiousness and selectivity is clear. *Copia* is as much an exercise in accumulation and memory as it is in nuance and discretion—the orator's "critical selection." In this sense, it too is implicated in the production of rhetorical habit. At the same time, the import of accumulation should not be overlooked. If the rhetorical habits discussed so far help to mediate between self and other—or, perhaps, between what the orator brings to the situation and what the situation demands—*copia* supplies the orator with a selection of materials with which

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[98] Operating under this assumption, I would argue that even in Quintilian we see early signs of *copia* as a systematic, topically driven process of generating abundance—something that becomes more explicit and formalized under Agricola (see section 2.2.5 of this dissertation).

[99] Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 10.1.8.

[100] Institutio Oratoria, 10.1.6.

to bridge this gap, a range of resources for connection upon which the rhetorical habits may operate.

For Quintilian, the *loci communes* play a similar role in simultaneously cultivating habits of perception, mediating between self and other, and providing fodder for argumentative invention. As discussed above, Cicero gave the *loci communes* a role in invention—particularly as it pertained to eloquence—and pointed to a "vast store of ideas and words," acquired through extensive training, as the prerequisite for such invention. But *De inventione* does little more than name these commonplaces, many of which are already complete and ready to be inserted, if discerningly, into a speech. It is in the *Institutio oratoria* that we get a clear, consistent, and explicit view of the *loci communes* as mediatory and adaptive heuristics aimed primarily at cultivating rhetorical habits.[101]

Like Cicero, but again more explicitly, Quintilian presents the *loci communes* as completed arguments that are useful in certain kinds of situations. As was typical at the time, they were primarily moral in nature; they were also, in Quintilian's account, to be drawn largely from experience—from courtroom disputes.[102] While selected for their portability, they were far from universal and had to be chosen with care, lest they "seem to have been tacked on to the speech, not interwoven in its texture, either because it is out of keeping with the circumstances or

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[101] This interpretation of Quintilian's treatment of *loci communes* is far from universal—even recent histories of commonplacing tend to portray Quintilian as championing "the judicious recycling of valuable truths and telling phrases." David Allan, *Commonplace Books and Reading in Georgian England*: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 37. See also Earle Havens, *Commonplace Books: A History of Manuscripts and Printed Books from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century*: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library New Haven, CT, 2001), 14. I find Leff's account particularly promising in its argument for the comparative "heuristic value" of Quintilian's *loci communes*. Still, this argument stems from his view of Cicero's *loci communes* as "finished material products." ("Commonplaces and Argumentation", 448). Having suggested in the prior section that a number of Cicero's *loci communes* function in the more heuristic capacity that Leff attributes to Quintilian, my position is that Quintilian and Cicero's treatments of the commonplaces differ in degree rather than kind.

[102] *Institutio Oratoria*, 2.4.22: "As to *commonplaces* (I refer to those in which we denounce vices themselves such as adultery, gambling or profligacy without attacking particular persons), they come straight from the courts and, if we add the name of the defendant, amount to actual accusations."

like most of its kind is inappropriately employed not because it is wanted, but because it is ready

for use."[103] Essential, then, to Quintilian's understanding of *loci communes* is his insistence that

they be not only selected, but also adapted in conversation with the context in which they are

deployed. Thus, he continues:

> Some speakers, for example, introduce the most long-winded commonplaces just
> for the sake of the sentiments they contain, whereas rightly the sentiments should
> spring from the context. Such disquisitions are at once ornamental and useful,
> only if they arise from the nature of the case.[104]

Again, the particulars of the case are at the heart of the inventional process. As in Cicero, only

the best orators are capable of discerning which *loci communes* are appropriate for the situation.

But for Quintilian, the *loci communes* are useful not only as a store of arguments that such

orators may apply; they are resources for creating the skilled orators—for cultivating wisdom

and adaptability. As was the case with *copia*, the aim of employing *loci communes* is not rote

memorization and replication, but flexible, perceptive adaptation.

Leff, drawing from Mary Carruthers, argues that this use of commonplaces illustrates the

inventive nature of memory that is often neglected in modern accounts, accounts that tend to

assume—or, at least, aim for—fidelity across multiple recollections.[105] Earlier accounts, by

contrast, often distinguish between verbal memory—the memorization of words, in which such

fidelity is possible—and the comparatively hazy and therefore more active memory of substance,

wherein the remembered object must be reconstituted time and time again. This latter kind of

memory is a process of repetition with a difference, where that difference is what drives

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[103] Institutio Oratoria, 2.4.30-31.
[104] Institutio Oratoria, 2.4.31-32.
[105] Leff, "Commonplaces and Argumentation," in particular 449-451.

adaptation, creativity, invention. In Leff's words, "what is stored in memory becomes equipment for enlarging the fund of knowledge and for building new constructs."[106]

Similarly, a commonplace or *locus communis* is not a single, stable argument, inserted time and time again into different contexts; it is rather an organic entity that evolves through deployment in these contexts. Or, as Leff puts it—in a manner that again hints at the role of commonplaces in early modern natural history—"the *loci communes* are not exercises designed to produce a static object, but to offer a concrete model for certain kinds of impure but practically useful arguments."[107] In contrast to Cicero, Quintilian does not present the reader with lists of *loci communes*, or even a single complete example—a testament, perhaps to what little value he places on any individual articulation. Instead, he tells us where to find commonplaces and how to use them, as well as how practice with them helps to cultivate the wise adaptability of which he speaks—the most important feature of the orator.[108] Much like *loci*, *loci communes* are evolving heuristics that engage the rhetor in mediation—not between general form and particular application, but between what has been said and what can be said.

Having briefly surveyed Quintilian's redeployment of inventional resources as pedagogical practices, I want to suggest that what Quintilian contributes to topical inquiry is not just an emphasis on habit, but a prioritization of habit above all else, and an expressed conviction, articulated in neither Aristotle nor Cicero, that the topics and commonplaces are historical, incomplete, evolving.[109] The pedagogical nature of the *Institutio oratoria* is a

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[106] Leff, "Commonplaces and Argumentation," 449-450.
[107] Leff, "Commonplaces and Argumentation," 451.
[108] Institutio Oratoria, 2.13.1-3.
[109] Indeed, Quintilian appears to reject Cicero's later attempts to devise a unified and generally applicable system of places. *Institutio Oratoria*, V.10.100: "it is not sufficient to classify them generically in our instructions, since from each of them there arises an infinite number of arguments, while it is in the very nature of things impossible to deal with all their individual species. Those who have attempted to perform this latter task have

testament to the pragmatic spirit of topical inquiry—and indeed, rhetoric itself—under Quintilian: the specific rules and recommendations in the treatise are far less important than the practices they facilitate and the wise adaptability they instill.[110]

2.2.4 Medieval *Florilegia*

Topical inquiry was dissociated and redirected in the Middle Ages, as knowledge and social order became the province of the Church, and Greco-Roman learning was devalued. The classical works that retained some influence were appropriated for primarily religious purposes, so that rhetoric and dialectic, once aimed squarely at the probable, became tools for discovering and speaking about truth through scriptural exegesis and reasoning from axioms. *De differentiis topicis,* Boethius's particularly influential synthesis of the Aristotelian and Ciceronian topics subordinated rhetoric to dialectic and dialectic to logic, returning to an entirely formal conception of the topics. In this manner, the medieval topics continued to develop in the rich tradition of dialectical logic (well surveyed by Eleonore Stump[111]), but had little effect on the aspects of Renaissance commonplacing that interest us.

At the same time, the practice of gathering and organizing content for arguments became a material process of compilation in the medieval genre of *florilegia*—ancestors to the commonplace book that collected flowers of wisdom, typically from early Christian texts and, of

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exposed themselves in equal degree to two disadvantages, saying too much and yet failing to cover the whole ground."

[110] Thus, Quintilian writes, "I do not…propose to lay down rules for commonplaces, a task requiring infinite detail, but merely to sketch out the general lines and method to be followed by the orator. The method once indicated, it is for the individual orator not merely to employ his powers on its application, *but on the invention of similar methods as the circumstances of the case may demand*. For it is impossible to deal with every kind of case, even if we confine ourselves to those which have actually occurred in the past without considering those which may occur in the future." *Institutio Oratoria*, 5.1.3, emphasis added.

[111] In particular, Eleonore Stump, *Dialectic and Its Place in the Development of Medieval Logic* (Cornell University Press, 1989).

lesser importance, classical works on moral philosophy. My aim in this section is to show, on one hand, how the genre was informed by topical inquiry and, on the other hand, how it reshaped such inquiry by situating it in a physical book. Further, I will attempt to draw parallels between *florilegia* and commonplace books, while also elucidating their differences.

The excerpts collected in *florilegia* functioned much like the *loci communes*, but the selection and collection process was considerably more focused. First, the authority of sources— a factor of little import to classical rhetoricians—became a central concern and source of rhetorical power in the Middle Ages. Further, because *florilegia* were physical books, medieval compilers placed a great deal of emphasis on arrangement. The aim, put briefly, was to collect wise and eloquently articulated extracts from the most authoritative sources and arrange them in a manner that would amplify their powers and possibility. This endeavor was most clearly inspired by Seneca's recommendation to "follow…the example of bees, who flit about and cull the flowers that are suitable for producing honey, and then arrange and assort in their cells all that they have brought in gathering nectar from all the best flowers."[112] The bee becomes the preferred metaphor for characterizing—and guiding—the work of compilers, appearing in works from Macrobius's *Saturnalia* (roughly 400 CE) to Thomas of Ireland's *Manipulus florum* (1306) to Erasmus's *Ciceronianus* (1528), before resurfacing in Bacon's famous analogy for the natural historian-as-mediator in his *Novum Organum* (1620).[113] Seneca's metaphor calls to mind a

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[112] Seneca, *Epistles 66-92*, trans. Richard M. Gummere. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920), 84.3.

[113] A fuller account of the bee metaphor in reference to commonplacing is given throughout Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*—see for example 12-15 and 18-20; Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*, trans., ed. Thomas Fowler. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1878)*,* I.95: "Those who have treated of the sciences have been either empirics or dogmatical. The former like ants only heap up and use their store, the latter like spiders spin out their own webs. The bee, a mean between both, extracts matter from the flowers of the garden and the field, but works and fashions it by its own efforts. The true labor of philosophy resembles hers, for it neither relies entirely or principally on the powers of the mind, nor yet lays up in the memory the matter afforded by the experiments of natural history and mechanics in its raw state, but changes and works it in the understanding." A more general account of the bee metaphor in

process of selecting, arranging, and producing that, in subsequent iterations, becomes a remarkably apt characterization of the kind of invention that topically organized notebooks facilitate. In medieval *florilegia*, selection becomes an explicitly moral endeavor; arrangement becomes creative mediation; production becomes invention.

Encyclopedic collections of excerpts existed in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, though their influence on commonplace books was, at best, extremely indirect.[114] Compilations that may be viewed more clearly as ancestors of the commonplace book begin to appear in the twelfth century.[115] Particularly influential compilations from this period include the *Florilegium gallicum* and *Florilegium angelicum.* These works, like many early *florilegia*, were organized by author—compilers would simply enter excerpts as they encountered them through reading.[116] In many instances, however, the compiler modified the excerpts in important ways— consider, for example, Goddu and Rouse's descriptions of these modifications in the *Florilegium angelicum*:

> In compiling the *Florilegium* the author modified the extracts grammatically to form complete sentences. He eliminated extraneous or incompatible material and occasionally simplified the grammatical structure to make the extract more direct. In so doing he removed from the quotations any trace of the context in which they were set originally, rendering them usable in virtually any situation. In the process, what were once component parts of integral and structured thoughts became brief, pithy moral precepts, epigrams at best.[117]

By modifying extracts in these ways, the compiler is, in effect, *creating* commonplaces— arguments usable in a range of contexts—out of more situated passages. In later *florilegia*, organized thematically, we see a complementary move: re-contextualizing bits of wisdom—

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accounts of commonplacing is given throughout in Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*—see for example 12-15 and 18-20.
      [114] Moss, 24n1.
      [115] Moss, 24.
      [116] Moss, 25.
      [117] A.A. Goddu and Richard H. Rouse, "Gerald of Wales and the Florilegium Angelicum," *Speculum* 52, no. 3 (1977), 491-492.

often drawn from other *florilegia,* as was common practice—in the service of moral arguments and themes.[118]

One of the earliest and most important works to perform this kind of re-contextualiztion was John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* (1159). The *Policraticus* is a thematically organized treatise on political philosophy that interweaves excerpts from Holy Scripture, Christian writings, ancient poetry, and philosophy (again, largely gleaned from *florilegia*[119]) to construct and illustrate arguments about right action and, in particular, the proper conduct of the prince.[120] Because John integrates these excerpts in prose rather than simply listing them, his work is better understood as a digest than a *florilegium*, though it remains an influential example of the creative compilation that comes to characterize the latter genre. Consider the chapter titled "That the prince is a minister of priests and their inferior; and what it is for rulers to perform their ministry faithfully," wherein John explores and defines the religious duties of the prince by synthesizing quotations, arguments, and historical and religious anecdotes from a wide range of sources—for example:

> Furthermore, by the law of reason, whoever wills is he who nullifies, and he who can confer rights is he who can withdraw them. Did Samuel not impose a sentence of deposition upon Saul by reason of disobedience, and substitute for him the humble son of Jesse atop the kingdom? If the properly constituted prince administers faithfully the office undertaken, such honour and such reverence are exhibited for him as to match that superiority which the head has over the other members of the body. In addition, he administers his office faithfully when, mindful of his special situation, he remembers to cherish the unique character of the community subject to him, and when he is cognizant that he does not owe his life to himself but to others, and when he allots things to them according to the order of charity. Therefore, he owes the whole of himself to God, most to his country, much to his parents and relatives, and less (although still a little) to

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[118] Goddu and Rouse, "Gerald of Wales," 488-489.

[119] Cary J. Nederman, Editor's Introduction to *Policraticus*, trans. Cary J. Nederman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), xx.

[120] On the place of John of Salisbury in the commonplacing tradition, see also Moss, 18-21.

foreigners. [Cicero, *De officiis,* i.45.160] He is thus duty bound 'to the wise and to the foolish, to the insignificant and to the great'. [Romans 1:14.][121]

John makes his case by referencing not only Biblical material, but also ancient wisdom, giving every excerpt that he digests a distinct moral thrust that both reveals new interpretive possibilities for the original, and lends nuance, eloquence, and above all authority to his argument.

Thus the *Policraticus*, while not a *florilegium,* exhibits many of the features that characterize medieval excerpting practices going forward.[122] Chief among these features is an emphasis on the collection and arrangement of excerpts as a moral endeavor. Gathering is also a process of selecting, rejecting, and arranging, and so, John suggests, one should proceed mindfully and arrange their extracts according to the themes prescribed by Christianity: "Whatever we have acquired from our varied reading, let us convert to the benefit of virtue, in such a way that our rational judgement arranges it all into a coherent order of things to be done."[123] John is very open about the active role of the compiler in transforming what they collect. At the same time, by anchoring this transformation in virtue, he locates the creative work of the compiler as entirely in mediation—the negotiation between what was said and what virtue would have us say.

As in antiquity, the topics are what facilitate this negotiation. Reconstituted as moral heads, the topics supplant authors as the organizational scheme of *florilegia*, effectively transforming all note taking into a form of topical mediation. To enter an extract of any kind in a

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[121] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, trans. Cary J Nederman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 33.

[122] Moss, 18-20.

[123] Quoted in Moss, 19.

florilegium so organized, one must first place it beneath a topical head, thereby rearticulating it as exemplary of some a particular moral theme.

For our purposes, this turn to thematic organization marks *the* crucial shift in the history of *florilegia*, the moment in which excerpting becomes an inherently topical endeavor. As the organizing principle of *florilegia*, the topics can no longer be thought of as inert resources for storing and recalling content; they become heuristics, leading compilers and users alike in interpreting and characterizing excerpts in mediatory, generative ways. And importantly, while these heads were typically derived from Christian precepts and themes, the specific list of topics used varied from collection to collection, depending on the investments of the compiler, the works being consulted, and so forth—a hint that what is being generated is not only new content and new ways of seeing, but also new topics or topical schemes themselves.

This turn to topically organized *florilegia* accompanied a more general movement in the Late Middle Ages toward *florilegia* driven by—and developed for—practical use, particularly as aids for composing sermons. Especially influential among these works was Thomas of Ireland's *Manipulus florum* (1306), which aimed at giving the user a large bank of authoritative quotations with which to compose sermons.[124] These quotations, primarily from the Church Fathers and doctors, but also the occasional ancient, were collected under 266 alphabetically organized topical heads, which, in Thomas's estimation, covered the matters that most frequently arose in sermons—virtues, sins, and other religious themes.[125] So for example, under "A," we see the headings *Abstinentia*, *Amor*, *Angelus, Antichristus, Apostoli,* and so forth.[126] It is worth restating that such collections of topics were not uniform across the *florilegia*. While clearly informed by

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[124] Richard H. Rouse and Mary A. Rouse, Preachers, Florilegia and Sermons: Studies on the Manipulus Florum of Thomas of Ireland: PIMS, 1979), 117.
[125] Rouse and Rouse, Preachers, Florilegia and Sermons, 117.
[126] For a complete list, see Moss, 40.

a long tradition of religious inquiry, they should be seen as emerging out of the compiler's experience with that tradition. Across the extraordinarily variegated field of *florilegia*, the adaptive, open-ended nature of the topics is on full display.

What separates the *Manipulus florum* from earlier works, including John of Salisbury's, is its primary role as a reference book and tool for composition. Instead of reading the entire book as a compendium of moral wisdom, individuals—most notably preachers—could use it to quickly locate all of the most eloquent and authoritative insights on a particular topic for use in their own studies and writings. As Rouse and Rouse observe, this orientation toward utility distinguished the *Manipulus florum* from many of the *florilegia* that preceded it: it was designed to be searched rather than read, and to serve as "a mode to approach" other works, rather than an "end in itself."[127] In this sense, it was much closer in function to the commonplace book—indeed, it was the only *florilegium* to be republished with any significance in the centuries that followed.[128]

Here one might pause to reflect on the changing nature of commonplaces. Cicero's *loci communes* are widely applicable and resonant arguments that the skilled orator may embellish into something eloquent and appropriate for the circumstances. For Quintilian, they are largely moral arguments of recognized efficacy, taken from courtroom experience, which may be refashioned for use in new situations—albeit with the primary aim of cultivating the wise adaptability of the orator.[129] In medieval *florilegia*, excerpts serve as commonplaces to the extent that they are eloquent, authoritative, and may be moved productively into new contexts (sometimes after being decontextualized during the excerpting process, as with the *Florilegim*

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[127] Rouse and Rouse, Preachers, Florilegia and Sermons: Studies on the Manipulus Florum of Thomas of Ireland, 3.

[128] See Moss, 39.

[129] Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 2.4.22.

angelicum). In the Renaissance, we will see, commonplaces comprise a vast selection of eloquently articulated wisdom, taken from the best authors, and opened up via topical inquiry to produce an abundance of argumentative possibilities. What remains constant through all of these iterations is something that was present even in Aristotle's account of the topics: the movement between general and particular as the engine of invention, guided by a commitment to the acceptable. What changes are the strategies for this kind of movement and the grounds of acceptability.

Later *florilegia* enact a novel integration of the *loci* and *loci communes* that gives rise to many of the essential characteristics of the commonplace book. The material *loci* of the Romans (particularly the moral *loci* of deliberative rhetoric) are refashioned according to moral themes taken from Christianity and used to collect, organize, and recall what are effectively moral commonplaces. In using topics as topical heads—as organizing principles—these collections facilitated the composition of persuasive arguments by making it possible to quickly access all of the most eloquent and/or authoritative passages one had read on a given subject. More significantly, the use of pre-determined heads shaped the way readers gathered and interpreted texts, leading them to focus on particular themes in their reading, and, again, to interpret excerpts in terms of the headings under which they were categorized. (As in the *Policraticus*, it was not uncommon, for example, for compilers to creatively appropriate the eloquent wisdom of antiquity's pagan moral philosophers to bolster Christian argument.[130]) Further, by organizing passages under themes, it became possible to use those passages to explore each other—in the

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[130] See, for example, John of Salisbury's use of Aristotle and Plutarch to explicate and support Job 28:12-13 in V.6 of the *Policraticus*.

sermon rhetoric facilitated by later *florilegia*, the kinds of transformations apparent in the *Policraticus* became formalized as a method for scriptural exegesis.[131]

In some respects, this kind of activity is quite familiar within the tradition of topical inquiry: topical heads draw together what is known or asserted by others, finding in it—or building from it—a place upon which to stake out an argument of one's own. But as physical books, topically organized *florilegia* also entail a pivotal transformation of the topics. As with commonplace books, *florilegia* serve as artificial memory stores, wherein the topics not only generate, but accrete. On the page, commonplaces are simultaneously accumulated and aligned within a shared space—or, more accurately, *place*. While the ancients offered a comparatively compact collection of commonplaces to remember and reinvent, analogs from the Middle Ages, no longer bound by the memory of the orator, are characterized by their abundance—*florilegia* were often massive books.

Such abundance, combined with the materiality of *florilegia*, gives rise to another crucial development in the history of commonplace books. Thus far, the resources of topical inquiry have been light, portable—frameworks, suggestions, relatively brief quotations. Recall Leff's account of Quintilian's *loci communes* as models for useful arguments rather than "exercises designed to produce a static object."[132] In notebooks, while the goal may be preparation, this "static object" begins to take shape. Whereas the transformation facilitated by the classical topics appears as a lineage, a series articulated one frame at a time, the topical heads of *florilegia* facilitate a kind of rounding out, producing, through the accumulation of perspectives and expressions, an object—neither static nor lightweight, but rhetorical, heavy with possibility.

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[131] An especially clear example from John of Salisbury appears in the chapter of the *Policraticus* referenced in the prior note: John breaks the text into its grammatical components and explores each with a range of other excerpts. For a more detailed account of this process and its influence on sermon rhetoric, see Moss, 42-43.

[132] Leff, "Commonplaces and Argumentation," 451.

Such practices owe a great deal to the nature *florilegia*, but they are also indebted to the tradition of topical inquiry described in the preceding sections. Beyond mediating between self and other through an emphasis on the acceptable—in this case defined in terms of authority—*florilegia* employ the topics as a literal organizational and conceptual framework: they are written on the page, and as such, they function as productive heuristics that not only agitate and transform what they seek to categorize, but also compile it, amass it, allowing different iterations of a particular theme do work upon each other. In *florilegia* and their Renaissance descendants, headings generated by the compiler collect an abundance of commonplaces from a range of sources, inviting a consideration of their relations to one another—and, importantly, to one's own thoughts. Finally, *florilegia* are generative, producing collections of topical heads and inventing religious arguments—imaging what can be said from what has been said.

Medieval rearticulations of the *loci* and *loci communes* therefore continued their role as aids for rhetorical invention, wherein the former serve as heads under which to gather, organize, and examine the latter. But while *florilegia*, as collections of wisdom excerpted primarily from religious authorities, helped to structure and support moral arguments, Renaissance commonplace books facilitated argumentative invention in a much deeper and broader sense: by gathering numerous ways of approaching a particular topic, they cultivated an awareness of perspective and a readiness to expound upon any theme in any number of ways, depending on the particular situation. The goal of commonplace books was less an authoritative exposition of truth than it was a facility with language, a readiness to respond, and above all, a capacity for multiplying—and choosing among—persuasive possibilities.

2.2.5 Renaissance Progenitors of the Commonplace Book: Agricola and Erasmus

If in classical rhetoric, the *loci* and *loci communes* functioned independently as resources for invention, in medieval *florilegia*, the former assumed the role of sorting and collecting the latter (or analogs thereof). In Renaissance commonplace books, this budding engagement between the two kinds of places became more sophisticated, as the *loci* took on a more active role in shaping the commonplaces they gathered. For our purposes, two northern European humanists—Rodolphus Agricola and Desiderius Erasmus—are particularly central to this shift. Both Agricola and Erasmus proposed programs for teaching argumentative invention that were rooted in topical inquiry and performed in *florilegium*-style notebooks, and both may be considered originators of the Renaissance commonplace book. Ultimately, Erasmus's vision is closest to the commonplace books described at the start of this chapter. But Agricola's powerful reintegration of the formal and material topics is what transforms excerpt collecting into commonplacing—the topically driven rhetorical practice of *copia* that Erasmus develops.[133]

This reintegration takes place in Agricola's *De formando studio* (1484) a short but widely read pedagogical work that outlines a program for studying philosophical argumentation.[134] This program—a tripartite sequence of reading and analyzing texts, memorizing those texts, and transforming them to compose new arguments—relies heavily upon notebooks of quotations. The distinctive note-taking practices that Agricola espouses—and their centrality to his educational program—reflect the decade he spent in Italy, where *florilegia*-style notebooks were widely used by humanists to teach Latin grammar and eloquence. Agricola's contribution to this

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[133] For an especially thorough account of Agricola's highly systematic reintegration of the dialectical and rhetorical topics, see Mack, *Renaissance Argument*.
[134] Havens, Commonplace Books, 28.

tradition lies in his productive systematization of commonplacing practices through their integration with topical inquiry and, in particular, the dialectical topics.[135]

Like medieval *florilegia*, Agricola's notebooks help the student read, analyze, and memorize written wisdom (though in his case, primarily that of classical authors). But their role in facilitating argumentative invention reveals an important point of departure. Agricola's method for collecting subject matter in notebooks encouraged juxtaposing and cross-referencing texts in a way that produced novel insights. While compilers of traditional *florilegia* struggled to deal with excerpts that fit under multiple heads, Agricola saw these once-troublesome areas of overlap as resources for invention.[136] Each topical head brings out something new; each conflict pushes the reader/writer to consider new associations and, from them, argumentative possibilities.

This generative provocation becomes a full-fledged system for composing arguments when one follows Agricola's recommendation to use it alongside his treatise on dialectic, *De inventione dialectica* (1479). Beyond using the materially oriented moral heads as heuristics for interpreting and reconceptualizing excerpts, Agricola shows how the topics in this treatise (including the familiar topics of genus, species, cause, effect, adjacents, etc.) can be used to amplify one's understanding of the matter at hand—and how the resulting bounty of material may be used to compose new arguments.[137] As an example, he considers the question of whether the philosopher should take a wife, explaining that one should separate out each term—the philosopher, the wife—and run it through the topics, each of which will reveal new aspects of the

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[135] Agricola's list of topics drew from Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, and Boethius—see Mack, *Renaissance Argument*, 147. For comparisons of Agricola and the Italian humanists, see Havens, 25-26; and Moss, 75.
[136] Moss, Printed Commonplace-Books, 75-77.
[137] The topics of *De inventione dialectica* are adapted from those of Aristotle, Cicero, and Boethius,

term that may be useful for constructing arguments.[138] In Agricola's assessment, the philosopher may be viewed as, among other things, a man (genus); a Stoic, Epicurean, or Peripatetic (species); one associated with paleness, leanness, shivering, uprightness of morals, and so forth (adjacents); one who studies, stays up late, works, and/or endeavors to improve human life (actions).[139] From this reservoir of predicates, one may develop a sense of "the philosopher" that is compatible (or incompatible, depending on the side one wishes to argue) with a similarly developed sense of "the wife."

In this manner, we begin to comprehend a thing by exploring its relationship to other things—relationships that are figured through the dialectical topics and that give us wealth of different ways to present the thing in question, depending on the argument we wish to make. Agricola illustrates this process with a physical metaphor:

> [B]y the prompting of the topics…we are enabled to turn our minds around the
> things themselves and perceive whatever in each of them is convincing and
> suitable for what our speech sets out to teach.[140]

To explore the persuasive possibilities of a thing, that is, we examine it from different angles, not unlike one begins to comprehend an object by turning it around in their hands—prodding, tracing, comparing, contrasting. The practice being described is a highly methodical form of *copia*, where the dialectical topics serve as the engine for discovery and accumulation. As Terence Cave argues, under Agricola, dialectical invention becomes "an art of *copia*," giving *copia* a "technical status" not apparent in earlier accounts.[141]

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[138] No English translations of Agricola's *De inventione dialectica* currently exist. I am therefore indebted to detailed accounts of this section in Mack (130-131) and Moss (78).

[139] This is a partial list, drawn from Mack's more comprehensive summary and translation of Agricola's topical investigation of the philosopher. Mack, 130-131.

[140] *De inventione dialectica*, 2, translated in Mack, 139.

[141] Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance*: Clarendon Press Oxford, 1979), 14. Cave notes that while both Cicero and Quintilian discuss *copia*, neither does so especially methodically. For Cicero, *copia* indicated a style, more than it did a method for achieving it. And while Quintilian

While this process bears some resemblance to the inventional practices in Cicero's *De inventione*, where one generates arguments by considering different facets of a particular case, the general philosophical arguments with which Agricola was concerned have no case upon which to draw. That is, when debating whether the philosopher should marry, we do not have a specific philosopher in mind, but must instead draw upon the constellation of common and accepted associations that constitute "the philosopher" in popular consciousness. Undoubtedly, many of these associations spring readily to the arguer's mind. But a much fuller sense of the concept's possibilities may be gained by turning, as Moss observes, to one's commonplace book.[142]

In an additional departure from the classical tradition, the content of arguments ("the philosopher," for example) resides not in the world or even in one's mind, but rather on the pages of the commonplace book—as the product of topically guided inquiry. While commonplace books may be thought of as a storehouse of *endoxa* not unlike Aristotle's tables of knowledge from written works, their topical heads are not just headings that aid in information retrieval; like—and in conjunction with—the formal topics, these headings actively and explicitly do work upon the excerpts they collect. The placement of an excerpt beneath a topical head is not, in other words, just a flag in the ground—a reminder of where you placed something so you might take it up again—but an argument, a declaration of new possibilities for both excerpt and head, systematized through the dialectical topics. Commonplaces in this sense are both the fruits of topical inquiry and inventional resources themselves—generative, mediatory

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stressed the importance of acquiring an abundance of matter and words, in Cave's view he "dismisses" the former as particular to the case and treats the latter in a "brief and relatively unsystematic" manner (7). My own reading viewed Quintilian's treatment of *copia* as a somewhat more serious endeavor than Cave suggests, but not in a way that detracts from Agricola's originality in systematizing the practice.

    [142] Moss, 78.

heuristics that are at once generally applicable and subject-specific, widely accepted and continually transforming.

Agricola's topical inquiry—shaped by Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, among others, and performed in *florilegium*-style notebooks—can be seen as synthesizing the many approaches to the topics we've encountered so far, primarily for the purpose of philosophical argumentation. The topics are what direct our inquiry into the matter at hand—the material topics as topical heads that designate and stabilize our objects of inquiry, the dialectical topics as a program of inquiry that guides us in asking questions of these objects. The notebook, as a space for compiling and organizing our findings, is both a reservoir of possible (if at times conflicting) answers to these questions—excerpts from esteemed authors—as well as a site in which these answers are explored and transformed by the topics. In this manner, Agricola rejoins the formal and the material topics—and more deeply integrates them with the commonplaces—in physical notebooks, creating what may be rightly called a commonplace book.

Erasmus, too, prescribed notebooks as resources for argumentative invention, drawing extensively from his predecessors—in particular, Quintilian and Agricola (in the case of the latter, likely more than he acknowledged).[143] But while Agricola's approach to invention was rooted in dialectic and aimed at legitimacy, Erasmus's drew more extensively from rhetoric and aimed at accumulation—a shift that Moss characterizes as a turn "from proof by argument to proof by example."[144]

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[143] While Erasmus regularly paid homage to Agricola, he nevertheless maintained that he had not encountered his *De inventione dialectica* before the first publication of *De copia*. For an extended account of why one should regard this claim with at least some suspicion (though without necessarily alleging deliberate deception), see Mack, 305-311.

[144] Moss, 108.

Erasmus's pedagogical reform was premised not upon a logical system, but rather upon habits of invention, developed through the imitation of exemplars. The whole stress of teaching," he argues, "must be laid upon a close yet wide study of the greater writers."[145] Rather than focus on rules, his educational program, briefly described below, steeps the student in diverse expressions of eloquence. [146] Similarly, he looks askance at scholastic logic and dialectic, deeming the latter "an elusive maiden, a Siren, indeed, in quest of whom a man may easily suffer intellectual shipwreck."[147] Rather than set off in pursuit of certainty, Erasmus maintains that we should focus on cultivating the habits conducive to eloquence, responsiveness, flexibility—the "wise adaptability" that Quintilian prized in the orator.[148] And to acquire such habits, one must "write, write, and again, write"—in one's commonplace book.[149]

Erasmus's commonplace-centered program for instruction, outlined in *De ratione studii* (1511), leads the pupil from imitation to original composition, all the while articulating them into a culture of eloquence through excerpting. Students begin to fashion their first commonplace books by copying selections from their instructor's—the most eloquent passages from the finest classical philosophers, poets, orators, historians, geographers and the like. As with Quintilian, excerpts from such works are more means than ends in themselves; they teach grammar and

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[145] Desiderius Erasmus, "De Ratione Studii," in *Desiderius Erasmus Concerning the Aim and Method of Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904), 8.

[146] Rules have no place in early training in composition, "[f]or it is not by learning rules that we acquire the power of speaking a language, but by daily intercourse with those accustomed to express themselves with exactness and refinement, and by the copious reading of the best authors." "De Ratione Studii," 3. And while Erasmus acknowledges that the rules of grammar should be taught to more advanced students, he insists that they be illustrated with quotations ("De Ratione Studii," 7).

[147] "De Ratione Studii," 4.

[148] Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 2.13.2. For Erasmus's view of *copia* as a faculty, see Desiderius Erasmus, *On Copia of Words and Ideas*, trans. Donald B. King and H. David Rix. (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2005), 1.9.

[149] "De Ratione Studii," 3. Erasmus is not entirely opposed to including dialectic or logic in teaching composition—in the same discussion, he permits the use of Aristotle while categorically rejecting the "verbiage of the schools." And, as I discuss in detail below, the dialectical topics become resources for accumulating subject matter in *De copia*.

usage of course, but more than that, they provide students with a rich and expansive experience of style that becomes the basis for a sensibility. Beginners simply record these "striking passages" verbatim in their notebooks;[150] intermediate students are invited to play with the text in structured ways: paraphrasing passages, rewriting them in different styles, translating Greek texts to Latin, and so forth.[151] When the pupil is deemed ready to compose their own work, Erasmus refers the educator to Cicero and Quintilian's instruction on oratory.[152] The primary end of commonplacing, it should be clear, is not the commonplace book, but the rhetor—or, more precisely, the rhetorical sensibilities of one who has experienced the range of ways a given topic may be approached and who is prepared to present each topic anew as novel occasions arise. The end, in other words, is eloquence.

To appreciate how excerpting into commonplace books, as a form of imitation, promoted a capacity for creative transformation seen at later stages of Erasmus's educational program, one might turn to his famous treatise on accumulation—in Peter Mack's estimation, "probably the most studied of all Renaissance textbooks"—*De copia* (1512).[153] *De copia*, is, in effect, a book-length work dedicated to formalizing the practice of amassing the "copious store of words and things" that Quintilian briefly described in Book X his *Institutio oratoria*.

In the first book of *De copia*, Erasmus shows the reader how to use rhetorical figures and tropes to acquire an abundance of words. The aim of such abundance is eloquence, acquired through a systematic exploration of linguistic possibility. As part of his instruction, Erasmus shows us how to produce a copious store of ways to say "Your letter has delighted me very much," presenting the reader with the fruits of a process of division and multiplication much like

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[150] "De Ratione Studii," 4.
[151] "De Ratione Studii," 8.
[152] "De Ratione Studii," 9
[153] Mack, 305.

Agricola's. For each term, he applies a slew of inventional resources—in this case, not the dialectical topics, but figures and tropes—to generate a list of variations ("letter," for example, becomes "epistle" [synonym], "little letter" [heterosis], "written sheet" [synecdoche], and so forth), which he then combines into a massive and extremely colorful collection of permutations, from the pithy ("Your epistle has cheered me exceedingly") to the purple ("What clover is to bees, what willow boughs are to goats, what honey is to the bear, your letter is to me.")[154] While at first glance this exercise borders on the absurd, Erasmus makes clear that his advice concerns not how to speak or write, but rather how to train the mind.[155] Eloquence, in his view, does not consist of mere linguistic variation; as we will see, it depends instead upon one's ability to inquire into and appreciate the full possibilities of a certain word and to choose among them the most essential, the most apt.

Erasmus does not limit this kind of inquiry to words. The second book of *De copia* outlines eleven methods for amplifying subject matter, the last of which is particularly relevant to our inquiry into commonplacing. It is under this method, concerning "proofs and arguments," that we find cursory treatments Cicero's categories for topics, *ex personis and ex negotiis*, though they are confined to the realm of forensic rhetoric, as well as topics that apply to all speeches—namely, the dialectical topics of genus, species, property, and the like.[156] At first glance, Erasmus appears to invoke the latter more formal topics primarily to dismiss them, offering only a halfhearted gesture toward their possible use: "Whoever trains himself for eloquence ought to examine individual places and go over them in detail to see what he can elicit

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[154] Erasmus, *De Copia*, 1.33.

[155] As Erasmus writes of his discussion on *copia* more generally, "I am not prescribing how one should write and speak, but am pointing out what to do for training, where, as everyone knows, all things ought to be exaggerated." *De Copia*, 1.4.

[156] For example, *De Copia*, 2.3, 46: "we do not just set forth a bare fact, but recount also the underlying causes," or 2.5, 47: "we do not state a thing simply, but set it forth to be viewed as though portrayed in color on a tablet, so that it may seem that we have painted, not narrated, and that the reader has seen, not read."

from them."[157] But certain classes of these topics reappear in the account that follows, as tools for generating, organizing, and relating a far more powerful resource: the *exemplum*.

At the heart of the eleventh method, and in fact the entire second book, are *exempla*: parables, proverbs, and the like, which may be used "not only for producing belief but also for embellishing and illustrating, for enriching and amplifying subject matter."[158] Dialectical topics, with their origins in predication, are the means by which one relates these *exempla* to the matter at hand—or, the means by which one articulates that matter in terms of *exempla*—much like we see in Agricola. So while these topics appear to be almost an afterthought, their role in transforming and multiplying argumentative content—and, specifically, commonplaces recorded in notebooks—remains.

One acquires *exempla* through a process of exhaustive reading and systematic note taking, facilitated by a commonplace book. Anyone who seeks to join the ranks of the learned must, Erasmus stresses, "read through every type of writer…thoroughly once in [their] life," recording *exempla* in a commonplace book as they go. Before beginning, students are to organize their commonplace books with topical heads of their choosing—not only those concerning virtue and vice but also "those things that are especially important in human affairs" and "those that…come up most often in persuasion."[159] So while these notebooks at first appear almost indistinguishable from medieval *florilegia*, Erasmus has vastly expanded the possibilities for the material topics, so that they now include a suite of practical and situated considerations.

How does one generate such a list of topics? Erasmus invites his readers to use their own judgment, while referring them to headings employed by Cicero, Valerius Maximus, Aristotle,

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[157] *De Copia* 2.11, 67.
[158] *De Copia* 2.11, 67.
[159] *De Copia*, 2.11, 87.

St. Thomas, and Pliny.[160] In all, he presents three kinds of headings: material topics related to virtue and vice, material topics indicating remarkable classes of *exempla*, and commonplaces themselves.[161] His illustrations of classes of *exempla* tend toward the extraordinary and anomalous and are to be paired with their opposites—for example, "extraordinary eloquence" and "the inability to speak."[162] Commonplaces, meanwhile, include fairly standard *sententiae* ("It is safest to trust no one") as well as comparisons ("whether a monarch or a democracy is preferable"), under which one may place *exempla* that support the declaration—or, in case of comparisons, one of the two sides. In generating headings, one should be selective and avoid excessive specificity. Erasmus recommends that one select "only those which seem to be required frequently in speaking"—and for this he directs the reader to the three species of rhetoric: "demonstrative, hortatory, and forensic."[163]

The list of possible headings is boundless, but it is not arbitrary. As ever, the material topics articulate shared investments—the salient features of a case, the religious themes that structure collective existence, and now any matters that the compiler recognizes as "especially important in human affairs." As ever, the topics are an art of topics: the perceptive faculties honed through training in topical inquiry serve not just to generate arguments, but, arguably more importantly, to generate new ways of looking—new topics themselves, through an ongoing process of testing and adaptation. In Quintilian, this feature became explicit and central to the litheness—the "wise adaptability"—of the rhetorician. But in Erasmus, who draws from both

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[160] *De Copia*, 2.11, 88.

[161] Havens, who credits Erasmus with "deliver[ing] the commonplace book to the Renaissance world," sees this latter move as central to the character of commonplacing, as well as Erasmus's influence upon it: "Where *sententiae* formerly had been adjudged the mere subject matter that one filtered through the list of established commonplaces of philosophical and rhetorical argument…they could now stand alone as fundamental constitutive elements of discourse." Havens, *Commonplace Books: A History of Manuscripts and Printed Books from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century*, 28.

[162] Erasmus, *De Copia*, 2.11, 88.

[163] *De Copia*, 2.11, 88.

Quintilian and medieval *florilegia* (mediated, to at least some extent, though Agricola) the topics

materialize in commonplace books as sites of inquiry into the possibilities for shared

understanding.

As inventions of the compiler, the topical heads of commonplace books become a way of

seeing that trains the vision on matters of common interest while cultivating an interest in what is

common. Once named, topics structure the practice of *copia*, gathering *exempla* from different

authors, nations, periods, people, and things.[164] That is, to acquire an abundance of subject

matter, one looks to the different treatments of a particular topic amongst the Greeks and the

Romans, the young and the old, the past and the present, and so on. In such a manner, the topical

head becomes a multifaceted object with immense persuasive potential: each articulation

presents it in a new light, and in a manner that may speak to a particular audience. Thus Erasmus

advises us to consult not only the Greeks and the Romans, but also "the barbarians, and in

fact…the common talk of the crowd. For we are moved most strongly by *exempla* that deal with

illustrious events of our own past or the present day, of our own race and people."[165] In preparing

to persuade any audience, the compiler becomes a student of innumerable perspectives.

Erasmus illustrates the volume and diversity of perspectives that his method draws

together by presenting us with the copious material one might collect beneath the title of

"Inconsistency." His list is indeed copious, but also explicitly incomplete, using only the

different arts and branches of knowledge as an engine for abundance (leaving to speculation how

he would consult what is, for our purposes, one of the most compelling sources *exempla* named

above, "the common talk of the crowd"), and he giving only a handful of examples from each.

Nevertheless, the collection that emerges offers a rich and multifaceted view of the object under

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[164] *De Copia*, 2.11, 67.
[165] *De Copia*, 2.11, 68.

consideration. From the poets, he takes stories of Morpheus "accustomed to assume whatever appearance he wishes" and Mercury, "the crafty god" known for his many roles and names. From natural philosophy, he takes "the chameleon repeatedly changing its color, and the panther, with its variegated, many colored spots"—"the wondrous mobility of quicksilver [and] a reed, bending lightly to every breath of air." From history, he takes "the native changeableness of the Greeks" and "the Scythians, changing their pastures from day to day;" from the tragedies, the "varying moods" of Phaedra; from proverbs, "Diana, wandering over all lands."[166] This is a modest sampling of a lengthy list that is itself merely a sampling of all that could be gathered, but already we see the ways in which *copia* deepens one's sense of an idea or a thing—and a hint of the persuasive possibilities that emerge as a result. Erasmus's collection furnishes the reader with myriad ways to articulate "inconsistency," making it possible not only to describe an "inconsistent" phenomenon in the manner most appropriate for the persuasive situation, but also to rearticulate an extremely wide range phenomena *as* inconsistencies by recognizing their kinship with particular *exempla*.

But what is important here is not only the multiplicity of perspectives that such accumulation affords. Topical inquiry imparts *copia* with what at first seems to be a counterintuitive capacity for discernment—for not only identifying raw possibility, but also pursuing those possibilities best suited to the case at hand. Thus, the result of training in *copia* is not, as was sometimes charged, a penchant for excess.[167] On the contrary, the most striking result of such accumulation is a capacity for brevity. For, Erasmus writes,

> who would be more able at expressing any subject in the fewest possible words
> than one who has learned and studied what the matters of special importance in a
> case are, the supporting pillars, as it were, what are most closely related, what are

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[166] *De Copia*, 2.11, 93-96.
[167] Erasmus addresses such concerns early in *De copia*, in particular 1.4.

appropriate for purposes of ornament. No one certainly will see more quickly and more surely what can be suitably omitted than he who has seen what can be added and in what ways.[168]

This structural metaphor suggests a more nuanced understanding of *copia* as looking not only outward, but also, and perhaps more importantly, inward. The aim of accumulation is not endless expansion, but rather inquiry and exploration—activities that are in keeping with its topical heritage. *Copia* allows us to fill out, and feel out, the structure of a thing—to layer words and associations upon it until it begins to take shape. What emerges, then, is not a diffuse cloud of possibility, but a deep sensibility for the matter and, in particular, the "pillars" most vital to its structural integrity.

To understand how one gets to these pillars, consider Erasmus's recommendations for developing and subdividing the topics in Book II. Using the example of piety, he advises us to consider:

> what piety is, how it differs from other virtues, what is peculiar to it, in what ways it is reserved or violated, by what things it is strengthened or corrupted, what it profits man. Here a field of *exempla* and *judicia* is opened up.[169]

A field of commonplaces is "opened up" by methodically delving deeper into the topic at hand and exploring its relation to others—by mapping, one might say, the material topics with the formal, the heads of the commonplace book into a system of relations. As in Agricola's example of the philosopher, the so-called formal topics themselves become topical heads under which to collect *exempla*. What distinguishes these topics from what we might, for the sake of distinction, refer to as the material topics, is their persistent concern with relation. Unlike "piety," they are not objects of inquiry, but rather the queries that examine the object from different angles, each

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[168] Erasmus, *De Copia*, 1.5—while these comments appear in Book I and are therefore apply most directly to the accumulation of words, I hope to show that they also pertain to the accumulation of subject matter.

[169] *De Copia*, 2.11, 88.

one further articulating it into a web of relations. Thus "piety" emerges as an object of understanding to the extent that it is articulated the familiar topics of definition and *differentia*, as well as topics that have been selected and adapted for inquiring into virtue—the Aristotelian topics of more and less, Boethius's elaboration of the topic of effect into generation and corruption, and so forth.[170] (The closest analog to the final matter of "profit" is, perhaps, Aristotle's treatment of "advantage" as the "end" and organizing principle of deliberative rhetoric and, as such, a basis for generating *idia* pertaining to happiness and what is good.) In Erasmus, all of these topics perform the same function: they guide the process of collection and place what is collected in relation to existing terms and literary exempla, producing a multifaceted textual object that is situated in the world of what has been said and that may be easily reoriented to suit common argumentative applications.

This use of these "formal" topics as instruments for inquiry is licensed by Erasmus's assertion of the primacy of words. He begins *De ratione studii* by dividing all of knowledge into ideas—the things studied, described, and put forth not only by natural philosophers, but also astrologers, mathematicians, travelers, storytellers, and the like—and our names for those ideas—words.[171] While acknowledging that our first commitment is to ideas, he holds that we apprehend such ideas only through language—and for that reason, words must be the starting point for elementary education: "For ideas are only intelligible to us by means of the words which describe them; wherefore defective knowledge of language reacts upon our apprehension

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[170] See Mack, 156.

[171] Erasmus, "De Ratione Studii,", 1: "principio duplex omnino videtur cognito, rerum ac verborum." As William Harrison Woodward notes, this distinction follow's Quintilian, for whom "res" stood for ideas and "verba" for names. Further, Erasmus's sense of ideas is notably broad, including the facts studied by all branches of knowledge. As such, "res" indicates not only things in natural world, but also those beyond it (e.g. "the versatility of the god Mercury,"), as well as human constructs (e.g. the commonplace, "friendship between equals is the most durable" William Harrison Woodward, *Desiderius Erasmus Concerning the Aim and Method of Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904), 138-139.

of the truths expressed."[172] *Copia*, then, is an exploration of discursive possibility that traces a web of terminological associations and transformations—the "unfolding" as Cave puts it, "of object-things within language."[173] In this view, the formal topics that appear in Book II—genus, species, adjacent, and the like—are not "actual" distinctions in the world, but tropological maneuvers that become virtually indistinguishable from those in Book I. Metaphor and irony, genus and adjacents—all are ways of revolving a term to examine its connections to others. grounds.[174]

From *De copia* we gain two important insights about the appropriation of topical inquiry in Erasmian commonplace books. First, while the formal topics appear to be almost an afterthought, the use of topics to transform and multiply argumentative content—and, specifically, commonplaces recorded in notebooks—is as evident in Erasmus as it was in Agricola. Adapting Cave's characterization, *topics* are the art of *copia*—in the case of Erasmus, as an extremely diffuse collection of inventional resources that are valuable not only for the *exempla* they gather, but also for the habits that they engender, and, in a way that was not yet fully realized, the understanding they promote.

Second, the ascendance of *copia* as the arch rhetorical operation marks a dramatic refocusing of rhetorical habits that nevertheless remains tied to the ongoing investment in eloquence. This tension between new and old is apparent, for example, in Alvin Vos's reading of *De copia*, wherein *copia* is a revolutionary transformation of rhetorical means that serves a very traditional ends—"a novel but sufficiently comprehensive way to the old rhetorical wisdom of

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[172] "De Ratione Studii," 1.
[173] Cave, The Cornucopian Text, 28.
[174] Erasmus acknowledges as much in his initial distinction between words and subject matter in Book I: "[S]o much does one [kind of *copia*] serve the other, so that they might seem to be distinct only in theory, rather than in fact and in use," he writes, justifying the distinction primarily on pedagogical grounds (*De Copia*, 1.7, 15-16).

Cicero and Quintilian."[175] Vos's interpretation, along with my own, supports a view of *De copia* as redirecting the resources of rhetoric toward inquiry—most famously, figures and tropes become heuristics that serve not to adorn speech, but instead to facilitate an exploration of persuasive possibility.[176] For Vos, the result is a groundbreaking shift in focus from eloquent oratory to "linguistic competency, fluency, and variety—from the forum to the schoolroom."[177] For our purposes, it is productive to view this shift as rooted in a more general realignment of rhetorical concern that has unfolded over the course of this chapter: a shift in emphasis from performance to preparation. *Copia* was concerned with the cultivation of habit even in Quintilian, but with its materialization in the commonplace book, a new regime of activity emerges: *copia*, as the endless preparation for eloquence, becomes a habit of inquiring into persuasive possibility—the defining habit of the collector of perspectives.

No longer is the rhetor concerned with *endoxa* in the limited sense of what is accepted by everyone, the many, or the wise. Commonplace books are stores of insights whose primary rhetorical value is not their acceptability to a pre-established community, but their diversity—the range of articulations and associations that they collectively bestow upon an idea, the rhetorical possibility they possess and express.

Yet for all the apparent novelty of this approach, Erasmus's aims for *copia* are in some senses quite traditional, committed as they are to the pursuit of eloquence. In his short chapter on the usefulness of *copia*, Erasmus stresses that it contributes above all to good style—those trained in *copia* avoid needless repetition and keep the audience engaged by "turn[ing] the same thought into many forms," for "just as the eye is held more by a varying scene, in the same way

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[175] Alvin Vos, "De Copia and Classical Rhetoric," *Classical and Modern Literature* 7 (1987), 289.
[176] Vos, "De Copia," 288.
[177] "Vos, 289.

the mind always eagerly examines whatever it sees as new."[178] In addition, it improves students'

extemporaneous speaking abilities, by equipping them with "so many formulas prepared in

readiness for action."[179] (While Erasmus concludes by mentioning a few additional benefits—

namely helping in "interpreting authors, in translating books from a foreign language, [and] in

writing verse"—he marks it as an aside and offers minimal elaboration.[180]) The primary aim of

copia is, in short, personal eloquence—an ability to speak fluently and pleasingly before an

audience. As Vos contends, Erasmus's central contribution is to identify *copia* as the rhetorical

theme by which commonplacing "is assimilated into the context of the ancients' pursuit of

eloquence"—to reconstitute *copia* as a method for organizing and unifying notebooks in the

service of "one grand purpose: *flumen orationis aureum*"—Cicero's golden stream of speech.[181]

In this sense, *De copia* contains a contradiction. The work guides the reader in collecting,

organizing, and relating numerous ways of seeing, diverse perspectives that Erasmus rightly

recognizes for their tremendous rhetorical potential—as so many ways of engaging so many

audiences—but not for their potential to disrupt and disorder the common ground that makes

verbal persuasion and eloquence possible. On one hand, *copia*, as a habit of inquiry, rests upon a

recognition of the myriad—and productively incongruous—ways of seeing circulating in

Renaissance Europe. What's more, it harnesses the rhetorical power of these diverse perspectives

by compiling them in topically organized commonplace books, so that *copia*, becomes a basis for

developing one's sense of the common understanding of a thing—for constructing an object

through a layering of perspectives. On the other hand, one sees little indication that Erasmus

recognizes, as many 17th century assessments of the commonplace book will—the threat that

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[178] *De Copia*, 1.8, 16.
[179] *De Copia*, 1.8, 17.
[180] *De Copia*, 1.8, 17.
[181] Vos, "De Copia," 293.

such a cacophony of voices poses to the fundamental rhetorical aims of seeing, being, and acting together.

2.2.6 Natural Historical Commonplace Books: Bacon and Locke

Natural historical commonplace books harnessed the rhetorical power of their humanist forbearers by redirecting topical inquiry from the preparation for eloquence to the construction of objects of understanding. Central to this development is Francis Bacon, who saw commonplace books as indispensible in compiling natural histories—the means by which one collected and organized the observations that drove his program of induction. So far, Ann Moss's authoritative history of commonplacing has guided this exploration of the topics and their development into commonplace books. But here our paths diverge. For Moss, Bacon reduced the commonplace book to a memory aid, much as he reduced rhetorical invention to an act of "resummon[ing] that which we already know."[182] I propose an alternative: while Bacon may herald the end of the commonplace book as a site of textual transformation, his engagement with rhetoric creates an opening in which to divest from the project of eloquence and adapt the tradition for early modern sensibilities. While humanist commonplacers approached the topical concern with acceptability as a matter of eloquence, Bacon anchors it in sense perception. The commonplace book he imagines remains a tool for facilitating agreement by inquiring into mutual acceptability, but its pages are filled with observations of the natural world rather than eloquent *sententiae*.

Bacon, of course, was far from alone in employing the commonplace book for naturalistic inquiry. Commonplacing was, as Ann Blair has argued, integral to natural

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[182] Bacon, "De Augmentis Scientiarum," V.iii, 83-84; For Moss's discussion of this passage, see Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, 268-269.

philosophical production in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, whether in actual

notebooks or as "a metaphor for [the natural philosopher's] way of creating physical

knowledge," a means of establishing continuity in the face of nature's abundant

contradictions.[183] While the early commonplacing efforts of natural philosophers and historians

ostensibly departed from the humanist tradition by collecting observations about natural

phenomena rather than literary *exempla*, they continued to gather their material from many of the

same sources: ancient, medieval, and religious texts, as well as more recent histories. One sees

this application of literary wisdom to natural historical subject matter in such prominent works as

Edward Topsell's *Historie of four-footed beasts* (1607).[184] The margins of Topsell's *Historie* are

peppered with scriptural citations and the names of the wise—Aristotle, Cicero, Pliny, Plutarch,

Galen, Leo Africanus—authorities who mingle in the text with more common sources—"the

"Countrey people" of England, "the *Germans*," "some Physitians"[185]—to produce a composite

picture of the creature at hand, uniting all that has been written, observed, and discovered about

it. In this manner, ancient wisdom is rendered compatible with present-day experience.[186]

In works of this kind, *copia* assumes a new, epistemic role that refigures the

commonplace book's relationship with authority. Working to separate fact from fable, Topsell

approaches *copia* as a source of credibility, as we see in in his epistle:

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[183] Ann Blair, "Humanist Methods in Natural Philosophy: The Commonplace Book," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 53, no. 4 (1992). See 547-548 for Blair's account of the more metaphorical relationship between commonplacing and natural philosophy.

[184] Topsell's work was itself largely based upon an earlier text—Swiss philosopher and physician Conrad Gessner's *Historia animalium* (1551-1558)—aimed at compiling a massive number of observations from ancient and medieval sources into a full accounting of animals, past and present.

[185] Edward Topsell, *The History of Four-Footed Beasts and Serpents*, trans., ed. Thomas Moffett Conrad Gessner, and John Rowland. (London: Printed by E. Cotes, for G. Sawbridge), 530-534, emphasis in original.

[186] In Topsell's section on "the diseases of swine," for example, he describes the treatment for swine lice used by the "Countrey people" of England (530), reviews different nations' names for and approaches to swine measles (528), and so forth. In a separate section, titled "Men that have perished by Boars in hunting," he offers accounts from the mythological (e.g. Ancaeus) to the historical (e.g. two deaths reported in Plutarch's *Sertorius*) to illustrate the threat that boars pose to their hunters (543-544).

> I would not have the Reader of these Histories to imagine that I have inserted or
> related all that ever is said of these Beasts, but only so much as is said by many.[187]

Authority, now vested in what "is said by many," takes on a cumulative dimension, loosening the grip of the few—the holy, the wise—over the acceptable. Of course, traditional authorities retain much of their power and visibility in Topsell's compendium, which, subject matter notwithstanding, remains firmly in the tradition of the Renaissance commonplace book and its medieval predecessors. But an important shift has occurred—one that revives the Aristotelian sense of *endoxa* as the province of not only the wise, but also the many. While the cited authors remain among the wise—and, as such, contribute to the credibility of the work—they have also joined the cadre of the many. Their accounts no longer enjoy the automatic legitimacy of *auctoritates*; they are treated as individual contributions that serve, like the uncredited observations with which they are intermingled, to construct and validate a composite understanding of a particular kind of beast. In the Erasmian commonplace book, each entry can stand on its own; its validity derives from its source (or the imagined audience's appraisal thereof). In Topsell's, compatibility with other entries is the grounds for inclusion.

This synthetic, more egalitarian approach to compilation lays the groundwork for Bacon's supposed reinvention of the natural historical commonplace book, even as he categorically rejects its progenitors on the grounds of their bookishness. On one hand, Bacon recognizes the power of the commonplace book for guiding natural inquiry: arguing that in "the interpretation of nature…there can hardly be anything more useful…than a sound help for the memory; that is a good and learned Digest of Common Places."[188] On the other hand, no sooner

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[187] Topsell, *The History of Four-Footed Beasts and Serpents*, Epistle Dedicatory. Notably, this approach to validation permits Topsell to include a number of fantastical beasts—gorgons, gulons, unicorns and the like—given their lengthy history in the literary sources he privileges.

[188] Bacon, "De Augmentis," V.v, 108.

does he name the commonplace book as his tool of choice, than he charges the full range of its present instantiations with "carrying…merely the face of a school and not of a world; and using vulgar and pedantical divisions, not such as to pierce to the pith and heart of things." Bacon takes aim at both the literary content of commonplace books and the topical "divisions" that structure it, charging both with inquiring into discursive worlds, incapable of reaching the natural world beneath. What, then, remains of the commonplacing tradition? Does the tradition only persist, as Moss suggests, in the Baconian commonplace book's role as memory store?[189]

The mnemonic function of Bacon's commonplace books cannot, I argue, be so easily decoupled from its role in structuring inquiry. This is not to deny his well-known distinction between memory and invention, wherein natural history, commonplacing, and in fact the entirety of rhetoric (including topical inquiry) fall under the former, seemingly distinct from and subordinate to the work of invention.[190] Rather, it is to suggest that his appropriation of the topically organized commonplace book retains a rhetorical commitment to mediation, perpetuating the close relationship between memory and invention characteristic of its literary predecessors. For Bacon as for the humanists, the inquiry facilitated by the commonplace book is the topical inquiry we've seen throughout this chapter. Consider, for example, Bacon's argument that "diligence and labour in the entry of common places…supplies matter to invention, and contracts the sight of the judgment to a point."[191] These two activities mirror and

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[189] Moss, Printed Commonplace-Books, 248.

[190] See Bacon's familiar assertion that "to invent is to discover what we know not, not to recover or resummon that which we already know," made to distinguish rhetorical invention from invention proper (Bacon, "De Augmentis Scientiarum," V.iii, 83-84).

[191] "De Augmentis," V.v., 103-104. Notably, in *The Advancement of Learning* (1605), which was later revised and expanded into the Latinized *De Augmentis*, Bacon describes the former activity in terms of *copia*: "supplies matter to invention" appears as "assureth *copie* of invention." (Though "*copie*" is often incorrectly presented as "copy" in a number of editions of the work). Francis Bacon, *The Works of Francis Bacon.*, ed. Robert Leslie Ellis James Spedding, and Douglas Denon Heath. (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.), 6:281.

preserve the core functions of the Renaissance notebook: *copia*, as the collection of subject matter, and selection, as the process by which the judgment narrows the field of possibility generated by *copia*, discerning the most essential features (as in Erasmus's "pillars") of a given idea.

To appreciate the extent of Bacon's debt to the commonplacing tradition, one might consider his adaptation of that tradition in the context of his broader intellectual efforts. Bacon sought to develop and promote of a new program of natural philosophical inquiry rooted in empirical observation and aimed at foresight and invention. Traditionally, he suggests, humans have happened upon great discoveries (fire, for example) accidentally, only then beginning to figure out the cause. What had long been viewed as invention was, in other words, much more a matter of chance ("you would not say that Prometheus was led by speculation to the discovery of fire, or that when he first struck the flint he expected the spark; but rather that he lighted on it by accident, and (as they say) stole it from Jupiter. So that in the invention of arts it would seem that hitherto men are rather beholden to a wild goat for surgery, to a nightingale for music, to the ibis for clysters, to the pot lid that flew open for artillery, and in a word to chance, or anything else, rather than to Logic.")[192] With a revitalized art of invention—rooted in a capacity to "pierce to the…heart of things"—humans might expand the range of possibility beyond the previously experienced, imagining and pursuing novel outcomes.

To the extent that the Baconian commonplace book functions as "help to the Memory," it does not assist with invention directly, but is rather a repository for the findings of its predecessor, natural historical inquiry. But while Bacon suggests that traditional natural history is valuable primarily as a mnemonic device—a source of "knowledge of the particular things it

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[192] "De Augmentis," V.ii,66.

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contains"—he has loftier ambitions for his own method. His natural history is to serve as the foundations of natural philosophy, "containing material true and copious and aptly digested for the work of the Interpreter."[193] The task of the natural philosopher is this interpretation—and ultimately invention—via induction. The task of the natural historian is providing "the stuff and subject-matter of true induction"—in short, accumulation.[194] *Copia,* then, is the central operation of Baconian natural history, performed via the commonplace book, but, as in Topsell's *Historie*, aimed at achieving a fuller picture rather than a more versatile repertoire. In keeping with Bacon's insistence that "the end rules the method,"[195] this reorientation toward the cumulative necessitates a complementary revision of means—in Bacon's case, seemingly far more extensive than what his fellow natural historians found necessary.

Baconian *copia* marks a significant methodological departure from Erasmus, making a much cleaner break with certain aspects of the humanist tradition than works such as Topsell's.[196] Two aspects of this departure are particularly relevant to this project. First, Bacon rejects the cultural, aesthetic, and practical commitments of Renaissance commonplace books— the investment in inherited topical systems, the reverence of ancient authorities the prioritization of eloquence, the interest in human affairs and rhetorical concerns. While Topsell's *Historie* restores the role of the many in producing probable knowledge, the "many" are nevertheless literary sources, including numerous ancient and medieval figures. Similarly, while the *Historie* is not intended as a collection of *sententiae* and shows no particular interest in eloquence, its collection and organization of examples appears to be guided by a concern with utility. Entries

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[193] "Preparative Towards a Natural and Experimental History (Parasceve)," in Bacon, *Works*, 8:353.
[194] "Parasceve," 358.
[195] "Parasceve," 358.
[196] For Bacon, names of ancient authorities almost never appear in Bacon's histories. The vast majority of observations are presented as declarations, experimental findings, or else observations in the passive voice.

focus to a great extent on the features of the beasts most relevant to human interests—the diseases they carry and their cures, the uses and value of their hides and furs, the dangers they pose to humans, and so forth. Bacon, by contrast, instructs his compiler not to "consult the pleasure of the reader, no nor even that utility which may be derived immediately from their narrations," but rather to focus exclusively on collecting "such store and variety of things as may suffice for the formation of true axioms."[197] Compilers, that is, should include matter not because it is eloquent or useful—or, more generally, because it is compatible with some existing way of seeing—but only because it contributes meaningfully to the collective body of knowledge on a given phenomenon. In shedding the investments that bound the humanist topics and collection practices, Bacon's vision of compilation becomes massive. Natural history, he argues, must be "made to the measure of the universe…For that fashion of taking few things into account, and pronouncing with reference to a few things, has been the ruin of everything."[198] Viewing traditional commonplacing practices as a matter of redescribing the known world rather than discovering what is genuinely new in it, he approaches collection as at once a vast expedition and extremely nuanced exploration of the unknown that cannot be tethered to existing conventions of seeing and inquiring.

Second, owing to the arduousness of this endeavor, Bacon brings the collective dimension of *copia* to the fore. Noting the daunting nature of the task ahead, he wonders if

> it may not be amiss to try if there be any others who will take these matters in hand; so that while I go on with the completion of my original design, this part which is so manifold and laborious may even during my life…be prepared and set forth …For as much as relates to the work itself of the intellect, I shall perhaps be able to master that by myself; but the materials on which the intellect has to work

[197] "Parasceve," 358.
[198] "Parasceve," 361.

are so widely spread, that one must employ factors and merchants to go everywhere in search of them and bring them in.[199]

Bacon tasks natural history with nothing less than amassing a *copia* of observations of the entire natural world—an impossibly daunting task for all but the grandest of thinkers, requiring the assistance of every hand available, working from every corner of the world. He envisions a network of observers who, like factors and merchants, effectively import observations for the natural philosopher—in this case, Bacon himself—to use. Here, natural philosophy appears to retain some of the old sense of authority as the property of the few (the wise, the holy, etc.), bringing the more democratic character of natural history into relief. While not everyone possesses the intellect necessary for natural philosophy, natural history, rooted in experience, is *almost every man's industry*. Bacon proceeds to make this point more explicitly, if also rather haughtily: "Besides," he says, "I hold it to be somewhat beneath the dignity of an undertaking like mine that I should spend my own time in a matter which is open to almost every man's industry."[200] Natural philosophy may be the work of the wise, but natural history belongs to the many.

Of course, *copia* has always been a collective endeavor, having long engaged with a shared body of textual and oratorical commonplaces and practices—in Moss's words a "cultural matrix"—transforming individually compiled notebooks into sites of community formation and negotiation. But in Bacon's vision, the individual entries are to be shared in a much more direct sense: individuals are seen as contributing to a common collection of observations from which natural philosophers might draw to construct "true axioms." And the observations of the many, if

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[199] "Parasceve," 353-354.
[200] "Parasceve," 354.

they are to be usable to the natural philosopher, must be gathered and compiled in a way that ensures their compatibility. For this task, Bacon turns to topical inquiry.

Topical inquiry is Bacon's method for gathering and synchronizing the copious natural historical observations required by his program. While he initially classifies the topics as resources for inventing arguments (which, again, "is not properly an invention"), he openly recognizes their role in discovering new knowledge. The topics, he writes, do not "serve only to apprompt our invention, but also to direct our inquiry."[201] He continues:

> [T]he same places which will help us … produce of that which we know already,
> will also help us, if a man of experience were before us, *what questions to ask*; or,
> if we have books and authors to instruct us, *what points to search and revolve.*

More than just a tool for storing, organizing, and recalling the returns of inquiry, the topics guide us in "what questions to ask"—and as such constitute an art of inquiry itself

The Baconian commonplace book thus entails not only a shift content, from books to the world, but also in orientation—from argument to question.[202] Having critiqued the literary topics as artifacts of discursive systems, Bacon seeks a topics capable of inquiring into the new, rather than seeing the world, and all that is potentially new in it, in terms of the old. He objects to inquiry led by the formal topics of "Much, Little ; Like, Unlike; Possible, Impossible; likewise Being and Not-Being, and the like" on the grounds of their artificiality, the fact that they "do not properly come under Physic."[203] But the problem, perhaps, is less in the topics themselves than the way they are employed in argumentation—as a means of pursuing the "height of speech

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[201] Bacon, *Advancement of Learning* in *Works*, II.xiii.9, 6:156. This quotation and the next are from the *Advancement*, where Bacon's wording is, for the purposes of this project, somewhat richer and more illustrative than what appears in the translation of *De Augmentis*, though the passage in the latter work is quite similar (V.iii, 86).

[202] Bacon described this shift in familiar language, presenting himself as collecting seeds rather than flowers. See Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, 271.

[203] Bacon, "De Augmentis," III.i, 475.

[rather] than at the subtleties of things."[204] Instead, he suggests, "Much and Little" might inspire one to search for "a reason why some things in nature are and can be so numerous and plentiful, others so few and scanty," or, in the case of "Similitude and Diversity," an explanation for "why betwixt different species there almost always lie certain individuals which partake of the nature of both"[205] In spite of their alleged artificiality, these formal—or, more fittingly, relational—topics appear to have a role to play in Baconian natural history, as resources for discovering new questions to ask. As such, they serve as complements to the scheme of natural topics that Bacon endeavors to create—topics that constitute an "arrangement of the sciences," derived not from "the laws of reasoning" but rather "the existence of things."[206]

The Baconian topics proliferate out of his division of natural history—first into histories of generations, pretergenerations, and arts; then into subcategories (for generations, "Ether and things Celestial," "Meteors and the regions…of Air," "Earth and Sea," the elements, and species); then finally into a series of "particular histories" or "titles" in need of inquiry (beneath "species," for example, histories of quicksilver, fossils, gems, vegetables, fishes, birds, and so forth).[207] These titles are invitations to inquiry, each guided by "a set of questions on the several subjects, and [explanation of] what points with regard to each of the histories are especially to be inquired and collected, as conducing to the end I have in view, like a kind of particular Topics."[208] As Lisa Jardine notes, these topics are rearticulations of the dialectical topics, and

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[204] "De Augmentis," III.i, 476.
[205] "De Augmentis," III.i, 476.
[206] "De Augmentis," III.i, 475.
[207] "Parasceve," 361-362.
[208] "Parasceve," 371, emphasis added.

Bacon uses them for a similar purpose, to "discover the available evidence," albeit while insisting that they be particular to the subject matter.[209]

To understand what these histories looked like and how they were used in practice, let's turn to an example. Bacon produced only a few such histories in his lifetime—for example, his "History of winds" and "History of life and death," as well as his "investigation…into Form of Heat."[210] The latter exploration of heat, as the *Novum Organum*'s prime example of Bacon's inductive method, is particularly instructive.[211] The inquiry that Bacon envisions is to take place in his infamously laborious tables of presence, absence, and degree—spaces in which to collect and describe the conditions under which the object of inquiry, in this case "heat," is present, absent, and, in the case of degree, more or less (note the resemblance to the formal topics initially dismissed in *De Augmentis* III.i). Beneath these topical heads, or "titles" as Bacon called them, the natural historian would enter, respectively, all known instances of heat (e.g. the sun's rays, "burning thunderbolts," "horse-dung," "villous substances" like wool and plumage, and so forth); closely related instances devoid of heat (e.g. the moon's rays), and the comparative hotness of things (e.g. the observation that "Some ignited bodies are found to be much hotter than some flames").[212] While the most obvious role of such natural histories is to provide materials for induction, they also generate new lines of inquiry: "An anvil grows very hot under the hammer, insomuch that if it were made of a thin plate it might, I suppose, with strong and

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[209] Lisa Jardine, *Francis Bacon: Discovery and the Art of Discourse*: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 136n2.

[210] Bacon, *Novum Organum*, II.xi-xiii, 127-145. In "Parasceve," Bacon expressed his intent to "draw up a set of questions on the several subjects" outlined therein, while noting that he was far too busy for such an undertaking at the moment (371).

[211] For a full account of Bacon's known lists of queries, see Michael Hunter, "Robert Boyle and the Early Royal Society: A Reciprocal Exchange in the Making of Baconian Science," *The British Journal for the History of Science* 40, no. 1 (2007), 6.

[212] *Novum Organum* For examples of presence, absence, and degree, see respectively: II.xi, 127-129; II.xii, 129-137; II.xiii, 137-145.

continuous blows of the hammer, grow red like ignited iron. But let this be tried by experiment."

Quite often, such questions and experiments emerge out of the friction between titles—for example, when Bacon considers, having observed that the heat of dung derives from the animal's body and that air confined in caverns is warmer than the air outside, whether the warmth associated with wool and feathers owes to their nature as animal "excretions" or to how they confine air. He recommends an experiment in which one compares the warmth of " fibrous substances made of linen" to that of "animal excretions."

After completing these tables, the inquirer may turn to induction. As Bacon explains, induction proceeds by excluding those "natures," which are not necessarily linked with the phenomenon under investigation, either because they are present or increasing when it absent or decreasing, or the reverse. Once this process is complete, "there will remain at the bottom, all light opinions vanishing into smoke, a Form affirmative, solid and true and well defined."[213] Much as *copia* begets brevity in Erasmus, revealing the idea's "supporting pillars," Baconian inquiry produces an object of understanding: the volume of observations will strip opinions and partialities away, until all that remains is a positive articulation of the form. The difference is that Baconian natural history yields only abundance. The judgment that gives the Erasmian rhetor their capacity for brevity belongs, in Bacon, to the natural philosopher.

Thus Baconian natural history, however innovative and influential, is still just a means to an end. It is, to be sure, the best means, a necessary means, the "nursing mother" to the infant natural philosophy.[214] But Bacon's interest is in the latter, whose story stretches far beyond its initial dependence on the mother. Natural history is merely a vessel—a "storehouse of things, not comfortable accommodation for staying or living in, but a place we go down to when we need to

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[213] *Novum Organum*, xvi, 205.
[214] "Parasceve," 360.

fetch out something useful."[215] The commonplace book, the storehouse materialized, is not to be read, but only referenced. On one hand, this distinction is nothing new; topically guided compilations have served as reference texts at least since the *Manipulus florum*. On the other hand, it signals another significant departure from extant humanist and even natural historical commonplacing practices. It is not just that the natural historical commonplace book cannot be read as a continuous, standalone work, but that its entries are themselves of little immediate value to the reader, prior to treatment by the natural philosopher.

John Locke revives the full inventional capacity of the commonplace book by viewing natural history rather natural philosophy as the site of knowledge production. Joining his Royal Society colleagues in embracing Bacon's vision, Locke practiced and promoted a form of Baconian natural history inherited from his mentor, Robert Boyle. The ensuing chapters examine the role of commonplacing in Locke's own endeavors; the aim of the present section is to place Locke within the tradition of commonplacing thus far discussed and to characterize his principal contribution to it. This contribution, I argue, arises largely from a distinction from Bacon that transforms the commonplace book from a storehouse or preparation to a site of meaning making: In keeping with his well-known views on the limits of human understanding, Locke is highly skeptical of the philosophical pursuit of axiomatic knowledge, including through Baconian induction.[216] Chapter 6 looks at Locke's natural historical activities in detail, showing how his approach to commonplacing interweaves accumulation and selection to produce the kind of situated, useful, common knowledge he seeks. For now, the key point is that it is under Locke—a

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[215] "Parasceve," 359.

[216] A very thorough case for Locke's alignment with Baconian natural history rather than natural philosophy appears in Anstey, *John Locke and Natural Philosophy*, in particular 45-89. Locke's most developed explication of this position appears in two early medical writings, *De arte medica* and *Anatomia,* discussed in 6.2 of this dissertation.

well-known critic of literary commonplacing—that the natural historical commonplace book becomes not just a storehouse but a place to dwell.[217]

Locke's adaptation of the commonplacing tradition is far more substantive and theoretically sophisticated than what is suggested by his best-known contribution to it, his *Méthode nouvelle de dresser des recueils* (1686) (posthumously published in English as *A New Method of Making Common-Place-Books* (1706)). On one hand, Locke's theory and practice of commonplacing was deeply interwoven with his epistemological and political thought, and it has significant implications for both those endeavors and rhetorical theory. On the other hand, while the *Méthode nouvelle* markedly increased Locke's stature in the commonplace book's history, the work itself is an entirely technical work—a brief and unassuming formalization of his personal note-taking practices, published only after much prodding by his close friend Nicolas Toinard.[218]

But while the *Méthode nouvelle* does not venture into theoretical considerations, it should not be overlooked as a source of insight into Lockean commonplacing. If Locke's commonplace books are, as this dissertation argues, technologies for being together, understanding their technical features is essential to making sense of their rhetorical power. The goal of the present discussion is to explicate these features and examine their relationship to Locke's theoretical commitments and natural historical subject matter.

Even the technical contributions of the *Méthode nouvelle* were ostensibly quite modest. As Michael Stolberg has shown that almost all the features of this "new method" had long been

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[217] Chapter 3 centers on this tension, using Locke's critiques of humanist commonplacing as a means of bringing out and clarifying the role of natural historical commonplacing in his political and epistemological thought.

[218] Locke's "New Method" enjoyed considerable posthumous success, and was and widely circulated, adapted, and referenced into the nineteenth century. On the enduring influence of Locke's method, see for example Lucia Dacome, "Noting the Mind: Commonplace Books and the Pursuit of the Self in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 65, no. 4 (2004), 603-606.

common practice, save a small, if quiet useful, innovation re indexing. [219] Across the commonplacing practices employed by early modern naturalists and physicians, Stolberg identifies three dominant organizational schemes, all of which Locke experimented with during his development as a scholar and practitioner: First, a "textbook" approach, where compilers assigned heads to each page in advance, in keeping with a pre-established systematization of subject matter; second, an alphabetical approach that arranged heads by their first letter rather than their place in a knowledge system; and third, a "sequential" or index-based approach, wherein compilers filled empty pages with entries as they encountered them, labeling each with a head, which was then added to an index used to locate entries later. As Stolberg notes, the last of these approaches was by far the most flexible and efficient, requiring neither a pre-established list of heads, nor the guesswork (and waste) of labeling or setting aside pages in advance. Still, index-based commonplacing presented its own challenges for use and organization. For one, reviewing one's notes on a particular topic could be exceptionally tedious, with conceivably dozens of entries scattered throughout a single notebook, each needing to be located amongst a jumble of unrelated topics. Further, the index could be sprawling, messy, and difficult to construct—without knowing in advance what heads one would use, one could hardly predict how much space to reserve under each letter.

Locke addresses these problems by interweaving the alphabetical and sequential approaches, with some modest but important enhancements. His method is distinctive in three ways: First, rather than add entries indiscriminately, he enters them on pages dedicated to a particular letter combination—the first letter and following vowel of the entry's title (under Pe, for example, one might find *Pestis, Phrenitis,* and *Pleuritis*)—vastly increasing the likelihood

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[219] Michael Stolberg, "John Locke's 'New Method of Making Common-Place-Books: Tradition, Innovation and Epistemic Effects'," *Early Science and Medicine* 18 (2014).

that multiple entries for the same topic appear on the same page, and thus expediting information retrieval considerably. Second, rather than label these pages in advance, he adds them as he goes, making it possible to cluster heads alphabetically on each page without forcing the notebook as a whole into a rigid ordering scheme. Finally, rather than listing all of the heads contained in the book, the index simply gives the pages associated with each letter combination. As such, it may be structured in advance on a single page, consisting of each letter of the alphabet with the vowels listed beneath (Figure 1). To search for *Pestis*, for example, one would visit the pages devoted to Pe—in Figure 1, pages 102, 320, 327, and 342.

Figure 1. Index for one of Locke's medical commonplace books (MS Locke f. 19, fols. 396c-396d). Used with the permission of the Bodleian Libraries, Oxford.

The result is a distinctly early modern adaptation of the commonplacing tradition that mediates between flexibility and structure in a way that is deeply compatible with Locke's broader political and epistemological commitments. Other readers have been less impressed, viewing Lockean commonplacing primarily as a personal storage strategy rather than a source of common ground. Consider, for example, the commentary offered by Ann Moss and Richard Yeo, whose studies of commonplacing and Locke's note-taking practices, respectively, are the most comprehensive to date. Moss, continuing her critique of the early modern commonplace book, regards Locke's contributions as relatively mundane, entirely technical, and noteworthy primarily as an indication of "how far the commonplace-book [had] fallen."[220] The systematic ordering of topics and their role as "ascriptions which link [excerpts] back into a certain cultural matrix" are, in Moss's account, what give the commonplace book its generative capacity—both in the philosophical sense of inventing philosophical arguments and the rhetorical sense of studying, producing, and maintaining consensus. The movement from systematic to alphabetical or indexical organization reduces the topic to "keywords" that serve as "finding mechanism rather than …ordering principle."[221] As keywords, heads bring neither compiler nor contents into conversation with others, severing the rhetorical stolons of the commonplace book and neutralizing its inventional power. Locke, then, is presented as marking if not marshaling a radical break in the commonplacing tradition that divorces it from common life, so that even

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[220] Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, 280. Moss turns to Locke very briefly in the final pages of her study, focusing primarily on his *Méthode nouvelle* and its English translation, noting that he "saw fit to publish the technical details of his system for improving their efficiency, seemingly without feeling obliged to expand on their theory, status, or use." Locke's personal commonplace books and his more theoretical critiques of humanist commonplacing in his educational and epistemological works offer a more nuanced view of his attitude toward and practice of commonplacing—one that renders him somewhat more compatible with the tradition celebrated by Moss.

[221] Moss, 279.

traditionally formatted collections are littered with "extracts from reading unrelated to the heads, letters and poems by the owner or of personal interest to him, drafts of sermons, political and theological ruminations of topical interest, and scraps of uncoordinated trivia." [222] The seventeenth century marks what Moss views as the "decline" of the commonplacing tradition, wherein the once-venerated site of intellectual invention, adaptation, and cohesion is reduced to essentially a personal notebook and "confined to the backwaters of intellectual activity."[223]

Richard Yeo counters Moss's "severe assessment" by thoroughly cataloging the vibrant role of commonplacing in Locke's natural historical, experimental, and medical collaborations, but he nevertheless presents Lockean commonplacing as a largely private endeavor, its "scope and purpose…individual rather than institutional."[224] He bases this position on two technical features of Locke's commonplace books, both concerning their use of topics. First, because their indexes consisted of letter combinations rather than topics or heads, their utility as information repositories extended only to those who knew in advance the material collected in the notebook and the heads used to organize it—in other words, Locke alone. Second, in contrast to collections structured according to a common set of topics, the contents of Locke's notebooks "depended on his personal notice of the material"—a personal, rather than shared sense of salience.[225] This reading, however, does not adequately attend to Locke's actual practices regarding the generation of heads, or to the rhetorical heritage of these practices. I will return to this point momentarily.

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[222] Moss, 280.

[223] Moss, 279. Consider also Roland Barthes's embrace of the alphabetically organized commonplace book's disaggregating potential in *A Lover's Discourse* (3-9).

[224] Richard Yeo, *Notebooks, English Virtuosi, and Early Modern Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 176, 218.

[225] Yeo, *Notebooks*, 218. See also Stolberg, "John Locke's 'New Method'," 27.

Stolberg's study concludes with a different possibility, situating Locke's "New Method" within a larger, collective effort to adapt commonplacing to natural historical inquiry. In this view, the openness of the headings does not represent a retreat from the common, but rather an adaptation to a new subject matter: "the virtually infinite realm of natural particulars…the hundreds or indeed thousands of plants, animals, stones and other things in nature[, e]very single one of [which] might deserve a heading of its own."[226] From this view, the apparent idiosyncrasy of headings in Lockean commonplacing made it possible to document and comprehend the profound diversity of the natural world with far greater sensitivity and responsivity than approaches based upon an established list of heads, freeing the compiler to adapt and expand their list of heads to accommodate new observations and discoveries. Yet such sensitivity seems to support rather than allay Moss and Yeo's concerns over the individualism of commonplace books wherein collectors generate their own list of heads. When the topics derive from the self rather than engagement with others, one's worldview and one's commonplace book become mutually reinforcing entities.

For all of their differences, then, Moss, Yeo, and Stolberg all interpret Lockean commonplacing as maximizing the compiler's freedom to catalog the world according to their experiences and readings, rather than an imposed structure of knowledge—a view that complements Locke's reputation as the paradigmatic individualist. But a closer look at his political writings (the focus of Chapter 4) suggests that, even in his most "liberal" works, he was less interested in amplifying individual freedom directly than in imagining a way for individuals to surrender some of their inherent freedom to others, thereby securing the advantages of living, working, and inquiring together. In his political writings, this investment is often expressed

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[226] Stolberg, 466.

through efforts to conceive of common standards that mediate between individual and collective; in his commonplacing activities and the *Méthode nouvelle*, it appears as a dual commitment to flexibility and standardization.

Discerning this investment requires a somewhat broader conception Locke's ingenuity than what is suggested by Stolberg's analysis, wherein the "truly novel and characteristic feature" of Locke's commonplacing method "was the sorting of entries based on [letter combinations] which allowed for an index that occupied only a single double page."[227] This assertion—that Locke's indexing strategy was the only feature of his method not seen in prior notebooks—is a crucial corrective to Yeo's reading, which gives Locke considerable credit for the index-based approach as a whole—a practice that, Stolberg points out, had been widely practiced for at least a century prior.[228] But Stolberg's focus on the "truly novel"—those features that appear for the first time in the "New Method"—neglects the innovative, powerful, and nuanced ways in which Locke adapts, rather than remakes or replaces, the rhetorical tradition of commonplacing in response to a new subject matter and political moment. And by neglecting the rhetorical features that Locke inherited, we miss much of what remains communal—and generative—about his commonplacing approach.

The rhetorical inheritance of Lockean commonplacing is particularly evident in two note-taking practices. The first concerns the generation of heads, which for Locke as for his predecessors, embodies the characteristic topical practice of thematic variation, wherein the stable assertions of an other provide the grounds—and generative bounds—of invention.

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[227] Stolberg, 466.

[228] Stolberg, 466. Stolberg positions his assessment of the tradition in opposition to Yeo's 2004 study, which appears to credit Locke with inventing index-based commonplacing (Yeo, "John Locke's 'New Method'", 28). (Yeo subsequently clarified this position, presenting Locke as the first to formalize and publish this approach (*Notebooks, English Virtuosi, and Early Modern Science*, 181)). Arguing that this aspect of Locke's "New Method" "was not new at all," Stolberg works to identify the elements of the method without apparent antecedents in the tradition.

Consider the key technical advantage of Locke's commonplacing method: not its added flexibility, but its ability to temper the chaos of index-based commonplacing with the orderly retrieval process of the alphabetical approach. [229] For Moss, this improvement offers little indication of an enduring rhetorical commitment—she treats Locke's seemingly ad hoc approach to topic creation as disqualifying, arguing that it reduces the topics to memory places, divorced from the "cultural matrix" that gives the commonplace book its rhetorical power. But in fact, Locke's choice of heads is perhaps the most obvious reason to reject the individualistic view of his note-taking practices. While the absence heads in the index leads Yeo to interpret the Lockean notebook as usable to the compiler alone and thus entirely individualistic, one might as easily intuit the opposite: that such notebooks *necessitate* an external source of order apart from the memory of the compiler to facilitate in recall—particularly for as avid a commonplacer as Locke, who made tens of thousands of entries in his notebooks over the course of his life. Locke was open about the use of such a scheme, as well as the importance of producing such a scheme for oneself.[230] In this respect, however, he was very much following the Erasmian tradition of topical head generation, wherein one devises one's own collection of organizing heads first by drawing upon, adapting, and adding to the topics of respected sources, and second by selecting among potential heads "only those which seem to be required frequently in speaking."[231] Erasmus shows us two ways in which an individually fashioned collection of topics derives from the "cultural matrix" of which Moss speaks: first, by drawing upon existing and widely respected topics, and second by choosing topics that align with what is currently and commonly regarded

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[229] Stolberg, it should be noted, acknowledges the technical advantages of this interweaving, though he maintains that it offered the "greatest flexibility in the number and scope of headings" (465-466).

[230] See John Locke, "Study," in *The Life of John Locke: With Extracts from His Correspondence, Journals, and Common-Place Books*, ed. Peter King (London: H. Colburn and R. Bentley, 1830), 107, as well as 6.3 of this dissertation.

[231] Erasmus, *De Copia*, 2.11, 88.

as salient. Locke engages in both of these activities. While he regularly adds to his collection of heads, many of the ones he uses most frequently derive from existing classifications of natural phenomena. In his medical commonplace books, for example, the names and relationships between heads can in many cases be traced to the chapter headings of Daniel Sennert's *Institutiones medicinae* (1611), which Locke, following the standard practice for students at the time, had used to organize one of his earliest medical notebooks.[232] His decisions about classifying fevers follow Thomas Sydenham's.[233] Similarly, while Locke had no interest in what is "required frequently in speaking," he was highly invested in generating useful knowledge and, as I argue in Chapter 6, he devised his heads accordingly. In these respects, these supposedly idiosyncratic heads were, to a large extent, built in conversation with the conceptual norms of a community, in the manner of the Erasmian commonplacer,

Locke's rhetorical inheritance is further brought out by his natural historical and experimental activities, wherein his commonplace books were the means by which he recorded, collected, shared, and solicited observations, procedures, and specimens across his far-reaching network of correspondents. Locke as commonplacer came to serve as a kind of virtual hub for proto-scientific research and communication. Beyond bolstering knowledge production, these activities were integral to constituting and maintaining a common way of seeing and engaging with the world—through topical inquiry.[234] The rhetorical work of Locke's commonplacing practices becomes apparent in Stolberg's argues that the role of these practices was not, as Yeo and Moss suggest, merely mnemonic but also synthetic: "[A]ssigning empirical observations to a common heading created a kind of virtual unity, an entity that could be distinguished from other

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[232] Stolberg, 458.

[233] Guy G. Meynell, "John Locke's Method of Common-Placing, as Seen in His Drafts and His Medical Notebooks, Bodleian Mss Locke D. 9, F. 21 and F. 23," *The Seventeenth Century* 8, no. 2 (1993), 251-252.

[234] See Chapters 5 an 6 of this dissertation

related entities, which had their own respective 'places.'"[235] Locke's heads, in other words, were not only places of memory, but also places of production—sites where the objects of inquiry and shared understanding were created and distinguished from one another through the accumulation of observations.

In observing the synthetic function of topics, Stolberg offers a vital insight, but he forgoes some of its promise by using it to distinguish the kind of natural historical commonplacing practiced by Locke from the literary humanist tradition. Arguing that humanists, drawing from classical texts, "could easily be content with a fairly limited range of well-known, given topics," Stolberg suggests that the rapidly shifting and expanding terrain of naturalistic inquiry demanded a more flexible topics—that is, the ability to adjust and enlarge one's catalog of natural phenomena by adjusting and enlarging one's collection of heads.[236] By contrast, the tracing undertaken in this chapter suggests that these features have deep roots in the tradition. Attending to the this continuity makes it possible to link the mechanics of Lockean commonplacing not only to their epistemic effects, as Stolberg has done, but also to their rhetorical potential—and thus their role in Locke's theoretical and material efforts to found community upon inquiry.

What distinguishes Lockean commonplacing within this tradition is not this synthetic capacity, however, but rather the end to which this capacity was directed. While Erasmus saw *copia* as deepening one's understanding of an idea, that understanding served primarily to facilitate selection—to assist in choosing the most apt exempla. His *copia* had the effect of producing common objects of understanding by accumulating perspectives on the pages of the commonplace book, but as a preparation for eloquence, it was not particularly interested in

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[235] Stolberg, 466.
[236] Stolberg, 466.

regarding the collection as a whole, as an object, leaving the full inventional power of the topics largely unrealized. Bacon's natural historical commonplacing brings these objects—and their collectivizing potential—to the fore, but even he views the commonplace book as a kind of preparatory reservoir, a "storehouse" of raw materials that may be elsewhere constructed into "comfortable accommodation for…living in." Locke's contribution is to lend his pragmatic and political orientation toward knowledge (discussed in the ensuing chapters) to the collectivizing, synthetic power of Baconian natural history, using topical inquiry to produce collectively recognizable objects that constitute a field of shared perception, the world in which we live together.

The independence of the Lockean commonplacer is thus bounded in two respects. First, while compilers work independently to gather and classify observations, the classification scheme, like the observations themselves, is largely derived from others. Second, the practice of commonplacing itself endows the compiler with the habits of the natural historian, shaping how they perceive and value natural phenomena and how they classify the observations of others. Both of these features have long been a part of the commonplacing tradition, and topical inquiry before it. Under Locke, they become its centerpiece, guiding individual inquirers in making and remaking shared objects of understanding—seeing together while seeing for themselves.

This chapter has traced the rhetorical heritage of Lockean commonplacing and its capacity to constitute common objects—common ground—through the articulation and exploration of shared investment. As we will see, the commonplace book is, for this reason, uniquely positioned to assist Locke in his persistent efforts to mediate between individual and collective and to chart a path between the equally undesirable poles of relativism and

dogmatism.[237] Lockean commonplacing represents a collective mode of inquiry that achieves community not through persuasion, or choosing materials to appeal to a particular audience, but through *consensus*: sensing together made possible by the accumulation of perspectives. The following chapters develop this argument by turning to Locke's philosophical works and natural historical activities and revealing the centrality of commonplacing to his work as a theorist and practitioner of community. First, however, let us briefly review the tradition of commonplacing as it has been presented in this chapter.

2.3 Summary

Since Aristotle, topical inquiry has encompassed both a set of rhetorical habits and an evolving collection of heuristics for rhetorical invention, ranging from queries to headings to commonplaces. Since Aristotle, these two features of the topics have mediated between self and other, and between general and particular, generating common ground by considering the position of the other or the audience and finding a common angle of approach. As heuristics, the imperfect fit between topical resources and the particulars they seek to characterize generates new ways of seeing, both by prodding at the particular in unexpected ways and by prompting reconsideration of the resource itself. But even as the individual resources evolved in relation to their environments, the habits of topical inquiry have remained largely consistent, imbuing the diverse practices charted in this chapter with distinctly rhetorical investments: flexibility,

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[237] On *De copia* as explicitly directed against dogmatism, see Thomas O. Sloane, "Schoolbooks and Rhetoric: Erasmus's Copia," *Rhetorica* 9, no. 2 (1991).

perspicacity, selectivity—a sense of salience, a facility for drawing connections, the ability to move with agility from what had been said to what could be said about a given topic.

Aristotle's dialectical topics look at what has been said and locate in it possibilities for mounting an argument of one's own. As such, they perform the essential topical operation: finding places to begin in the propositions of an other by classifying those propositions as instances of a more general type. In this respect, the topics were, from inception, engaged in a kind of inquiry rooted in mediation. Aristotle's rhetorical topics, invested in the world of political practice and everyday life, expanded to consider not just argumentative form, but a suite of factors that were likely to speak to the (Athenian) audience. The *Rhetoric*'s somewhat arbitrary collection of topics and *idia* were presumably drawn from Aristotle's own rhetorical sensibilities and therefore specific to, at the very least, a particular political or persuasive milieu—in contrast to the more universal framing of the dialectical topics. For this reason, we may view them as a collection of heuristics that may be adapted to the scene of their deployment.

Cicero gives us a strand of topical inquiry aimed at gathering subject matter—a hint of the topics' future role as subject headings in commonplace books. Further, he introduces commonplaces (*loci communes*) themselves—full arguments of established force, which may be applied profitably to a range of situations. In Quintilian, topical inquiry serves primarily as a means of habit formation. Lists of topics and commonplaces may change in response to new circumstances, so that their precise content becomes far less important than their role in training the orator's mind for Quintilian's principal aim: wise adaptability. The result is a level of "theoretical insouciance," to borrow Struever's phrase, that is characteristic of rhetoric—a degree of casualness if not indifference with respect to systemization, definition, generalization

that stems from rhetoric's perpetual engagement in its own reinvention.[238] Further, under Quintilian, seeds planted by Cicero give rise to a new practice of copia, an art of accumulation and selection that becomes the central focus of topical inquiry in commonplace books. In medieval florilegia, the topically organized gathering of argumentative content described by Cicero becomes a material, literary pursuit: gathering takes place in notebooks, under topical heads, resulting in a genre that is very similar to commonplace books in form if not function.

Humanists continued to use florilegium-style notebooks, while granting the topics and commonplaces a more active, inventional role in considering the possibilities of a given idea, inaugurating the rich tradition of commonplace books described at the start of this chapter. In Renaissance commonplace books, the topics became an art of *copia*, a way of building an understanding of an idea by examining it from numerous vantages so that one might argue effectively on that topic, no matter the audience or occasion. For Agricola, the dialectical topics directed this kind of inquiry: one grasped the possibilities for presenting the philosopher, for example, by considering the philosopher's predications—different articulations of genus, species, antecedents, and so forth. The topics made it possible to systematically interrogate an idea, revealing the ways in which it could be bent—while still retaining its integrity—to serve whatever argument one was required to make. For Erasmus, such a systematized process was less necessary; his aim was no longer legitimacy, but accumulation—a storehouse of diverse *exempla* that could be called upon to speak pleasingly and persuasively about any matter to any audience. In both cases, *copia* was foremost a mode of preparation. The process of collecting the range of articulations associated with an idea produced not only a cache of rhetorical possibility,

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[238] See Struever, Rhetoric, Modality, Modernity, 7, 25.

but also a deep understanding of that idea—a sense of what was most essential and consistent across its myriad instantiations.

The commonplace book, then, can be seen as a humanistic rearticulation of topical inquiry that continued to assist in teaching distinctly rhetorical habits. By collecting numerous ways of viewing a particular topic, these notebooks cultivated an awareness of perspective and a readiness to expound upon an idea in any number of ways, depending on the situation. In these books, the topics were subject headings that served almost literally as "common places": repositories in which to gather the range of ways that a particular matter might be treated—and from which to compose arguments to persuade audiences of disparate views on matters for which no certain answer was available.

By interweaving copia and topical inquiry to develop ideas (e.g. the philosopher) through the systematic layering of perspectives, humanist commonplacers were, in a sense, transcending the divide between words and things, producing, under each topical head, an object, legible to all. Thus we see the beginnings of a mode of rhetorical invention that is both ingenious and deeply traditional. In commonplace books, the resources of rhetoric produce a collection of diverse perspectives, intended to serve individual orator's aims of eloquence, but with the secondary effect of facilitating the inquiry into and art of making common objects. Rhetoric, in this manner, reveals its potential as a technology of common ground—simultaneously a mode of inquiring into and means of producing shared objects of understanding.

This ontological rhetorical capacity is more fully developed in natural historical commonplacing, particularly under Bacon. Unlike the humanist commonplacers who gathered *sententiae* in preparation for eloquent argumentation, Baconian historians were to fill their notebooks with observations about natural phenomena as a first step toward discovering their

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what was essential in the. In place of the literary commonplaces of the wise, one finds observations of flame, heat, air, collected from a wide range of sources and organized under heads designed to correspond with discrete entities in nature.

Importantly, such natural historical commonplacing is best understood as a pivot rather than departure from standard Renaissance practices. While Bacon is often viewed as pursuing a radical shift from words to things, he does not reinvent the commonplace book from the ground up to catalog the natural world at the exclusion of words; rather, he recognizes the power of the resources already within it: the topics. Baconian natural history is topical inquiry, appropriated for the cooperative discovery and invention of natural phenomena.

But here is the pivot: in humanist notebooks, the object was the accidental shape of the repository; in natural historical notebooks, the object was the aim. This distinction appears quite clearly in the foregoing discussion of Erasmus, whose emphasis on persuasion and eloquence— the pleasures of variation, the selection of the most apt exempla—renders the commonplace book a preparatory aid, its inventional power largely unrealized. Bacon turns the compiler's attention to the shape of the whole, apprehending the entries beneath a topical head as an object, rather than a list of particular examples. Yet he too views the commonplace book as a kind of preparatory reserve—a "storehouse" of raw materials that only take shape in the hands of the natural philosopher. Baconian natural history accumulates particulars; Baconian induction, the work of the natural philosopher, transforms them into generalized, common objects.

Locke shares the Erasmian investment in the appropriate, while embracing the cumulative, object-centered Baconian tradition, so that topical inquiry and *copia* become a means of constituting community through consensus, or sensing together, rather than persuasion. The following chapter works to ground this view of Locke in his epistemological and political

works. By treating Locke's theory and practice of commonplacing as fully integrated with—and integral to—his broader intellectual project, we may appreciate the rhetorical power of his Baconian inheritance and the manner in which he redeployed it for a new and distinctly early modern project: the pursuit of consensus through collective (topical) inquiry.

3.0 Locke: Critic of Commonplacing or "Master of Order"?

Locke is a seemingly paradoxical figure in the history of commonplacing. On one hand, he openly disparaged the practice, arguing, for example, that it "teaches a man to be a fencer; but in the irreconcilable war between truth and falsehood…seldom or never enables him to choose the right side."[1] On the other hand, his own commonplace books played a central role in his intellectual activities, shaping how he recorded and referenced information throughout his life. Locke was an avid commonplacer from his early years at Oxford; by the end of his life, his notebook entries numbered in the tens of thousands, covering matters ranging from medicine and iatrochemistry to recipes and travel notes.[2] Even more strikingly, he developed his own method for indexing notebook entries, which, with the encouragement of his close friend, Nicholas Toinard, became his first major publication.[3] Locke's *Méthode nouvelle de dresser des recueils*, remained influential into the nineteenth century, earning him a prominent place in the history of commonplacing.[4] So renowned were his notebooks, in fact, that he earned the title "Master of Order" in Ephraim Chambers' *Cyclopaedia* (1728).[5]

Can the critic of commonplacing and the Master of Order be reconciled? A close examination of Locke's critiques alongside his own notebooks reveals surprisingly little

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[1] Locke, "Study,", 103.

[2] For an account of the contents of Locke's medical commonplace books, see J.R. Milton, "John Locke's Medical Notebooks," *The Locke Newsletter* 28 (1997), 138.

[3] Locke's *Méthode nouvelle de dresser des recueils* was originally published in 1686; an English translation, *A New and Easie Method of Making Common-Place-Books*, was published posthumously in 1706. For Toinard's encouragement to publish, see Nicolas Toinard to John Locke, 20/30 August, 1679 (*The Correspondence of John Locke, Vol. 2, Letters 462-848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), L.495, 79).

[4] On the reception and influence of Locke's *Méthode nouvelle* see Dacome, "Noting the Mind: Commonplace Books and the Pursuit of the Self in Eighteenth-Century Britain"; Stolberg, "John Locke's 'New Method'", 456; and Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, 279.

[5] Chambers' *Cyclopaedia* vol. 1, entry for "Common-Places," quoted in Yeo, *Notebooks, English Virtuosi, and Early Modern Science*, 175-176.

contradiction—particularly if we regard him as not only a practitioner, but also an important theorist of commonplacing, who, like the figures in the previous chapter, adapted the practice of topically guided compilation to match the character and exigencies of his moment. To approach Locke in this manner, we must understand his engagement with commonplacing in the context of the pursuit for which he adapted it: his lifelong (and markedly rhetorical) pursuit of *seeing together*, an ambition made more pressing and elusive by the widespread fragmentation (epistemological, political, religious, cultural, linguistic) he perceived in his own moment. Amidst such fragmentation, commonplace books proved a surprisingly powerful resource for producing common ground, serving as a means of standardizing perception, relating observations, and making ideas sharable. Lockean commonplacing, I will argue, was a rhetorical technology adapted to address the rhetorical problems central to his work.

This reading of Locke runs counter to those that characterize him as the "arch-individualist" not only in his political and epistemological positions but also his commonplacing practices themselves. As we saw in Chapter 2, Lockean commonplacing has been widely interpreted as an individualistic endeavor—the development of a private system of reference designed to assist him alone.[6] In practice, however, Locke's commonplacing activities served a demonstrably communal role: the topical headings that organized his notebooks were tools not only for retrieving information, but also for bringing into conversation observations from a wide range of sources, often including his own experiences and experiments. As a commonplacer, Locke facilitated the shared production of shared objects of understanding that were legible to

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[6] Yeo's extensive work on Locke's note-taking frequently alleges this kind of individualism. For a recent example, see *Notebooks, English Virtuosi, and Early Modern Science*, 218. Moss similarly credits Locke, along with Bernard Lamy—another 17th century critic-practitioner of commonplacing—with reducing commonplace books to entirely personal tools for information retrieval (Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, 275-2). I address these charges in detail in section 2.2.6.

all. Further, he contributed to natural historical inquiry primarily as a kind of hub—Locke himself was, in a sense, a site of common ground, meditating between and connecting observers; soliciting, interfacing, and distributing observations and even specimens.[7] Chapter 6 examines these activities in detail to show how Locke's commonplacing worked to foster the kind of community he envisioned. The goal of this chapter and the two that follow to draw out the theoretical grounds for reading these activities and their underlying commitments as fundamentally rather than incidentally concerned with community—and, importantly, with rhetoric.

This chapter begins by distinguishing Locke's use of commonplacing and topical inquiry from the literary practices he so openly disparaged. In spite of his substantial inheritance from the rhetorical tradition, there is no denying that he rejected all things rhetorical by name, deriding the "topical man," classing the figures of eloquence as "the perfect cheats," and citing the teaching of rhetoric itself as evidence of "how much men love to deceive and be deceived."[8] To establish a theoretical rationale for what Locke takes from the tradition and what he leaves behind, I turn to "Study," a relatively early writing (roughly contemporaneous with his *Méthode nouvelle*) that offers an especially clear articulation of his concerns with literary commonplacing. In addition to identifying the features of the tradition that Locke is eager to abandon—most notably, its apparent lack of accountability to the world—and those that it retains, "Study" points to two tensions that structure his broader relationship with rhetoric: an ambivalence toward words and an ambivalence toward authority. In both of these tensions, we will see, Locke attacks

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[7] See for example Stephen A. Harris and Peter R. Anstey, "Locke and Botany," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 37, no. 2 (2006) on Locke's collection and distribution of seeds and cuttings among prominent botanists and the likelihood—and the likelihood that he made, through these activities, substantial contributions to major early modern herbaria.

[8] For Locke's attacks on the "topical man," see Locke, "Study," 103-104. For his attacks on figural rhetoric, see *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), III.x.33.

the commonplace book not because he rejects the rhetorical enterprise, but because he is in fact fiercely committed to its pursuit of collective life. His vitriol is rather directed at the traditional means of rhetoric (in his mind, the temptations of eloquence, the ambiguities of figures, the cacophony of *copia*, the tyranny of *auctoritates*), which he sees as foreclosing shared understanding and destabilizing social ties.

The second part of this chapter addresses Locke's ambivalence toward language. Turning to Locke's discussion of words in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, we find that while he celebrates language as a divinely bestowed tool for facilitating collective life, he is deeply concerned the misunderstandings that occur when words signify different ideas in different minds. Locke's remedy—standardizing clear and distinct definitions for each word— resolves his concerns about the ambiguities of rhetoric and copious discourse, but fails to address a more serious problem: the question of whose definitions to use, when, as Locke puts it "nobody [has] an authority to establish the precise signification of words."[9] This framing of the problem of definition as problem of authority provides a foundation for Chapter 4, which traces Locke's efforts to conceptualize authority as a means of producing shared understanding without overriding individual perception. Together, these chapters give shape to the rhetorical exigency to which Lockean commonplacing responds, making it possible to reclaim this endeavor, so often dismissed as merely instrumental, as integral to his broader intellectual pursuits.

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[9] *Essay*, III.ix.8.

3.1 Against the "Topical Man": Early Critiques in "Study"

Locke's well-known concerns about rhetoric, reading, and received wisdom make him a somewhat unexpected paragon of seventeenth-century commonplacing. Indeed, Locke expressed numerous reservations about traditional commonplacing itself. These concerns are, perhaps, most clearly outlined and developed in "Study," a 1677 journal entry from his time in France.[10] While "Study" itself was never published, it introduces a number of themes that Locke continues in subsequent pedagogical and epistemological works (most directly, *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, the focus of Chapter 6 in this dissertation).

"Study" is a treatise on reading practices—on what, why, how, and even when to read— and an examination of the extent to which the understanding can be cultivated by engaging written works. Locke is characteristically ambivalent on the latter of these concerns. He acknowledges, rather begrudgingly, our indebtedness to books, but focuses primarily on criticizing and circumscribing their role in cultivating the understanding—"Study" is, to a great extent, a treatise on what and how *not* to study, driven by a set of largely pragmatic concerns and considerations that give shape to Locke's misgivings about commonplace books.

First, reflecting a theme central to his political and epistemological thought, Locke emphasizes the importance of adapting practices and principles to the particular circumstances at hand. In this case, the question of what and how to study must, to a large extent, be answered in a manner that attends to the individual's particularities: their disposition and circumstances, their

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[10] For a discussion of possible inspirations for "Study," see Richard Yeo, "John Locke's' of Study'(1677): Interpreting an Unpublished Essay," *Locke Studies* 3 (2003), 148-156.

proclivities and limitations, and their so-called calling in life.[11] Accordingly, Locke offers little in the way of specific positive instruction, instead laying out in broad strokes the sorts of aims that one should have in developing a plan of study (truth and utility, particularly in relation to one's calling) and the kinds of habits one should employ in pursuing it.[12] By contrast, his admonitions are more specific and directed at misguided habits and motivations, particularly those cultivated by participation in university disputations, where commonplace books played a central role.

Second, anticipating the *Essay*, Locke insists that humans have access only to a kind of provisional knowledge, gained through the senses and rational faculties. The aim of human understanding, then, is to acquire reliable knowledge about this world alone. As Locke puts it, "The beatific vision of the other life needs not the help of this dim twilight…the principal end why we are to get knowledge here, is to make use of it for the benefit of ourselves and others in this world."[13] Such knowledge is worth pursuing not for itself, but to the extent that it is *useful* in helping us act righteously and effectively in this life.[14]

Third, Locke reminds us that life is short and offers little time for study, so we must be very targeted in our reading and mindful of what is likely to lead us astray. Confronting the staggering volume of information available to the early modern reader, he chooses a different

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[11] Locke's stated hope is that with some general guidance on what to prioritize in study, "it will be easy for every one to determine with himself what tongues and histories are to be studied by him, and how far in subservience to his general or particular calling" (96).

[12] Locke devotes a sizable portion of "Study" to the cultivation of successful, sustainable study habits, divided into habits of the body and the mind. And as with the question of *what* to read, *how* to read depends on the individual: "the great secret is to find out the proportion; the difficulty whereof lies in this, that it must not only be varied according to the constitution and strength of every individual man, but it must also change with the temper, vigour, and circumstances and health of every particular man…" (97).

[13] Locke, "Study," 96.

[14] Locke underscores this point by stressing that humans should not sacrifice their wellbeing for the sake of knowledge, for "if by gaining it we destroy our health, we labour for a thing that will be useless in our hands…we rob God of so much service, and our neighbor of all that help, which, in a state of health, with moderate knowledge, we might have been able to perform." ("Study," 96-97).

path from his humanist counterparts: selectivity. He argues for this decision on epistemological as well as practical grounds: Faced with more books than we could ever read, Locke reminds us that most are filled with ideas that are baseless, redundant, or, quite often, both.[15] Accordingly, the encyclopedic knowledge amassed in traditional commonplace books cannot and should not be the goal. Locke's aim, in "Study," is to offer the reader a path to knowledge that is simultaneously more sustainable and more reliable.

Finally, joining the preceding two concerns, Locke argues that there exists tremendous "variety, contradiction, and extravagancy," not to mention bias, even among the learned, so reading widely on opinions and speculative matters is likely to produce confusion and incoherence in one's thoughts. Observing how speculations "carry with them the great exterior of learning, and so are a glittering temptation in the studious man's way,"[16] he urges us toward inquiry into "more material points,"—not opinions, but ideas built from and tested by experience.[17]

These commitments—to what is appropriate, useful, practical, material—stem from a close connection between understanding and action in Lockean thought: we study to understand; we understand to act; we act to improve our lives in this world. Because human knowledge is provisional and limited almost entirely to the sensible world, Locke embraces a kind of empirically anchored pragmatism that guides and unites virtually all of his intellectual activity, from his epistemological and political writings to his commonplace books and involvement with natural history and medicine. "Study" charts a path to right action, rooted not in what is eloquent or "true," but what is *useful and appropriate* in the sense of being compatible with the world that

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[15] E.g. "Study," 92-93. On the unique unreliability of ancient wisdom preserved in commonplace books see also *Essay*, IV.xvi.10.
[16] "Study," 95.
[17] "Study," 92-93.

we experience. Locke's approach to commonplacing, we will see, cultivates the habits of mind necessary for this task, collecting observations from the world of experience so that we might engage with it reliably and beneficially. His central critique of the humanist approach echoes Bacon's: it honors no such commitment to the world.

What "Study" makes clear is that, in want of such a commitment, traditional commonplacing is not just useless; it is, quite often, the *source* of the obstacles and distractions to understanding that Locke cautions against. Indeed, when Locke enumerates these obstacles at the start of the essay, all five clearly derive from the Renaissance commonplace books and/or their use in disputations:[18] 1) the use and proliferation of ornamental language, 2) a stress upon learning and accumulating the opinions of others[19] 3) a preoccupation with superficial linguistic concerns: "[p]urity of language, a polished style, or exact criticism in foreign languages" (foremost, Greek and Latin), 4) recourse to antiquity and historical *exempla*, and 5) engaging in "remote useless speculations."[20] Nearly all of these obstacles reflect Locke's concern with superficiality or, more accurate, disconnection: the distance between language, opinions, antiquity, speculation and the world in which we live.

The one apparent exception is Locke's admonition against historical *exempla*, which, at first glance, would seem to be a reservoir of precisely the kind of practical, materially anchored knowledge that he seeks. Instead, he argues that there is little difference between history and

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[18] "Study," 91-95.

[19] On this later point, see Yeo, "John Locke's' of Study'," 152-156.

[20] In this initial assessment, Locke sees little difference between history and myth as a source of moral guidance ("For the stories of Alexander and Caesar…are not one jot to be preferred to the history of Robin Hood, or the Seven Wise Masters."), apart from the tendency of the former, with its overemphasis on war and conquest, "to make butcher and rapine the chief marks and very essence of human greatness" (94). But he returns to the subject of history in the final paragraph of the essay, where he makes a striking call for historicization: When one with sound moral principles and judgment looks to history "he shall see the rise of opinions, and find from what slight, and sometimes shameful occasions, some of them have taken their rise, which yet afterwards have had great authority, and passed almost for sacred in the world, and borne down all before them" (108).

myth as a source of moral guidance ("For the stories of Alexander and Caesar…are not one jot to be preferred to the history of Robin Hood, or the Seven Wise Masters."), apart from the tendency of the former, with its overemphasis on war and conquest, "to make butcher and rapine the chief marks and very essence of human greatness."[21] In this argument, Locke displays three qualities that are vital to understanding his treatment of commonplacing: a rejection of received wisdom, an awareness that such wisdom often feigns universality while in fact articulating a particular perspective, and a Baconian desire to see not just what has been but also *what could be otherwise*—an investment, that is, in improving, rather than replicating, the human condition. These qualities are crystalized is the final paragraph of "Study," where Locke revisits the subject of history, this time to make a striking call for historicization: In history, a trained mind (one with sound moral principles and judgment)

> shall see the rise of opinions, and find from what slight, and sometimes shameful
> occasions, some of them have taken their rise, which yet afterwards have had
> great authority, and passed almost for sacred in the world, and borne down all
> before them.[22]

This critical tracing of established "truths" to their roots in happenstance, deceit, or the opinions of a few complements the kind inquiry that Locke promotes in his epistemological works, performs in his commonplace books, and relies upon in his political works: a collective mode of inquiry that founds our ideas about the world upon what is common across the experiences of many. As in the natural historical commonplace book, the copious observations of others work to anchor the beholder's understanding in the world of experience, while also serving as checks for one another, revealing, through accumulation, the most salient features of the matter in question. Without this kind of anchoring, history is indistinguishable from as myth.

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[21] "Study," 94.
[22] "Study," 108.

Thus we arrive at what Locke calls the "grand miscarriage in our study:" our blind acceptance of inherited wisdom.[23] Through a mix of cunning, ignorance, and interest, "opinions come to be settled and fixed in men's minds, which, whether true or false, there they remain in reputation as substantial material truths, and so are seldom questioned."[24] What makes certain opinions material is not matter itself, but rather their deposition in the mind, through discourse, cultural norms, and education in particular.[25] In this assertion, we catch a glimpse of the power that the commonplace book holds in Locke's though: as one of the principle means by which ancient opinions are replicated and revered, it is an almost literal site of this kind of deposition. Entry upon entry, layer upon layer, unchecked wisdom sets upon the page.

Locke then turns to commonplacing directly, charging it with the inverse problem in his most explicit attack on the practice. Not only does commonplacing embrace literary *sententiae* without considering their correspondence to reality, it promotes a total indifference to reality by accumulating and celebrating opinions that are in fact incompatible. Thus Locke derides "bookish men," who comb books for arguments on both sides of an issue, and "endeavor to lodge them safe in their memory to serve them upon occasion."[26] As we saw in Chapter 2, Locke tends to view the entries beneath his notebook heads as a whole; he resists the use of commonplace books as preparatory stores of eloquent *exempla* that may be plucked as needed for different occasions. In "Study," we begin to see why: the approach to reading cultivated by traditional commonplace books sets a man off before the world as a very knowing learned man,

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[23] "Study," 103.
[24] "Study," 101.
[25] See "Study," 100 for Locke's focus on the role of education in "planting" opinions in peoples' minds.
[26] "Study," 103. Locke's critique is directed primarily at university disputations, where students could be assigned to either side of an issue.

but upon trial will not be found to be so; indeed, it may make a man a ready talker and disputant, but not an able man.[27]

Locke charges literary commonplacing with promoting an inventionally impoverished approach to argumentation that has been attributed to the use of commonplaces at least since Aristotle: regurgitating eloquent arguments with the aim of impressing and persuading one's audience or opponent.[28] Locke's chief concern with this method is its role in training the understanding to operate without concern for reality. In teaching the student to select *exempla* according to their ability to persuade an audience, it prizes eloquence over agreement with reality; in collecting perspectives without attending to how they do and do not fit together, it inures the user to cognitive dissonance; in teaching argument from the statements of others, it leaves students unable to trace—or defend—a position to its roots.

Thus we arrive at Locke's principal critique of the traditional commonplace book: Its emphasis on superficial concerns—style over substance, victory over truth, rote memory over understanding, magnificence over utility—separates us from the world, producing what Locke calls the "topical man," who

> with his great stock of borrowed and collected arguments will be found often to contradict himself, for the arguments of divers men being often founded upon different notions, and deduced from contrary principles, though they may be all directed to the support or confutation of some one opinion, do not withstanding, often really clash one with another.[29]

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[27] "Study," 103.

[28] For Aristotle's attack on related practices under the sophists, see *Sophistical Refutations*, 183b-184a.

[29] Locke, "Study," 103-104.

Training in traditional commonplacing creates dabblers who are content to merely repeat eloquent arguments without fully comprehending their implications or their incompatibility with each other.

These are forceful attacks, particularly from one whose "new method of making commonplace books" was published the year prior.[30] And it is tempting to dismiss them as either uncharitably directed at a straw man of rhetorical practice or else implicitly rhetorical, rejecting commonplace books because they are ineffective preparation for persuading rationally minded early modern audiences. But neither of these interpretations tells the whole story.

Locke's critiques do not foreclose the project of commonplacing entirely, nor do they categorically reject its traditional features and aims, many of which "Study" continues to embrace. While clearly rejecting the humanist preoccupation with ancient authorities and literary *exempla*, Locke remains committed, both in theory and in practice, to reading from credible sources, recording and organizing what is useful in them, and adapting the resulting body of knowledge to particular situations. But, as we saw in Chapter 2, he approaches these activities quite differently, having directed them toward a different end: not persuasion, but shared understanding, rooted in experience. Following Bacon, Locke's commonplace books collect not what is pleasing, but what is observable—not the eloquent words of a revered authority, but the experiences of many.

But Locke is also doing something new: his commonplace books are not merely preparatory stores, as they were for both Erasmus and Bacon; they are sites of production, capable of constructing common objects of understanding from experience that is made collective *through collection*. This innovation, I argue, may be understood as a major, if

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[30] See section 2.2.6 for an overview of Locke's "new method."

overlooked, contribution to the rhetorical tradition, and as central to Locke's markedly rhetorical efforts to theorize the conditions of possibility for community, amidst what he perceives as deep political and epistemological fragmentation. In following Bacon's turn from books to the world—from the literary to the natural historical commonplace book—his goal is to ground community not in philosophical truths, but rather in pragmatic, provisional, arguably rhetorical knowledge: the appropriate, the useful, the practical, the material. And when he attacks literary commonplacing for its elevation of eloquence and received wisdom, it is because he sees it as antithetical to these aims—aims that he shares with rhetoric. What "Study" suggests and his later works make clear is that Locke is both committed to the rhetorical project of collective life and convinced that the traditional rhetorical means for pursuing it are bankrupt.

Locke, we will see, adapts topical inquiry to early modern exigencies in a way that reinvigorates its long-held commitments. First, however, we must turn to his epistemological and political works, to understand the extent of his devotion to the rhetorical project of collective life, and the extent to which his rejection of the existing rhetorical means threatens this lifelong pursuit. The critiques against eloquence and ancient wisdom in "Study" point to two deep ambivalences in Locke's broader body of work—ambivalences toward words and authority, respectively—that structure his tortured relationship with rhetoric and his views on what commonplace books should and should not do. For Locke, I will argue, words and authority are both the basis for civil society and its greatest threats. The task is now to elaborate a distinctly Lockean conception of each—and to understand how this conception not only shapes, but also necessitates a Lockean theory of commonplacing. The remainder of this chapter examines Locke's problem of words; Chapter 4 turns to his problem of authority.

3.2 Locke's Problem of Words

Of the numerous obstacles to understanding identified at the start of "Study," Locke addresses words first. His concern in this early work is primarily with eloquence—and, in particular, the proliferation of superfluous, ornamental words in university disputation and learned discourse, words that "leave distinctions without finding a difference in things."[31] While Erasmus celebrated *copia* as a capacity "to turn the same thought into many forms, as the famous Proteus…changed his form," for Locke, this abundance masks a poverty of reference.[32] *Copia* gives us so many different ways to talk about an idea, while muddling or, at best, deferring our understanding of the idea itself. This view of eloquence as an enemy of the understanding persists in the *Essay*, giving shape to Locke's infamous attacks on rhetoric, understood primarily as the art of figurative speech. Rhetoric, "that powerful instrument of error and deceit," exploits, in his view, the natural imperfections of language to beguile, derail, or deceive—it turns ambiguity into an art form.[33]

At the heart of these attacks is a concern with the ambiguities that result from words that are not accountable to the world they purport to represent—a concern that underpins not only Locke's attacks on rhetoric, but also his more general concerns about language. Because words are, in his view, mere sounds that bear no necessary connection to the idea for which they stand, they allow reason—and conversation—to hover, unaccountable, above the world, giving cover to erroneous and malformed ideas, creating differences that don't exist, and eliding ones that do.[34]

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[31] Locke, "Study," 91.
[32] Erasmus, *De Copia*, 1.8, 16-17.
[33] Locke, *Essay*, III.x.34.
[34] *Essay*, III.ii.8.

This is not to say that Locke had no use for language. He was not, as John Durham Peters has suggested, one for whom "language and rhetoric were excrescences, scales on the eyes that should be stripped away so that things as they really are can speak."[35] While Locke clearly championed empirical responsibility and abhorred the excesses and ambiguities of figural rhetoric, language itself was, in his view, the very "instrument of knowledge."[36] Adopting his idiom to characterize his position, we might describe Locke as promoting an instrumental view of language, the compact he demanded between words and ideas rooted not in reality but utility. This view is only partially developed in "Study," where the young Locke still thinks it possible "to think upon things…separate from words."[37] Words, he writes, "are the great and almost only way of conveyance of one man's thoughts to another man's understanding."[38] But even in the *Essay*, where words become the means by which we form, relate, and renegotiate ideas, their social function remains primary: "God, having designed man for a sociable creature…furnished him also with language, which was to be the great instrument and common tie of society."[39] Language is not simply a tool; it is "the great instrument"—*the* tool—given us by God to cultivate shared understanding and, from it, common ground.

So when the *Essay* turns to the imperfection of words, we must understand its arguments as politically as well as epistemologically driven. The problem of language is the central problem of political life, as we see when Locke asks

> whether the greatest part of the disputes in the world are not merely verbal, and
> about the signification of words; and whether, if the terms they are made in were
> defined, and reduced in their signification (as they must be where they signify

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[35] Peters, "John Locke, the Individual, and the Origin of Communication", 394.
[36] *Essay*, III.ix.21
[37] "Study," 104.
[38] "Study," 104.
[39] *Essay*, III.ii.1

anything) to determined collections of the simple ideas they do or should stand

for, those disputes would not end of themselves, and immediately vanish.[40]

Superfluous and ambiguous significations do not just impair the understanding; they lead to "the greatest part of the disputes in the world." These high political stakes give Locke's critiques of language a level of urgency that explains, perhaps, their vitriol. Like so many of his English contemporaries, the horror of civil war looms large in his work, and he commits himself to eradicating what he sees as the chief cause: verbal disputes.

Anxieties about the ambiguities of language were by no means unique to Locke—though for Locke, we will see, they proved uniquely intractable. Concerns about the integrity of verbal communication—and its political implications—abounded in early modernity, famously among his Royal Society interlocutors, some of whom sought recourse to a universal language.[41] Foremost among these efforts was founding member John Wilkins's *An Essay Towards a Real Character, and a Philosophical Language*. Wilkins argued that individuals share "same *Internal Notion* or *Apprehension of things*"—for example *horse* or *tree*—and what varies is only the names we use to express those notions. Thus, he contends, "if men should generally consent upon the same way or manner of *Expression*, as they do agree in the same *Notion*, we should then be freed from that Curse of the Confusion of Tongues, with all the unhappy consequences of it."[42] Like many seventeenth-century language reformers, Wilkins pursued a universal language built upon these shared notions—echoing Bacon, "a *Real universal Character* that

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[40] *Essay*, III.xi.7. See also III.ix.21, where Locke suggests that if greater attention were paid to the imperfections of words, "the way to knowledge, and perhaps peace too, [would] lie a great deal opener than it does."

[41] While John Wilkins is the best-known example, a number of members were actively engaged in language planning (e.g. Seth Ward and John Ray, with whom Wilkins worked closely, and Francis Lodwick, who pursued a philosophical language and universal alphabet over the course of several publications), some—including Robert Hooke, Ray, and Lodwick—taking up Wilkin's own project after his death.

[42] John Wilkins, *An Essay Towards a Real Character, and a Philosophical Language* (London: Gellibrand, 1668), 20, author's italics. In *De Augmentis Scientiarum*, Bacon speaks of "real characters…which represent neither letters nor words, but things and notions" (VI.i).

should not signifie *words*, but *things* and *notions*."[43] Following, it seems, Bacon's call for a "philosophical grammar…which should diligently inquire, not the analogy of words with one another, but the analogy between words and things," Wilkins did not attempt to discover or elevate an existing language.[44] Rather, he built his language from scratch, aspiring to a system of artificial characters whose relations reflected the natural order of things, famously drawing upon taxonomies provided by his Royal Society colleagues.

While Locke shared the concerns that motivated these endeavors, his epistemological commitments (and, we will see, practical orientation) prevented him from sharing their optimism. Indeed, he rejected these aspirations to a universal language as "ridiculous," scoffing at the belief "that all men should have the same notions."[45] Hannah Dawson traces this rejection to two crucial claims in the *Essay*: first, that words cannot signify real essences but only ideas (a claim that, in Dawson's words, "jeopardizes the link between words and the world which was one of the means by which the commonality of meaning was secured"); and second, that these ideas are the creations of individual minds, making variation between minds all but inevitable.[46] The second of these claims is, she notes, the dominant reason why Locke cannot join in the pursuit of a universal language: Because he does not believe that so-called notions are shared by all, the ambiguity of words cannot be resolved simply by standardizing usage. The symbol for

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[43] Wilkins, *An Essay Towards a Real Character*, 13, author's italics.

[44] Such had been the aim of those who sought the Adamic language (the original, perfect language, spoken by Adam), as well as those who, as was more common by the mid-seventeenth century, worked to elevate their national language to universal status by demonstrating its Adamic ancestry and/or inherent rationality, descriptive capacity, and so forth, as in Justus Georg Schottelius's *Ausführliche Arbeit von der Teutschen HaubtSprache* (1663). See Clauss, who further observes that resistance to such efforts often came from speakers of English, "a language with less claim than most to linguistic purity." Clauss, "John Wilkins' Essay," 534-535.

[45] Locke, *Essay*, III.xi.2: "I am not so vain to that any one can pretend to attempt the perfect reforming the languages of the world, no not so much as that of his own country, without rendring himself ridiculous. To require that men should use their words constantly in the same sense, and for none but determined and uniform ideas, would be to think that all men should have the same notions, and should talk of nothing but what they have clear and distinct ideas of."

[46] Hannah Dawson, "A Ridiculous Plan: Locke and the Universal Language Movement," *Locke Studies* (2007), 151.

"horse," however fixed, generates a different idea in every mind. But given Locke's desire to anchor language in the world, the first claim is of at least equal import to understanding his relationship with language.

How does Locke reconcile his claim that words do not signify things with his insistence that words be compatible with experience? One could justifiably argue that he does not. In Dawson's view, Lockean language is, in spite of his efforts, inherently unstable, gravely imperiling his vision of civil society. This is an important and often-neglected insight to which I will return in Chapter 4. But for now I want to consider an alternative: Locke's treatment of language in the *Essay* does in fact hint at a solution, rooted in what I'm calling his "instrumental" treatment of language: words may be viewed as instruments of inquiry that produce world-compatible and (potentially) shareable ideas—not by capturing real essence but by guiding the perception to features of the world that are salient to a language community. Because Locke only hints at this possibility in the *Essay*, subsequent chapters will turn to his political works and commonplace books to fully develop it and argue its interpretive value. The remainder of this section will review its epistemological foundations.

One of Locke's most familiar arguments—that we are born with no innate knowledge—sets up a distinction between simple and complex ideas that is crucial to his dismissal of the language planners. Beginning as blank slates—*tabulae rasae*—our minds acquire ideas through sense experience. Simple ideas—sensations of blueness, bluntness, sweetness—are the basic units of sense perception, universal, discrete, and passively received.[47] These simple ideas are

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[47] *Essay*, II.xxxi.12: "*Simple* Ideas, which are…*copies*; but yet certainly *adequate*. Because being intended to express nothing but the power in Things to produce in the Mind such a Sensation, that Sensation, which it is produced, cannot but be the Effect of that Power." Locke proceeds to contrast simple ideas (adequate copies) with 1) complex ideas of substances (inadequate copies) and 2) complex ideas of modes and relations (inadequate originals or archetypes) (II.xxxi.13-14)

then actively combined by the mind into "complex" ideas that are "as various as men vary."

While Locke acknowledges that we begin life equipped with our mental faculties intact (and are thus not blank slates in the strictest sense), he holds that we develop these faculties in different ways, and that our habits of, for example, perception and judgment are shaped by our individual experiences.[48] So while simple ideas may be shared by all, the "Notions" of which Wilkins spoke—the conceit, or concept, of horse in one's mind—are complex ideas that are made differently by every mind."[49] Locke's concern, then, is not only that a single idea may be called up by numerous words (the problem that universal languages aimed to correct), but also, and more importantly, its reverse: that a single word may call up different collections of simple ideas in every mind.

In rejecting the presupposition that "all men should have the same notions," Locke transforms the pursuit of clear communication from a project of speaking together into one of making together by seeing together. His solution, as theorized in his political works and practiced in his commonplace books, is a mode of collective inquiry wherein shared habits of perception allow multiple individuals to perceive and privilege the same simple ideas and thus create the same complex idea.[50]

But what it means to sense together depends, to some extent, on whether we are forming ideas of *substances* (things in the world, like horse and gold) or *mixed modes* (abstract concepts

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[48] *Essay*, III.vi.27. See also II.xxiii.6.

[49] See also Dawson, "A Ridiculous Plan" 154.

[50] Note that while, for the present analysis, what matters is only that Locke's *viewed* the language reformers as essentialists, there is some scholarly disagreement about the extent to which they actually were. Dawson, for example, aligns with the standard reading of Wilkins and his counterparts as broadly, if latently and at times only instrumentally, beholden to the Aristotelian doctrine of natural kinds (in particular, 140, 153-154). For an alternative view of Wilkins as a conventionalist rather than essentialist, see, for example, Courtney Weiss Smith, "Rhyme and Reason in John Wilkins's Philosophical Language Scheme," *Modern Philology* 115, no. 2 (2017).

like justice and beauty).[51] The complex ideas of substances are collections of simple ideas that naturally occur together (for example, "the simple idea of a certain dull whitish colour, with certain degrees of weight, hardness, ductility, and fusibility" occur together in what we call lead), whereas mixed modes are "combinations of ideas as are not looked upon to be characteristical marks of any real beings that have a steady existence, but scattered and independent ideas put together by the mind."[52] While both kinds of ideas are actively created by the mind and stabilized via naming—by placing the associated simple ideas under a conceptually useful heading—our ideas of substances are formed in relation to some corporeal substance that naturally binds certain simple ideas together, whereas mixed modes are entirely human inventions—a collection of ideas that has no "archetype" in nature. The properties of substances adhere independent of our ideas of them; mixed modes must be thought into being.

3.2.1 Mixed Modes

Initially, the fully artificial nature of mixed modes makes them seem ideal for Locke's vision of clear communication: since we create them from the ground up, we need only break them back down into their constituent parts to arrive at a complete definition, from which others may reconstruct the idea in question. Locke illustrates this process with a story of Adam, who, wishing to solicit Eve's assistance in a delicate interpersonal matter, conceives of two novel ideas to describe it to her: the first, which he names *kinneah*, is roughly analogous to what we

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[51] Locke also speaks of simple modes, "which are only variations, or different combinations of the same simple idea, without the mixture of any other;—as a dozen, or score; which are nothing but the ideas of so many distinct units added together." While simple modes are technically complex ideas, they are "contained within the bounds of one simple idea" (*Essay*, II.xii.5).

[52] For Locke's account of lead, see *Essay*, II.xii.6; on mixed modes see II.xxii.1.

might call jealousy, the second, named *niouph*, to adultery.[53] But for Adam, of course, *kinneah* and *niuoph* are not analogous to a preexisting idea; they are assembled "only by his own imagination, not taken from the existence of anything, and to them he gave names to denominate all things that should happen to agree to those his abstract ideas, without considering whether any such thing did exist or not."[54] Unlike Adam's ideas of substances, which, we will see, must conform to a "standard made by nature," *kinneah* and *niouph* derived from a "standard…of his own making."[55]

Because mixed modes are purely human creations they can, in theory, be known completely and thus communicated with perfect clarity.[56] But after they enter common use, things become more complicated:

> If [Adam's children] would use these words as names of species already established and agreed on, they were obliged to conform the ideas in their minds, signified by these names, to the ideas that they stood for in other men's minds, as to their patterns and archetypes, and then indeed their ideas of these complex modes were liable to be inadequate, as being very apt not to be exactly conformable to the ideas in other men's minds, using the same names.[57]

In the realm of common use, mixed modes follow a standard of *someone's* creation, but for everyone besides this creator, that standard is only partly known. Locke's solution appears straightforward: "to ask the meaning of any word we understand not of him that uses it"—in short, definition.

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[53] *Essay*, III.iv.44. Adam appears regularly in early modern discussions of language, as a means of talking about its origins.

[54] *Essay*, III.iv.45. A more detailed account of this example is may be necessary to differentiate these two ideas from those based upon natural archetypes: Adam, concerned about Lamech's gloomy disposition, more or less *invents* a reason for this change in mood. Lamech, he concludes, must suspect that his wife has eyes for another man. He then invents two new ideas (and with them, words) with which to explain the situation to Eve and ask her to speak with the wife. Embarrassingly, he learns that he was entirely incorrect: Lamech's gloominess was not a result of *kinneah*, but rather having recently killed a man. Nevertheless, Adam continues to use *kinneah* and *niouph*, not as approximations of Lamech's actual mental state or marriage, but as the sets of simple ideas that he combined to describe what he originally imagined.

[55] *Essay*, III.iv.45.

[56] *Essay*, III.xi.15.

[57] *Essay*, III.iv.45.

What makes this ostensibly simple solution remarkable is what it suggests about the social nature of perception in Lockean epistemology. Because the simple ideas that constitute mixed modes are held together exclusively by naming, and because all of understanding is mediated by words, to adopt another's definition is to adopt that person's way of seeing. Participation in a language community thus obliges individuals "to conform the ideas in their minds…to the ideas that they stood for in other men's minds." For mixed modes, then, seeing together is achieved through convention: the agreement to adhere to a community's definitions and the perspective from which they arise.

In some respects, a conventionalist account of language seems to resolve Locke's dilemma, showing how words may be accountable to experience without claiming to signify things in the world. In such a view, words are compatible with experience not because their definitions derive from the unmediated natural world (where mixed modes do not exist), but because words give shape to the world as we perceive it, shaping our experiences, our understanding, our actions. And at times, Locke appears to embrace conventionalism, recommending common use[58] and definition[59] as the best sources of semantic stability, and even suggesting that moral discourse, consisting entirely in as mixed modes,[60] offers an opportunity for perfect communication: Because moral ideas, as mixed modes, can be completely defined, we should be able to speak about them without uncertainty or obscurity, in a fully abstract, almost mathematical manner.[61] But elsewhere Locke appears far less optimistic, insisting that in

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[58] E.g. *Essay*, III.vi.51, III.xi.11.

[59] E.g. *Essay*, III.vi.50, III.xi.15-18.

[60] Even when we invoke substances in moral discourse, it is also only as abstractions, ideals, "their divers natures…not so much inquired into as supposed" (*Essay*, III.xi.16). When, for example, we speak of a man who is subject to law, "we mean nothing by man but a corporeal rational creature: what the real essence or other qualities of that creature are in this case is no way considered" (*Essay*, III.xi.16). The objects of moral discourse, whether "justice" or "man," are creations of the mind, rather than nature.

[61] *Essay*, III.xi.16.

spite of these remedies, the names of mixed modes are "naturally" and unavoidably uncertain, "even in the mouths of those who had both the intention and the faculty of speaking as clearly as language was capable to express their thoughts."[62] Even as he acknowledges the value of clear and established conventions in reducing misunderstanding, he concludes that the imperfections of language are unavoidable.

While a number of factors contribute to this dismal conclusion, the most pervasive and intractable among them is strikingly political: because ideas are formed and named by inherently free and equal individuals, "nobody [has] an authority to establish the precise signification of words, nor [to determine] what ideas any one shall annex them."[63] Indeed, Locke observes that the very notion of propriety confronts this problem—how can we decide on proper usage, when do not share a sense for what is proper?[64] The question of communication thus becomes the question of authority—or, to put it simply, of *whose definition*?

This question, we will see, not only lies at the heart of Locke's concerns about words, it also imperils his political vision. For now, though, the key point is that in the face of this question of authority, mixed modes are particularly troublesome.[65] Unlike ideas of substances, with "standards in nature, whereby men may rectify and adjust their significations," mixed modes have no common standard and are thus free to proliferate boundlessly, not only among people, but also within individual minds.[66] So while current linguistic conventions are usually adequate, in situations where greater precision is required or where the stakes are higher,

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[62] *Essay*, III.ix.9.

[63] *Essay*, III.ix.8.

[64] *Essay*, III.ix.8.

[65] Locke hints at the political consequences of the imperfection of mixed modes, observing that "in the interpretation of laws, whether divine or human…comments beget comments, and explications make new matter for explications; and of limiting, distinguishing, varying the signification of these moral words, there is no end. These ideas of men's making are, by men still having the same power, multiplied in infinitum." (*Essay*, III.ix.9.)

[66] Dawson, "A Ridiculous Plan", 155-156. For Locke on inconsistencies between and within individuals, see *Essay*, III.ix.6.

individual definitions of mixed modes (for example "justice") are divergent enough to cause considerable misunderstanding. But definition and convention pose their own problems—as Locke's call for historicization suggests, he has considerable misgivings about simply fixing a definition and walking away. Mixed modes begin as "assemblages of ideas put together at the pleasure of the mind, pursuing its own ends of discourse, and suited to its own notions."[67] They are, in other words, private creations—reflections of the creator's experiences and interests that have no "archetype in nature" against which to be checked. As producers rather than products of the world of shared experience, they are ripe for exploitation and epitomize the lack of accountability to the world that poses, in Locke's view, the chief threat to clear communication.[68]

3.2.2 Complex Ideas of Substances

In contrast to mixed modes, ideas of substances are accountable to "archetypes made by nature," suggesting, at first glance, a way around the problem of authority.[69] Faced with the question of whose definition to use, one might simply answer: Nature's.[70] But Locke vehemently opposes this answer. Positioning himself, as he often does, against scholastic Aristotelianism, he rejects the doctrine of natural kinds and those who "have supposed a real essence belonging to every species, from which these properties all flow and would have their name of the species

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[67] *Essay*, III.ix.7.
[68] Section 5.1 of this dissertation reads Locke's *First Treatise of Government* as an attempt to historicize and thereby situate one such mixed mode: Robert Filmer's concept of "fatherhood," or "fatherly authority."
[69] *Essay*, III.vi.51.
[70] See again Peters's portrayal of Locke as attempting to strip away language so that "things as they really are can speak." Peters, "John Locke, the Individual, and the Origin of Communication", 394.

stand for that."[71] Suppositions of this kind conflict with one of the *Essay*'s foundational claims: that humans have no access to real essences of things (the "real, but unknown, constitution of their insensible parts; from which flow those sensible qualities which serve to distinguish them from one another"), but only "a sensitive knowledge; which extends not beyond the object present to our senses."[72] So while people typically "speak of species of things, as supposing them made by nature, and distinguished by real essences," they are in fact speaking only of the sensible qualities that real essences produce, qualities that the mind combines into complex ideas and fixes under names—in Locke's terminology, nominal essences. [73] Thus:

> Why do we say this is a horse, and that a mule; this is an animal, that an herb?
> How comes any particular thing to be of this or that sort, but because it has that
> nominal essence; or, which is all one, agrees to that abstract idea, that name is
> annexed to?[74]

In presenting essence as a matter of agreement, Locke again appears to adopt a conventionalist approach, this time with respect to substances. His rationale is not only epistemological but also practical: Because real essences are entirely unknowable: "if any one will regulate himself herein by supposed real essences, he will…be at a loss: and he will never be able to know when anything precisely ceases to be of [a certain] species."[75] It is only through acknowledging that our ideas of substances are *constructs* that crisp boundaries between ideas—and thus clear reasoning and communication—become possible.

Assertions of this kind drew misplaced charges of species nominalism from Locke's contemporaries—charges that persist today, in spite of his objections to them (e.g. in response to Molyneux: "I hope I have no where said, *there is no such sort of creatures in nature as birds*; if I

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[71] *Essay*, III.vi.49.
[72] *Essay*, III.iii.17, IV.iii.21. Locke elaborates on this latter point throughout IV.iii—see in particular 26.
[73] *Essay*, III.vi.49.
[74] *Essay*, III.vi.7.
[75] *Essay*, III.iii.13.

have it is both contrary to truth and to my opinion.")[76] For Locke, we may not be able to discern bright lines in nature, but we can—and must—draw lines that are consonant with the world as we experience it. He is not content to simply make up definitions and stabilize them with words; his vision of communication requires definitions that are not only stable and clear, but also, as we've seen, accountable to experience. Substances appear to offer such an opportunity for accountability, residing between the arbitrariness of mixed modes and the fixedness of real essences:

> [T]hough these nominal essences of substances are made by the mind, they are not yet made so arbitrarily as those of mixed modes…. the mind, in making its complex ideas of substances, only follows nature; and puts none together which are not supposed to have a union in nature. Nobody joins the voice of a sheep with the shape of a horse; nor the colour of lead with the weight and fixedness of gold, to be the complex ideas of any real substances; unless he has a mind to fill his head with chimeras, and his discourse with unintelligible words. Men observing certain qualities always joined and existing together, therein copied nature; and of ideas so united made their complex ones of substances.[77]

While nominal essences are mental constructs held together by convention, the process by which they are constructed is not entirely arbitrary, but rather based upon *observation*—a sense for properties that appear to have "a union in nature." Nature, then, plays a crucial, if circumscribed, role in their construction.

In the description above, nature appears to serve in a primarily negative capacity, telling us not what things really are, but what they are not, so that while our definitions of sheep and horse may vary, "[n]obody joins the voice of a sheep with the shape of a horse."[78] Identifying nature's positive contribution is somewhat more complicated. On one hand, we construct our

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[76] Locke to Molyneux, 20 December 1693 in *Correspondence Volume 4*, 626 (emphasis in original), quoted in Anstey, *John Locke and Natural Philosophy*, 205. For a thorough refutation of the dominant interpretation of Locke as a species nominalist, see Anstey, 204-218.

[77] *Essay,* III,vi,28, emphasis added.

[78] *Essay,* III.vi.28, emphasis added.

ideas from the sensible properties of things, which "flow from" real essences. On the other hand, none of these properties are essential in any real sense; rather, we make them essential when we include them in our definitions of a species—in the nominal essence. By way of example, Locke argues that reason is no more essential to him than to the "white thing" on which he writes, until we regard Locke as a human, or the paper as a treatise.[79] As with mixed modes, then, communication about substances becomes a matter of sensing together, seeing together, where definitions create a shared sense of salience that marks certain properties as essential.

But there is a crucial difference: definitions of substances not only create but also reflect this sense of salience. They are, in other words, not pure inventions, validated through convention alone; rather, they emerge and transform through an interweaving of invention and the ongoing observation of what is possible, probable, common in nature—in short, inquiry.

Here we arrive at the crucial point: The kind of inquiry that Locke proposes as a basis for defining substances is the *natural historical inquiry* practiced in his commonplace books.[80] He makes this point quite plainly at the end of Book III:

> For it is not enough, for the avoiding inconveniences in discourse and arguings about natural bodies and substantial things, to have learned, from the propriety of the language, the common, but confused, or very imperfect, idea to which each word is applied, and to keep them to that idea in our use of them; but *we must, by acquainting ourselves with the history of that sort of things,* rectify and settle our complex idea belonging to each specific name[81]

In presenting historical inquiry as the proper basis for definition and a means of mitigating the shortcomings of strict conventionalism, Locke inserts the commonplace book into his best-known attack on rhetoric, albeit as remedy rather than cause. Book III of the *Essay* is, of course,

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[79] *Essay,* III.vi.4.
[80] The *Conduct*'s recommendations for idea formation, addressed in Chapters 5 and 6 of this dissertation, are the most compelling evidence for this claim.
[81] *Essay,* III.xi.24, emphasis added.

where he casts "the art of rhetoric" as producing "perfect cheats."[82] But his ire is directed specifically at figural rhetoric ("all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented"), and it is driven by the apparent threat that figurative speech poses to shared understanding and collective life—aims consonant with those of rhetoric.[83] Locke's call to history, particularly when we recognize the kind he has in mind, may be read not as a rejection of rhetoric, but rather an effort to advance the foundational aims of rhetoric through an alternative means—a specific mode of historical inquiry with deep roots in the rhetorical tradition.

The historical inquiry of the Lockean commonplace book is, I will argue, a means of creating definitions that are rooted in shared experience and, as such, Locke's clearest means for overcoming the problems of language thus far described He has struggled, we've seen, with the tension between his descriptive account of words as names for mental constructs—ideas rather than things—and his normative position that words, to serve the aforementioned rhetorical ends, must maintain a connection to clearly defined, stabilized ideas that are compatible with experience. In the case of mixed modes, his efforts to achieve stability through convention alone confront the question of authority—of whose definition should become the convention—a question that he leaves unanswered with respect to language. But in the case of substances, historical inquiry into a world that is only partially knowable offers a way to create common definitions that are both stable and openly conventional—a way to "rectify and settle our complex idea belonging to each specific name." The Lockean commonplace book is the site where this production occurs, a meaning-making technology that deploys topically driven *copia* to accumulate observations and form them into objects of thought, nominal essences that constitute and are constituted by the world as it is experienced. Contained in these notebooks,

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[82] *Essay*, III.x.34.
[83] *Essay*, III.x.34.

then, are not the histories of things, but the histories of "sorts of things"—general ideas, designated by topical heads and created in conversation with the world.

In this sense, we might follow Peter Anstey's characterization of Locke as promoting a "constrained" and "convergent" conventionalism with respect to species[84]—constrained in the sense that nominal essences can only contain properties that have a "union in nature;" and convergent in the sense that with continued inquiry, nominal essences will, in Anstey's reading, "gradually converge to map more accurately their underlying real essences."[85] These two modifiers depict a kind of conventionalism that interweaves nature's negative and positive input into the process of generating definitions. *Constraint* encompasses nature's negative role in delimiting the range of possible combinations, *convergence* its positive role in combining certain properties with sufficient frequency to be perceived as "always joined and existing together." What results are nominal essences that converge upon real essences asymptotically, through a process of inquiry that gradually shifts the balance of authority from humans to nature.

Before complicating this picture with an instrumental interpretation of Locke's theory of language, I should stress that Locke aspires to the greatest certainty available to the human understanding, and that he embraces natural philosophical inquiry as a means of pursuing it—for example, in *Some Thoughts concerning Education* (1690), where he celebrates the newfound certainty made possible by Newtonian mathematics,[86] and in the *Essay*, where he praises "rational and regular Experiments" for helping us "see farther into the Nature of Bodies, and guess righter at their yet unknown Properties" (though such guesses can only achieve the status

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[84] Anstey, John Locke and Natural Philosophy, 209-214.

[85] Anstey, 213.

[86] John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), §194: "And if others could give us so good and clear an account of other parts of nature, as [Newton] has of this our Planetary World, and the most considerable *Phænomena* observable in it, in his admirable book *Philosophiæ naturalis principia mathematica*, we might in time hope to be furnished with more true and certain knowledge in several parts of this stupendous Machin, than hitherto we could have expected."

of "Judgment and Opinion, not Knowledge and Certainty").[87] Locke, it seems clear, was after a "convergent" knowledge of internal constitutions—not a perfect understanding, but the fullest one we can acquire. But does this desire for convergence extend to the realm of words and nominal essences—that is, to his inquiry-driven approach to definition?

I argue it does not: language is for Locke an instrument for communicating ideas and producing agreement, and while he insists that words must be accountable to the world as we experience it, his vision of definition is beholden to utility more than reality, for reasons both practical and epistemological. Practically speaking, very complex definitions impede the project of shared understanding, simply owing to the volume of ideas in play. Locke makes this point with respect to mixed modes, which is itself illuminating: even if one begins with an idea that is, in theory, perfectly knowable, in practice, it cannot be shared (or even reliably recalled in our own minds) if it contains too many simple ideas.[88] So while anchoring definition to a complete and indisputable account of a substance's properties would seem to provide the stable common ground that Locke seeks, such comprehensive accounts would be impractically cumbersome and thus do little to serve what he sees as the ends of language.

From an epistemological standpoint, the human faculties are tailored to the demands of this world and designed to provide useful knowledge alone: "in this globe of earth allotted for our mansion," Locke argues, "the all-wise Architect has suited our organs, and the bodies that are to affect them, one to another.[89] While sharper senses might allow us to discover the inner workings of things, such knowledge "would be inconsistent with our being, or at least well-

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[87] *Essay*, IV.xii.10, quoted in Anstey, *John Locke and Natural Philosophy*, 167.
[88] *Essay*, III.ix.6: "when a word stands for a very complex idea…it is not easy for men to form and retain that idea so exactly, as to make the name in common use stand for the same precise idea, without any the least variation…one man's complex idea seldom agrees with another's, and often differs from his own, from that which he had yesterday, or will have to-morrow."
[89] E.g. *Essay*, II.xxiii.12.

being, in this part of the universe which we inhabit," distracting from or rendering us incapable

of discerning those features that are most relevant to "our business in this world" (acquiring

"knowledge of the Creator" and "our duty" and "provid[ing] for the conveniences of living.")

Our dull senses, in other words, are not regrettable limitations; they are designed to allow us to

survive in the world—to flourish at the scale in which we live. Locke offers a number of

hypotheticals to support this position, focusing primarily on one concerning "microscopical

eyes":

> Nay, if that most instructive of our senses, seeing, were in any man a thousand or
> a hundred thousand times more acute than it is by the best microscope, things
> several millions of times less than the smallest object of his sight now would then
> be visible to his naked eyes, and so he would come nearer to the discovery of the
> texture and motion of the minute parts of corporeal things; and in many of them,
> probably get ideas of their internal constitutions: *but then he would be in a quite*
> *different world from other people: nothing would appear the same to him and*
> *others: the visible ideas of everything would be different. So that I doubt, whether*
> *he and the rest of men could discourse concerning the objects of sight, or have*
> *any communication about colours, their appearances being so wholly different.*[90]

Perceiving the internal constitutions of things, even if it were possible,[91] would be undesirable

because "nothing would appear the same" for one person as for others.[92] Crucially, Locke's

focus here is not only on human understanding, but shared understanding. Were sensible

qualities such as color to be replaced in the mind by the real constitutions that produce them,[93]

we would be unable to "discourse concerning the objects of sight" because everyone would live

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[90] *Essay*, II.xxiii.12.

[91] Locke, again, stresses that it is not humanly possible to access internal constitutions (*Essay*, II.xxiii.12).

[92] See also III,vi,28: "[Humans] must in some degree conform their ideas to the things they would speak of; or else men's language will be like that of Babel; and every man's words, being intelligible only to himself, would no longer serve to conversation and the ordinary affairs of life, if the ideas they stand for be not some way answering the common appearances and agreement of substances as they really exist."

[93] Locke's mention of color refers to the prior section, where he writes, "Had we senses acute enough to discern the minute particles of bodies, and the real constitution on which their sensible qualities depend…that which is now the yellow colour of gold, would then disappear, and instead of it we should see an admirable texture of parts, of a certain size and figure" (II.xxii.11)

in their own world of minute particulars. Locke's philosophies of perception and language meet in his efforts to imagine how we might live in the same world as others.

We've already seen one way in which Lockean language is rooted in instrumentality, rather than reality: The sole end of words is to convey an idea from one mind to another. Now we see another: Definitions must direct us to the qualities of objects that prepare us to engage with the human world. The unity that Locke seeks is not rooted in the world as it "really" is, but rather in useful constructs—not things themselves, but assemblages of relevant ideas, gathered through the senses we share, held together by words. He makes this point by considering how one with microscopical eyes might apprehend a clock:

> He that was sharp-sighted enough to see the configuration of the minute particles of the spring of a clock, and observe upon what peculiar structure and impulse its elastic motion depends, would no doubt discover something very admirable: but if *eyes so framed* could not view at once the hand, and the characters of the hourplate, and thereby at a distance see what o'clock it was, their owner could not be much benefited by that acuteness; which, *whilst it discovered the secret contrivance of the parts of the machine, made him lose its use*.

Locke's choice of example is instructive: the clock is a technology designed to standardize human activity, and what is relevant about it is not its inner workings, but its face and, more importantly, the legibility of that face—its role as a basis for shared understanding. This example illuminates Locke's treatment of the relationship between words and the world in two ways. First, the clock's salient features are determined by how the beholder's eyes are "framed," their way of seeing, which stems from convention, but may be better understood as *habit*. What makes the clock legible is not the definition itself, but rather the way that that definition shapes the beholder's posture toward the clock—their sense of what is important, of what to look for, of

what questions to ask.[94] Second, Locke's own assessment of the clock's most important feature—the position of its hands—is based on a single criterion: its utility, in explicit contradistinction to its real constitution. The "minute particles of the spring of a clock" are just as essential as its hourplate and hand (indeed, in the example, they are analogous to its real essence). But the properties that we *deem* essential to it are those that draw our attention to its useful attributes—those features that allow us to see and respond to the clock in a useful way. In language, "clock" is not a substance, but an instrument for action.

By presenting Locke as a kind of instrumentalist with respect to language, I do not mean to suggest that he was indifferent to reality or anything less than enthralled with natural philosophical advancements that promised greater certainty and deeper understanding. While he maintains that reality is inaccessible, its existence—and our engagement of it through inquiry—lends coherence, external accountability, and stability to our way of seeing and dividing up the world. Inquiring into nature, briefly put, allows us to create objects that are consistent with and therefore useful in the world, while providing substantial leeway to determine what is useful for ourselves.

This relationship with reality is apparent in Locke's account of naming species, where he argues that "our boundaries of species are not exactly conformable to those in nature" but rather a means of evoking the same ideas in other minds:

> For we, having need of general names for present use, stay not for a perfect
> discovery of all those qualities which would best show us their most material
> differences and agreements; but we ourselves divide them, by certain obvious

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[94] C.f. Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, II.xiii.9: "[T]he same places which will help us … produce of that which we know already, will also help us, if a man of experience were before us, *what questions to ask*; or, if we have books and authors to instruct us, *what points to search and revolve.*"

appearances, into species, that we may the easier under general names communicate our thoughts about them.[95]

As we've seen, Locke's insistence that "our boundaries of species are not *exactly* conformable to those in nature," is not to say that they are not at all. For this reason, Anstey's argument for Locke's convergent conventionalism is a vital intervention into efforts to cast him as a species nominalist on one hand or an uncritical realist on the other.[96] But with respect to language, the relationship of these boundaries to nature is less one of convergence than selectivity. If the aim were convergence, one might expect species determinations to flow from an ever-expanding list of increasingly minute properties; instead Locke points the reader in the opposite direction, toward "certain obvious appearances," a subset of properties that are, to "us," most obvious, most salient—that is, perceived as prominent, recurrent, and useful.

To summarize, Locke's normative account of definition, theorized in his philosophical works and practiced in his commonplace books, is not a matter of convention alone, but rather natural historical inquiry: a process of connecting sensory experiences to the ideas of substances—constituted as topical headings in the notebook—to produce and elaborate objects of knowledge out of one's own observations and the observations of others. And the aim, in Locke's case, is not at a comprehensive picture, but rather a selection of "obvious," which is to say useful and recurrent, features that emerge across the collected observations, shaped not only

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[95] Locke, *Essay*, III.vi.30, emphasis added.

[96] Species nominalism, in David Stamos's words, is the position that "biological species are not real, that they have no objective reality outside of the mind, that they are ultimately arbitrary, manmade groupings of individual organisms conventionally bracketed together by general names for the purpose of linguistic convenience," David N. Stamos, *The Species Problem: Biological Species, Ontology, and the Metaphysics of Biology* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2003), 31. As Anstey notes, most readings of Locke's treatment of species, Stamos's included, cast it in this light (e.g. Paul Guyer, "Locke's Philosophy of Language," in *The Cambridge Companion to Locke*, ed. Vere Chappell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Susanna Goodin, "Debate over Species," in *New Essays on the Rationalists*, ed. Rocco J. Gennaro and Charles Huenemann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)), Anstey, *John Locke and Natural Philosophy*, 204-5.

by an underlying and inaccessible real world, but also and the observers' habits of perception and sense for what is relevant.

In his account of naming substances, Locke illustrates the movement between inquiry and definition—and it's pitfalls—with another story of Adam, who in this case comes upon a novel substance, heavy, hard, and bright yellow. He calls it *zahab*. Naturally inquisitive, he seeks to uncover additional properties by subjecting it to a range of additional "trials"—he "knocks, and beats it with flints, to see what was discoverable in the inside," revealing its ductility, fusibility, and fixedness." [97] All of these properties—and the countless others that may later be discovered—can be added to the complex idea that "*zahab*" names.

But, even for Adam, problems arise.[98] At inception, "*zahab*" stood for a small set of properties that he had discovered: a substance that was heavy, hard, and yellow. But further inquiry into the substance disrupts this definition by raising the question of which characteristics should be considered most essential. Matters are further complicated as new individuals interact with the substance and observe their own sets of characteristics, expand and refining the list of properties that "*zahab*" potentially calls up. Suddenly, "*zahab*" may contain any number of properties, only some belonging to Adam's original definition, but all equally valid. Of course, the existence a physical referent, a "standard in nature," narrows the range of possible properties—as in the aforementioned example, "Nobody joins…the colour of lead with the weight and fixedness of gold." But variation within that range is still "almost infinite," raising

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[97] *Essay,* III.vi.47.
[98] Locke's examination of the problems that *even Adam* faced may be read as an implicit critique of those who sought to stabilize communication in a single Adamic language—if not the efforts of language planners more broadly.

the question of whose definition should count as *the* definition when nature vouches for all but appoints none.[99]

While our names for mixed modes and substances are both sites of proliferation, Locke's example of *zahab* suggests that, in the latter case, this proliferation is primarily driven by two factors that are specific to substances. First, the different properties of a given substance are vast, and all have "an equal right to go into the complex specific idea which the specific name is to stand for."[100] Second, these properties are differentially available, both to people and to different ways of seeing, inquiring, manipulating—a point Locke illustrates with reference to the "great variety of alternations any one of the baser metals is apt to receive from the different application only of fire"—and even greater "in the hands of a chemist." [101] While his discussion of microscopical is purely hypothetical, it highlights the disconnect between extant ways of seeing:

> I count the properties of any sort of bodies not easy to be collected, and
> completely known by the ways of inquiry, which our faculties are capable of.
> They being therefore at least so many, that no man can know the precise and
> definite number, *they are differently discovered by different men, according to
> their various skill, attention, and ways of handling*; who therefore cannot choose
> but have different ideas of the same substance, and therefore make the
> signification of its common name very various and uncertain.[102]

Thus, Locke concludes, again with a noticeable political inflection: "every one has a right to put into his complex idea those qualities he has found to be united together."[103] Noting that while different people's ideas of gold comprise various combinations of color, weight, fusibility, ductility, and so forth—*"as they have been taught by tradition or experience"*—each of these ideas "has its standard in nature," its qualities "upon trial…found united." Different trials—

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[99] *Essay*, III.ix.12; Locke makes this point explicitly in III.vi.47-48, suggesting that misguided efforts to ground names for substances in a real essence are driven by this very conundrum.

[100] *Essay*, III.ix.12.

[101] *Essay*, III.ix.12.

[102] *Essay*, III.ix.12, emphasis added. The extent to which perspectives become institutionalized in different fields becomes a major theme in the *Conduct*, as discussed in Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

[103] *Essay*, III.ix.12.

experiments—can yield copious observations of properties, all of which rightly belong to the substance in question. But inquiry capable of producing a common definition requires an additional selective step, as Locke makes clear when he asks: "Who of all these has established the right signification of the word gold? Or who shall be the judge to determine?"[104] The question of authority, so troublesome for mixed modes, persists in the realm of substances.

There are, however, two important differences between this question and the one asked of mixed modes, owing to the distinctive source of disparities in our ideas about substances (again, the innumerable properties within substances themselves and our diverse ways of discovering them—our different modes of inquiry.) First, the question of definition is, for substances, a question of selection—of what properties are revealed by an individual's way of seeing or inquiring, and among them, which appear most "obvious"—a determination that, we've seen, depends not only upon their frequency, but also their utility or relevance to the viewer. Second, and relatedly, while mixed modes are not accountable to any standard outside of the individual mind, our ideas of substances must consist of properties that are obvious to all—or could be, *if all adhered to the same mode of inquiry*, utility

So while Locke concludes that the imperfections of language are largely unavoidable for both mixed modes and substances, the origin of disparities in our ideas of substances suggests a possible solution: collective inquiry—standardizing not what we see (that is, the definitions themselves), but *how* we see and, perhaps, *why* we see. With a shared approach to inquiry rooted in a shared sense of salience, it becomes possible to independently arrive at compatible definitions without imposition. But even so, the question of authority lingers: if all perspectives are equally valid, whose should we choose?

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[104] *Essay*, III.ix.12; see also III.ix.17.

While Locke's own work in natural history shows a strong investment in standardization of this kind, he does not explicitly consider it as a remedy for the problem of words. The list of remedies that conclude Book III attempt to reduce miscommunication by explicating the mechanics of definition and disambiguation, but they do not address the core problem of authority that he introduced two chapters earlier. To fully grasp Locke's struggles with this question of authority, we must shift our attention to the works where he confronts it most directly: his political writings.

First, however, let us briefly review the foregoing discussion of words in a way that makes its political implications clear. For Locke, words are the means by which understand and communicate about a world that is only partially accessible to us. Because they cannot be rooted in real essences, they proliferate endlessly, creating and deepening baseless divides that he sees at the heart of so much political discord. He addresses the problem of words most directly in Book III of the *Essay*, where his solution rests primarily on clear definition and common usage— and, in the case of substances, compatibility with the world. Words, for Locke, are instruments for standardizing vision. Two questions remain unanswered: First, how should one decide what to include in a definition? Locke's many reasons for why the definitions he seeks cannot be comprehensive cast this problem of definition in terms of selection—of the criteria by which we should judge what to include and what to leave out. In keeping with his commitments in study, Locke, I have argued, presents salience—in the sense of what is commonly experienced and useful—as an answer. A second question proves more difficult: Given the diversity of individual perspectives and interests, whose assessment of salience should we make the standard? Here, the problem of definition becomes the problem of authority (and Locke, again, frames it in those terms: "nobody," he says, has "an authority to establish the precise signification of words, nor

what ideas any one shall annex them.")[105] While Locke's recommendation of historical inquiry (and, implicitly, the commonplace book) hints at a potential resolution, the basis for such a resolution is theorized elsewhere—most extensively, in his political writings. Accordingly, the next chapter turns to these writings, where we find compelling evidence that Locke's theory of authority in fact turns upon this question of standardization—and where collective historical inquiry akin to that of the Lockean commonplace book emerges as an answer.

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[105] *Essay*, III.ix.8.

4.0 Authority as Collective Inquiry in Locke's Political Writings

The prior chapter read Locke's attacks on rhetoric in the context of his political concerns about language. Given the fundamental uncertainty of the human condition, language—our means of producing, stabilizing, and sharing ideas about a world we cannot truly know—is both the means by which we construct common ground and the means by which we corrupt it. Locke's well-documented attacks on rhetoric are part of a broader effort to promote the use of clear, distinct, and stable definitions necessary for shared understanding. This recourse to common standards is characteristic of Locke's response to social and epistemological fragmentation, not only in his discussions of language and understanding, but also, we will see, in his political works. This chapter turns to the latter writings for an answer to the question that the *Essay on Human Understanding* raises but leaves unanswered: Who has the authority to create such standards?

This question of authority vexes Locke, as we see not only in his marked shifts as a political thinker, but also in the deep ambivalence towards authority apparent even within individual works. Indeed, while authoritative standards are his means of resolving differences between individuals, he is known primarily for his strong distaste for authority and his stress upon the primacy of the individual. Against the divine right of kings, his *Two Treatises of Government* argue that all people are naturally free and equal, and that government exists solely to protect individual liberties by promoting "Peace, Safety, and the publick good"[1] in cases where individuals cannot. The *Essay* similarly maintains that the knowledge necessary to

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[1] E.g. *Essay*, II.ix.131.

improve life on earth and achieve salvation is accessible to every individual through the faculties with which they were born—most centrally, sense perception and reason. Accordingly, he urges individuals not to "blindly…receive and swallow principles," but rather to see and judge for themselves, to use reason and the evidence of experience to form and test their beliefs.[2]

Locke argues against received wisdom on both epistemological and political grounds, underscoring the extent to which these two facets of authority are intertwined in his work. Epistemologically, because all human knowledge derives from the senses, "the greatest assurance I can possibly have, and to which my faculties can attain, is the testimony of my eyes, which are the proper and sole judges of a thing."[3] While Locke acknowledges that we can and, in fact, must often rely upon the testimony of others, direct experience—seeing for ourselves—is the surest path to knowledge: "Knowing is seeing, and if it be so, it is madness to persuade ourselves that we do so by another man's eyes."[4] Thinking for ourselves is also crucial: opinions (that is, propositions believed to be true) received on the basis of trust or reverence "make us not one jot the more knowing" even if they are true, for they do not add to our understanding of the world.[5] Opinions, if taken on the basis of authority alone, are akin to "Fairy-money": "Though it were Gold in the hand from which he received it, will be but Leaves and Dust when it comes to use."[6] Echoing his earlier concerns in "Study," the *Essay* presents received wisdom as not only less reliable, but also beguiling—a shortcut to apparent erudition that curbs the habits necessary to actually improve one's understanding.

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[2] *Essay*, IV.xii.6.

[3] *Essay*, IV.xi.2.

[4] *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* (London: Scott, Webster, and Geary, 1838), §24. See also *Essay*, I.iv.23: "we should make greater progress in the discovery of rational and contemplative *Knowledge*, if we *sought* it in the Fountain, *in the consideration of Things themselves*; and made use rather of our own Thoughts, than other Mens to find it."

[5] *Essay*, I.iv.23. For Locke's definition of opinions, see for example *Essay*, IV.xv.3.

[6] *Essay*, I.iv.23.

Politically, Locke was keenly aware of the linkages between knowledge and power, and he makes clear that accepting another's principles uncritically not only impairs the understanding, but can also be a dangerous form of subjugation.[7] Our opinions guide the way we live and understand the world, and, if we blindly embrace the opinions of others, we may unwittingly place ourselves in their service.[8] This concern drives the forceful conclusion of his famous argument against innate principles, themselves a kind of received knowledge, made particularly pernicious because they take people

> off from the use of their own Reason and Judgment, and put[s] them upon
> believing and taking them upon trust, without farther examination: In which
> posture of blind Credulity, they might be more easily governed by, and made
> useful to some sort of Men who had the skill and office to principle and guide
> them. Nor is it a small power it gives one Man over another, to have the Authority
> to be the Dictator of Principles, and Teacher of unquestionable Truths…[9]

Belief in innate principles is particularly problematic because it elevates certain opinions to the level of *unquestionable* truths, insulating them entirely from individual reason and judgment. But for Locke, "blind Credulity" in any form is an unjustified ceding of power to those whose opinions we take as truth. Authority thus becomes the site of tremendous tension in Locke's pursuit of collective life. Once again, the basis for shared understanding is also its greatest threat.

And once again, the commonplace book finds itself at the center of this tension. On one hand, the form of these books—the very genre of commonplacing, as a collection of what others have said—appears incompatible with Locke's well-documented skepticism of authority figures, from the ancients to teachers to kings. The political dimension of received wisdom adds gravity to his attacks on "bookish men" in "Study." It is not only that the latter's "great stock of

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[7] *Essay*, IV.xii.6.
[8] Consider, for example, Locke's attack of Filmer's *Patriarcha* in his *First Treatise*, discussed in section 5.1 of this dissertation.
[9] *Essay*, I.iv.24.

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borrowed and collected arguments" are liable to conflict and therefore muddle his understanding—or enable him to argue any position he likes.[10] When these arguments *do* agree (again, because they all derive from the same ancient source), they appear universal and eternal, foreclosing reason and subordinating the beholder to a single, untested perspective Commonplace books produce common ground in this manner, but it is common ground that lacks any necessary connection to reality—and that may thus be used to deceive and divide, as much as to unite. Yet Locke's commonplace books are filled with the views of others, often copied directly from books and rarely with annotation, raising the question of how someone so averse to received wisdom—and so conscious of its political perils—could have so earnestly devoted himself to what appears to be the accumulation of exactly that.

The most obvious answer is that the bulk of Locke's commonplace book entries, particularly after his time as a student, consist of medical, experimental, and natural historical observations, rather than the *auctoritates* against which he repeatedly cautions.[11] We might, then, understand most of these entries as *testimony*, in Locke's sense of the word: accounts rooted in "observation and experience" rather than opinion.[12] While one should endeavor to see for oneself, Locke recognizes the importance of testimony in forming much of the probable

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[10] "Study," 103-104.

[11] E.g. *Essay*, IV.xvi.10. Locke's problem, again, is not with the *auctoritates* themselves, but the way that people cite them—notably, in or from commonplace books—without working through the reasoning themselves.

[12] See Locke's account of "[t]he testimony of others, vouching their observation and experience" as one of the two grounds (in addition to personal experience) for probable knowledge (*Essay*, IV.xv.4). Locke, it should be noted, uses "testimony" in a manner quite different from the topical tradition. While Cicero introduced the *locus* of testimony in the *Topica* primarily in reference to the testimony of witnesses (a usage roughly comparable with Locke's) he laid the foundations for conceiving of testimony as *auctoritas*: "Now it is not every sort of person who is worth consideration as a witness. To win conviction, authority is sought; but authority is given by one's nature or by circumstances… For it is common belief that the talented, the wealthy, and those whose character has been tested by a long life, are worthy of credence. This many not be correct, but the opinion of the common people can hardly be changed, and both those who make judicial decisions and those who pass moral judgments steer their course by that" (Cicero, *De Inventione,* 73). Under Agricola, the classical topic of "Testimony" was recast as "Opinion"— precisely the source of information that Locke hoped to exclude with his turn to "testimony." On Agricola's adaptation of Cicero's topics, see Mack, *Renaissance Argument*, 143, 147.

knowledge necessary for human life.[13] In the *Essay*, he gives us six criteria with which to evaluate it—among them, the number of corresponding accounts, the credibility and impartiality of the witnesses, the consistency of the account, and the absence of contrary testimony.[14] Further (and again in reference to ancient authorities), he cautions against trusting long chains of citation, noting that "each remove weakens the force of the proof"—a seemingly obvious declaration that he feels compelled to make because it runs entirely counter to what is, in his view, the dominant means of assessing credibility.[15] In what he calls an "inverted Rule of Probability" an individual's opinion *gains* force over time—propositions that "found or deserved little credit from the Mouths of their first Authors" become "certain beyond all question" through sheer repetition.[16] Through these criteria and admonitions, Locke enjoins the reader in a more active, critical knowledge-acquisition practices, suggesting that the compiler is, to some extent, also the inquirer.

Thus we begin to see how Locke differentiates his commonplace books from their humanist counterparts with respect to authority. It is not just that the former collect empirically derived testimony and the latter ancient wisdom. It is that ancient wisdom is, in his view, an individual account made credible through repeated citation—repetition that humanist commonplacing encourages—whereas in his commonplace books, authority resides not in individual authors or entries, but rather in *collective* experience, produced by accumulating accounts and discerning what is common across them.

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[13] Locke gives two grounds of probability: The conformity of something with our existing experience—reliable but necessarily limited—and the testimony of others (Locke, *Essay*, IV.xvi,4). On the importance of probabilistic knowledge, see for example IV.xi.10: "[H]ow foolish and vain a thing it is, for a Man of narrow Knowledge, who having Reason given him to judge of the different evidence and probability of Things…*to expect Demonstration* and Certainty *in things not capable of it*… He that, in the ordinary affairs of life, would admit of nothing but direct plain demonstration, would be sure of nothing in this world, but of perishing quickly."

[14] *Essay*, IV.xvi.4-5.

[15] *Essay*, IV.xvi.10.

[16] *Essay*, IV.xvi.10.

But Locke's nominalist tendencies draw the very possibility of concurrence into question. How do we know, for example, that two observations are of the same species, when species is itself a construct? How do we place observations in conversation with each other, when the features that strike one observer may be missed by the next? And, of course, how can we be sure that the words used to relate observations designate the same set of simple ideas to all parties? The solution to which Locke repeatedly returns throughout his corpus is the creation and imposition of standards, ranging from laws and definitions to measurements and objects of inquiry. And here arises the question that we must answer to understand the significance of Locke's commonplacing practices, a question both political and epistemological: how and by whom are such standards created? How, in other words, do we arrive at the terms by which we all must live—and upon which collective life depend?

Ultimately, this is the problem of authority for Locke, recurrent across his writings on a range of subjects, though most thoroughly and directly confronted in his political writings. Uncovering an answer requires a fuller understanding of his conception authority—its uses, its limitations, its foundations—than what is possible from looking at his mature works alone. While Locke's mature works—his *Two Treatises* (published 1690, but begun a decade earlier) and *Essay* (published in 1689, but written over the prior two decades) are often taken as championing liberalism, individualism, and anti-authoritarianism, his earliest known writings on authority—his seemingly absolutist *Two Tracts on Government* and more moderate *Essay on Toleration*, penned in the 1660s but left unpublished during Locke's lifetime—paint a very different picture. Indeed, the young Locke espouses a number of positions that are wholly antithetical to those for which he is best known: anxious to preserve the supreme authority of the state, he denies the people the right to revolt, and, in the *Tracts*, places religious worship under

the magistrate's control. Yet across these ideologically disparate works, one sees a remarkable continuity of purpose—a pursuit that propelled virtually all of his work from his early days at Christ Church until his death: a means by which individuals might know, live, and act together, promoting a level of peace and wellbeing in this world that frees them to pursue salvation in the next. In the *Treatises* as much as in the *Tracts*, Locke's solution is, to a large extent, authority itself.

This chapter serves two purposes. The first is to establish the centrality of inquiry to Lockean authority. While this vision of authority as collective inquiry does not fully materialize in Locke's political works, tracing its development therein provides a theoretical foundation for the remaining chapters, which turn to the site of its most concrete manifestation: the adapted topical inquiry of Lockean commonplacing. Second, this chapter argues for the centrality of authority to Locke's political project, thereby presenting collective inquiry as the foundation of his civil society. In this manner, this chapter serves as a prelude to the next, making it possible to appreciate the political relevance and rhetorical promise of Locke's engagement with the commonplacing as a means of conducting such inquiry.

Bearing in mind the features of topical inquiry established in Chapter 2, I work to draw out four characteristics of Lockean authority that are essential to understanding its relationship with his theory and practice of topically guided commonplacing.[17] While these characteristics develop over the course of Locke's career, they are nevertheless present, if incipiently, from the start, allowing us to understand his political development in terms of continuity rather than contradiction—and to identify the sources of this continuity in terms of their rhetorical

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[17] The topics, I argued in Chapter 2, are an evolving and non-exhaustive collection of heuristics—ways of seeing that invite revision—that mediate between self and other, general and particular. As such, they are a generative mode of inquiry into the conditions of possibility for collective life.

investment. First, Lockean authority is best understood as a technology for creating common ground—as a collectively operated instrument that draws upon individual experience to create common standards through which to see, be, and act in the world together, akin to topical inquiry. Second, as a technology, this conception of authority interweaves capacities for inquiry and production, the former an epistemic capacity to judge the essential characteristics a people and, from that, what is in their best interests; the latter a political capacity to use this knowledge to create and sustain the standards that structure society (in Locke's civil society, laws; in his commonplace books, the topics themselves).[18] Third, authority's epistemic capacity derives from a mode of inquiry characterized by the accumulation of experience rather than the elevation of received wisdom derived from a single source. By conceiving of authority in this manner, Locke places what is arguably the central operation of traditional commonplacing—*copia*—at its heart, albeit with an important modification that mirrors the one enacted in his own commonplace books: *copia* is no longer the collection of perspectives into a reservoir for eloquent excerpting; it is the layering of perspectives with the aim of apprehending the whole. Finally, by the *Two Treatises*, this mode of inquiry is simultaneously individual and collective. Again performing the functions of topical inquiry, it mediates between general and particular, abstracting away individual interests while remaining attuned to the character of a particular society. Its register, we might say, is neither the universal nor the individual, but the local, the *common*. Authority, as this mode of collective inquiry, is an evolving technology with a single aim: allowing us to see together while still seeing for ourselves.

I begin with Locke's early, supposedly authoritarian works, not to more accurately place him between the poles of authoritarianism and liberalism, but rather to present his treatment of

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[18] On this use of "technology" with respect to rhetoric, see McKeon, "Uses of Rhetoric".

authority as instrumental rather than ideological—as rooted, like his theory of language, not in the claims of absolute truth or reality (which, Locke reminds us, can usually be traced to an individual's perspective), but rather in practice, utility, and the aim of collective life. Whether one looks across the evolution of Locke's views on authority or squarely at his prescriptions for governance within a single work, his focus is entirely adaptation and inquiry—the goal in every case is to arrive at laws and modes of governance that are *appropriate* for the people, rather than assume that one set of laws, style of government, or political ideology is best suited for all. So while authority is essential to Locke's political thought at every point in his career, it must be viewed in an instrumental light: it is not as an end in itself, but a means to an end, valued for its efficacy in securing the public good—and, in particular, peace. Similarly, his move from absolutism to liberalism—a remarkable reversal from an ideological perspective—may be more productively viewed as an instrumental adjustment, an attempt to redesign authority, in light of new experiences and practical demands, to better pursue these ends.[19]

4.1 *Two Tracts on Government*

In his *First Tract on Government* (written in 1660, but published only posthumously), a young Locke forays somewhat reluctantly into the arena of political debate, not as a champion of individual liberties, but as an advocate of religious uniformity.[20] Responding to fellow Oxford

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[19] Locke's turn from absolutism to toleration, one of the many major reversals observable over his lifetime, evinces the instrumentalism and empiricism that underpins his political thought throughout his oeuvre.

[20] While Locke originally planned to publish the essay (after much handwringing, which he details in the preface), he ultimately decided against it—perhaps because Parliament began to advance measures on uniformity.

student Edward Bagshaw's argument for a state policy of religious toleration, Locke stakes out a position that at first appears entirely opposed to the themes of his mature works:

> *no one can have a greater respect and veneration for authority than I.* I no sooner perceived myself in the world but I found myself in a storm, which hath lasted almost hitherto, and therefore cannot but entertain the approaches of a calm with the greatest of joy and satisfaction; and this methinks obliges me, both in duty and gratitude to be chary of such a blessing, and [to do] what lies in me to endeavor its continuance, by disposing men's minds to obedience to that government which hath brought with it that quiet and settlement which our own giddy folly had put beyond the reach, not only of our contrivance, but hopes.[21]

Shaken by a civil war that consumed much of his youth, Locke champions government-imposed uniformity as the sole antidote to the discord from which such terrible conflicts arise.[22] His essay, like the *Second Tract* penned two years later,[23] argues that the magistrate (that is, the governing body, whether monarch or assembly, though Locke regularly speaks of the magistrate as an individual [24]) has absolute authority over the "indifferent" aspects of worship—"those…things that God hath not forbid or commanded."[25] These ambiguous aspects of religious practice, matters on which Scripture offers no guidance, opened the door for the kind of "verbal wrangling" that Locke, at every stage of his career, wished to eliminate. Left up to the individual, they became, in his view, the very seeds of disagreement from which conflicts arise.

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[21] John Locke, "First Tract on Government," in *Locke: Political Essays* ed. Mark Goldie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 7, emphasis added.

[22] While Locke appears to echo Hobbes here, he was not, by his own admission in 1698, well acquainted with his work (he did not, however, refrain from expressing disdain). No indications of Hobbes have been found in his library or commonplace books, apart from a single excerpt from *Leviathan*, copied, without citation, inside a book published in 1668—a passage that decries, interestingly enough, "men who take their instruction from the authority from books, not from their own meditation" Peter Laslett, "Introduction: Locke and Hobbes," in *Two Treatises of Government (1690)*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 74.

[23] The *Second Tract*, also unpublished, is essentially a more concise articulation of the points in the *First*, styled as formal oration. These works were originally titled "Question: Whether the Civil Magistrate may lawfully impose and determine the use of indifferent things in reference to Religious Worship" and "*An Magistratus Civilis possit res adiaphoras in divini cultus ritus asciscere easque populo imponere? Affirmatur*." ("Whether the civil magistrate may incorporate indifferent things into the ceremonies of divine worship and impose them on the people: Confirmed") respectively; they became known as Locke's *Two Tracts on Government* in 1967, following Philip Abrams's English translation and publication—the first full-length publication of either work.

[24] Locke, "Second Tract," 57.

[25] Locke, "First Tract," 10.

So while these early works appear ideologically opposed to the *Two Treatises*, they should not be dismissed as anomalous or representative of a position that Locke entirely disavowed later in life. For while they espouse an approach to authority that he subsequently rejects, the ends of authority are in fact quite consistent with what appears in his mature works: authority produces standards with which to resolve ambiguities and disputes that lead to confusion, disagreement, and even war. This perspective appears quite early in the *First Tract*, where Locke imagines a society without these standards:

> But since I find that a general freedom is but a general bondage, that the popular assertors of public liberty are the greatest engrosses of it too and not unfitly called its keepers, and I know not whether experience (if it may be credited) would not give us some reason to think that were this part of freedom contended for here by [Bagshaw] generally induced in England it would prove only a liberty for contention, censure and persecution and turn us loose to the tyranny of religious rage…he must confess himself a stranger to England that thinks that meats and habits, that places and times of worship, etc., would not be as sufficient occasion of hatred and quarrels amongst us…and be distinctions able to keep us always at a distance, and eagerly ready for like violence and cruelty as often as the teachers should alarm the consciences of their zealous votaries and direct them against the adverse party.[26]

This passage reveals three important commitments that Locke will develop in later works. First, it is clear that the specter of civil war weighed heavily on his mind, as it did for virtually all English political theorists of the time, and that peace—rather than the adoption of a particular political philosophy or arrangement—is the ultimate goal. This is not to say that he did not have his own commitments, religious or otherwise, but rather that order took precedent over them all.[27]

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[26] "First Tract," 7.

[27] It should be noted that Locke was, particularly as a young man, adamantly opposed to Catholicism, partly due to prejudice (which was later softened significantly through encounters with practicing Catholics), and partly due to more lasting concerns about followers' primary allegiance to the Pope, rather than the magistrate. As he wrote to Henry Stubbe on the latter's call for toleration, "I cannot see how they can at the same time obey two different authoritys carrying on contrary intrest espetially where that which is destructive to ours ith backd with an opinion of infalibility and holinesse supposd to them to be immediatly derivd from god founded in the scripture and

Second, Locke presents experience as a basis for political judgment, arguing against religious toleration in practice rather than principle. Indeed, just the year prior, he had written Henry Stubbe to praise the vision of toleration articulated in the latter's *An Essay in Defense of the Good Old Cause*, while expressing a desire for examples from places where toleration was currently practiced ("Holland France Poland etc."):

> when you have added the authority of dayly experience that men of different professions may quietly unite (antiquity the testimony) under the same government and unanimously cary the same civill intrest and hand in hand march to the same end of peace and mutuall society though they take different way towards heaven you will…be very convinceing to those to whome what you have already said hath left noething to doubt but wither it be now practicable.[28]

The question of practicability was, it seems, a sticking point for Locke, whose observations and experiences in a war-torn England left him unable to conceive of toleration as a sustainable approach to governance. Leading up to the war, "matters indifferent" were the source of much religious conflict, and these conflicts form the basis for Locke's impassioned call for uniformity in the *First Tract*. Further, while Bagshaw made his argument on religious grounds,[29] Locke (though largely following in suit throughout his point-by-point rebuttal) ultimately insists that Scripture alone is insufficient for directing action on particular matters.[30] The very subject of the debate—matters indifferent—sends us outside of the Bible for justification, and Locke finds that justification in experience.

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their owne equally sacred tradition…" John Locke to S H [Henry Stubbe], [mid September?] 1659 (*The Correspondence of John Locke, Vol. 1, Letters 1-461* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), L.75, 111).

[28] Correspondence Vol. 1, L.75, 110.

[29] Bagshaw argued that government control over matters indifferent was contrary to Christian freedom of conscience, as well as specific Gospel precepts and Christian practice. Bagshaw, Edward. *The Great Question Concerning Things Indifferent in Religious Worship Briefly Stated and Tendered to the Consideration of All Sober and Impartial Men*. London, 1660.

[30] E.g. Locke, "First Tract," 51-52: "the Scripture is very silent in particular questions, the discourses of Christ and his apostles seldom going beyond the general doctrines of the messiah or the duties of the moral law…"

Third, Locke is suspicious of power, and in particular, the speed with which power is seized for private purposes under conditions of "general freedom."[31] His insistence upon the magistrate's authority is figured as an ironic inversion—as that which liberates us from the bondage of freedom, wherein the "tyranny of religious rage" operates unchecked and may be used to mobilize the masses against each other for personal or partisan gains. In a particularly informative argument later in the *First Tract*, Locke counters Bagshaw's concern over the dangers of unlimited authority—"the impossibility to fix a point where the imposer will stop"[32]—with another such inversion:

> Grant the people once free and unlimited in the exercise of their religion and where will they stop, where will they themselves bound it, and will it not be religion to destroy all that are not of their profession. And will they not think they do God good service to take vengeance on those that they have voted his enemies?[33]

Turning again to the English Civil War, he continues:

> …let [Bagshaw] look back and [he] will find that a liberty for tender consciences was the first inlet to all those confusions…and destructive opinions that overspread this nation. The same hearts are still in men as liable to zealous mistakes and religious furies, there wants but leave for crafty men to inspirit and fire them with such doctrines.[34]

In restricting the liberty of "tender consciences,"[35] the government protects the people from would-be tyrants who know how to exploit differences and inflame emotions to win their blind

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[31] This theme resurfaces as an argument about knowledge and power in the *Essay*, where Locke makes a political argument against innate ideas—e.g. *Essay*, I.iv.24.

[32] Quoted in "First Tract," 38.

[33] "First Tract," 40.

[34] "First Tract," 40.

[35] Charles II had famously—and ambiguously—promised "liberty for tender consciences" in his Declaration of Breda earlier that year. Prior to the English Civil War, the phrase typically implied toleration for those who wished to abstain from certain ceremonial practices on the grounds that such practices were "matters indifferent." But, as Paul Hardacre has argued, the phrase was subsequently appropriated by numerous groups to imply, for example, "covering complete toleration for themselves but not the other sectaries." Paul H Hardcare, "Sir Edward Hyde and the Idea of Liberty to Tender Consciences, 1641-1656," *Journal of Church & State* 13 (1971), 27. Thus by the time Charles II invoked it, it had been reduced "to a formality…a 'specious' concession." Paul H Hardacre, "The Genesis of the Declaration of Breda, 1657-1660," *Journal of Church & State* 15 (1973)1973, 79.

allegiance. In contrast to these "crafty men," the magistrate, whose power derives either from divine authority or the provisional consent of the governed[36] is an entity empowered to serve the public's best interests. [37] Crucially, Locke insists (counter to one of Bagshaw's central arguments) that such authority does not encroach on the individual's liberty of conscience.[38] What corrupts the hearts and consciences of individuals, conversely, are the arguments of those with the "knack of applying [Scripture] with advantage, who can bring God's word in defence of those practices which his soul abhors."[39] Freedom, to Locke, is freedom from susceptibility to the self-serving dictates of these would-be demagogues. The magistrate's authority becomes the guardian of individual liberty—a supreme and impartial legislative power that resides above private divisions and more nefarious attempts to claim authority.

But what gives magistrates this unique capacity for transcendence? On what basis should the people trust them to act in their best interests? What, in other words, distinguishes them from tyrants? Recourse to the divine right of kings offers a straightforward resolution: If the authority of magistrates derives from God, so too does their character—the people may trust that anyone divinely appointed possesses the characteristics necessary to enact God's will. If, however, it derives from the people—if, as Locke also considers, the magistrate "concentrates in his person the authority and natural right of every individual by a general contract"—on what grounds do

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Nevertheless, Locke, at least for the purpose of his argument against such liberty, appears to take the concession at face value.

[36] Locke, again, declines to take a stance on the divine right of kings, instead arguing in both cases, the magistrate must serve the public good.

[37] "First Tract," 10-11.

[38] "First Tract," 28: "[The magistrate] hath no commission to examine the hearts, but to take care of the actions of his subjects."

[39] "First Tract," 40.

individuals enter into such a contract?[40] What is the basis for a particular magistrate's legitimacy?

The *Two Tracts* do not offer an especially compelling answer beyond Locke's insistence that societies simply cannot function without a supreme authority: "a commonwealth without human laws never has existed and never could, and laws derived from any but the highest power cannot bind; for who would have the right to determine anything against his superiors, or those who were equally free?"[41] This question, though offered rhetorically, mirrors the one that Locke asks in earnest in the *Essay*'s discussion of words: if people are born free and equal, who is to decide the standards by which all must live? In the *Tracts,* authority is presented as necessary to establish the terms of collective existence. It is a means of reducing ambiguity and resolving disagreements, valued by the young Locke primarily for its supremacy, for its capacity to create laws that bind, rather than the content of those laws. In this sense, these early works appear to present a fairly standard—if not familiarly Lockean—conception of authority as a purely political capacity, consisting of an absolute power to rule arbitrarily.

But while the *Two Tracts* may appear to be glaring outliers in an otherwise generally liberal body of work, they can also be read as the earliest articulations of what would be a lifelong commitment to constructing *standards* as a basis for collective life, standards that are neither arbitrary nor true in any absolute sense, but rather instrumentally and locally determined. In the *Tracts*, as in Locke's later political writings, these standards take the form of human laws, created for a specific society by an earthly rather than divine authority because, as Locke explains,

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[40] "Second Tract," 70.
[41] "Second Tract," 70. Note that this question only arises if we deny the divine right of kings.

> The Scripture speaks very little of polities anywhere…and God doth nowhere by distinct and particular prescriptions set down rules of governments and bounds to the magistrate's authority, *since one form of government was not like to fit all people…*[42]

Unlike the more prominently featured arguments discussed above, this rationale for the magistrate's authority stresses the content, rather than the mere existence, of his laws. This authority, whether granted by God or the people, extends beyond Scripture precisely because the latter is written in only in general terms, while the human world is steeped in particulars, where "there are no actions without a host of circumstances which always attend them, such as time, place, appearance, posture, etc."[43] Such circumstances comprise the matters indifferent, which may be adjusted, to a great extent, as the magistrate "judge[s] best in the light of the times and the customs of the people."[44] God, then, does not simply leave matters indifferent unaddressed; He *delegates* them to the magistrate, to attend to on the basis of the particular society's character. Stressing the deeply cultural dimensions of worship, Locke offers examples from Christian, Jewish, Chinese, and Muslim religious practices, arguing:

> [C]ertainly, no one would consider going over to a religion as ridiculous in its ceremonies as all the customs of every nation are to every other. Therefore, God, indulging the weakness of mankind, left his worship undetermined, to be adorned with ceremonies as the judgment of men might determine in the light of custom…the magistrate is the judge of what constitutes order and of what is to be considered decent…he and he alone is able to determine what is appropriate and seemly.[45]

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[42] "First Tract," 51, emphasis added; see also "Second Tract," 64. By "people" Locke appears to mean peoples or societies, rather than individuals within a specific society.

[43] "Second Tract," 58.

[44] "Second Tract," 59. Locke also allows that these matters may be adjusting according to "the needs of the church" in the *Tracts*, though he establishes a bright line between religious and civil authority in subsequent works.

[45] "Second Tract," 60. To be clear, Locke is not arguing that faiths outside of Christianity have equal claim to salvation. Emphasizing the cultural specificity of worship, these examples from other religions support his argument that God, "to make the path to the Christian religion as free of obstacles as possible for all the various nations…appointed that Christian doctrine should be embraced by the soul and faith alone and that true worship should be fulfilled in public gatherings and outward actions" ("Second Tract," 59).

In presenting, somewhat counterintuitively, the cultural variability of worship as *support* for the magistrate's authority to dictate how his people worship, Locke indicates that such authority is neither arbitrary nor universal, but instead bound to local custom, to a sense of what is appropriate and seemly in a particular society. The magistrate is necessary *because* societies differ so greatly and thus require different modes of worship; his laws are valued for their adaptability and intended to serve as crucial mediators between the universality of natural law and the particularities of specific cultures.

Even in this supposedly absolutist work, Locke makes a strong case against coercion, promoting adaptation in its place. Consider, for example, his argument that God

> by no means looked for so onerous an obedience from proselytes as that all men
> should forthwith abandon the customs and practices of their race, which are
> generally so agreeable, so dear to them through long use, and so honoured
> through education and esteem that you shall wrest fortune, life, liberty and all
> from most of them sooner than their respect and use of these things.[46]

But what distinguishes adaptive from coercive governance is not the reach of authority. Locke, after all, is treating uniformity and adaptivity as entirely compatible. Rather, adaptive governance is distinguished by its exercise of judgment, gauged by the proximity of laws to the people's supposed character. Of course, there is a certain naïve essentialism to the position that the people within a society even have a kind of collective character that can be discerned. But even the young Locke is not after "real essences"—the character of a society is not only discovered, but also produced—through long use, through education and esteem, indeed, through uniformity itself. Locke, eager to reduce the division within his own society, presents human laws both reflective and constitutive of common ground.

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[46] "Second Tract," 59.

Thus even in Locke's earliest political writings, we see a vision of authority that persists throughout his subsequent work: authority is an instrument for creating common ground, distinguished by its efficacy in securing the public good. This efficacy in turn rests upon two capacities that belong to the authorized party alone: a political capacity to make and enforce the standards by which a people must abide and an epistemic capacity to observe a people and judge what is appropriate and seemly for them.

Crucially, Lockean authority does not include a moral capacity, even though the magistrate of the *Two Tracts* (but not any subsequent works) is authorized to rule on moral matters. What, then, guarantees that the magistrate who knows what is best for the people will *do* what is best for them? Locke's answer in the *Tracts*—and very famously in the *Treatises*—is the threat of the rebellion. "The magistrate's concernments," he writes in the *First Tract*, "will always teach him to use no more rigour than the temper of the people and the necessity of the age shall call for, knowing that too great checks as well as too loose a rein may make this untamed beast to cast his rider."[47] While Locke's early works insist that rebellion is unacceptable regardless of what the magistrate does, it is clear that the people *will* rise up against unjust rulers, where or not it's deemed acceptable. So even as Locke argues for the magistrate's political capacity to rule absolutely and arbitrarily, he indicates that in practice this capacity hinges upon the magistrate's epistemic capacity to rule wisely. And the seemingly competing demands of ruling wisely—which is to say particularly, appropriately—*and* absolutely is reconciled by Locke's assumption that it is possible to develop rules for worship that are not abhorrent to the English in the way that they might be to people of the other societies. One of the crucial differences between the *Two Tracts* and the more tolerant political works that follow lies in his

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[47] "First Tract," 39.

departure from this position. The supposed absolutism of the *Tracts* is instrumental rather than ideological and largely attributable to the young Locke's underestimation of the diversity in opinion and experience that exists within societies—misjudgment that is rectified in later works.

But even in these early and seemingly anomalous political writings, we see a vision of authority that persists throughout Locke's work: authority is a means of creating standards by drawing upon what is common across the people they are designed to govern. While these standards are determined unilaterally by a magistrate, the magistrate of the *Tracts* still possesses a sensitivity to the particular, the practical, the appropriate, the customary—commitments that lay the groundwork for Locke's mature vision of authority as a collective endeavor. In the *Tracts* and the supposedly more liberal works that follow them, sustainable authority is an authority built from and constitutive of the character and customs of the people: customs shape laws; laws determine practice; practice becomes custom over time. It is in the magistrate's creation of "local" standards—the movement between the particularities of a people on one hand and the need for stable ground on the other that a rhetorical sensibility begins to emerge.

To be clear, though, while authority attends to the collective in the *Tracts*, it is not yet collectively operated, nor is it fully articulated. The magistrate is treated as synonymous with authority, as God's instrument for promoting "order, society, and government" in the human world of particulars, and the inner workings of that instrument are, for now, entirely opaque.[48] Indeed, this opacity—indicative of Locke's assumption that magistrates simply *possesses* the epistemic capacity to legislate appropriately—is what gives his early vision of adaptive governance its authoritarian inflection. So while the *Tracts* establish a particular conception of authority as Locke's solution to the problem of seeing together while seeing for ourselves, they

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[48] "Second Tract," 71.

reveal a problem inherent to authority itself: the question of legitimacy—of what gives the magistrate in particular the epistemic capacity to judge what is appropriate. Locke addresses this question in his later works.

4.2 "An Essay on Toleration"

Locke's attention shifts to the epistemological basis for authority in his subsequent works—works that take the diversity of perspectives across individuals more seriously than the *Two Tracts* and, as such, promote a state policy of religious toleration. *An Essay on Toleration* (henceforth, *EOT*), written in 1667, lays out the kinds of practices that have a right to toleration by confining the magistrate's authority to the secular realm. *EOT* makes a clearer case for why authority is the ideal instrument through which to achieve political harmony, largely via Locke's repeated insistence that the promise of such harmony derives not from the magistrate's privileged access to truth, but rather from a capacity for perception and judgment that derives from a deep familiarity with particulars. While Locke addressed this capacity in the *Tracts*, he kept it largely distinct from the political and far from the center of his argument. In *EOT*, two major shifts occur. First, the magistrate's political capacity to make and enforce laws is legitimated primary by the epistemic capacity to rule wisely. Second, this epistemic capacity is no longer solely or necessarily a property of the magistrate; rather, it arises out of a particular *mode of inquiry* into the conditions of possibility for collective life in a particular society.

In the *Two Tracts* and in the *EOT*, Locke argues instrumentally for an approach to governing that is, based on his experience, most likely to achieve the desired outcome: peace. In the *Tracts*, his answer is absolutism; in *EOT* it is toleration, so long as it is limited to matters that

"do not tend to the disturbance of the state, or do not cause greater inconveniences than advantages to the community."[49] What makes the latter work interesting for our purposes—and what distinguishes it most clearly from the *Tracts*—is its exploration of epistemic capacity: how the magistrate acquires the knowledge necessary to legislate appropriately—and, thus, legitimately.

In *EOT*, Locke establishes the magistrate's realm of expertise primarily by explicating its limits, confining the epistemological and political dimensions of his authority to the secular world. Politically, the magistrate is "*but umpire between man and man*: he can right me against my neighbour but cannot defend me against my God."[50] Because his authority does not extend to the next world, he may not rule on matters pertaining to it. Epistemologically, the magistrate "hath nothing at all to do with my private interest in another world, and… no more certain or infallible knowledge of the way to attain it than I myself, where we are both equally inquirers, both equally subjects."[51] The magistrate has no deeper insight than anyone else on how to achieve salvation—on spiritual matters, he and his subjects are equal. Born with the same epistemic limitations as those he governs, his laws cannot be rooted in truth, nor judged according to that standard.

Much more explicitly than the *Two Tracts*, *EOT* makes clear that human laws are to be judged on the basis of efficacy rather than truth, articulating a vision of authority that is fully and explicitly instrumental:

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[49] John Locke, "An Essay on Toleration," in *Locke: Political Essays*, edited by Mark Goldie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 140.
[50] *EOT*, 137, emphasis added. Note that while Locke frequently describes the magistrate as acting in a judicial capacity, both in the *Two Tracts* and in *EOT*, he is clear that the magistrate is a legislative power (e.g. "Second Tract,", 71)—again, a means of creating *common standards*.
[51] *EOT*, 138.

> The magistrate as magistrate hath nothing to do with the good of men's souls or their concernments in another life, but…only [with] the quiet and comfortable living of men in society…the magistrate commands not the practice of virtues, because they are virtuous and oblige the conscience, or are the duties of man to God and the way to his mercy and favour, but *because they are the advantages of man with man*, and most of them the strong ties and bonds of society, which cannot be loosened without shattering the whole frame [52]

As in the *Two Tracts*, laws are necessary for collective existence, and the magistrate's role is to judge what is appropriate for the people and legislate accordingly. But in the *Tracts,* the magistrate's political capacity to legislate extended to spiritual as well as secular matters. His epistemic capacity to judge what was best for the people in both respects was taken as given, its source left unexplored. In *EOT*, by contrast, the magistrate has no privileged access to religious truth and is therefore not concerned with truth or morality in any universal sense. To make this point, Locke offers a hypothetical example of legalized horse theft in Sparta:

> There have been commonwealths that have made theft lawful for such as were not caught in the fact, and perhaps 'twas as guiltless a thing to steal a horse at Sparta as to win a horse race in England. For the magistrate, having a power of making rules of transferring properties from one man to another, may establish any [laws], so they be universal, equal, and without violence, and suited to the interest and welfare of that society, as this was at Sparta, who, being a warlike people, found this no ill way to teach their citizens vigilancy, boldness, and activity.[53]

This remarkable example of a magistrate transforming vice into virtue serves "to show how much the good of the commonwealth is the standard of all human laws." [54] But it also underscores the importance of instrumental judgment to the exercise of authority. The law in question is commendable not because it promotes virtue, but because it is *effective*—because it confers "advantages of man with man" by complementing the character of the people. The magistrate is thus imagined and valued as a kind of expert of the local, the common—one whose

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[52] *EOT*, 144, emphasis added.
[53] *EOT*, 145. Mark Goldie notes that this example is present in all extant versions of *EOT* except for MS 1, which is generally supposed to be the latest (145n8).
[54] *EOT*, 145.

decrees are based upon a situated knowledge of his people and aimed at the public good, rather than absolute truth or salvation.

Locke's move to situate and secularize the magistrate has two important implications for his theory of authority. First, the magistrate's value now lies solely in his attunement to the particularities of the society he governs. Departing from the *Tracts*, Locke makes clear in *EOT* that it is not enough for the magistrate to command uniformity; to maintain the peace and promote the public good, the magistrate *must* know what is best for his people and legislate accordingly. The defining characteristic of earthly authority thus shifts from a political capacity to make standards common to an epistemic capacity to invent standards out of what is already common to a particular people.

Second, the magistrate is fallible, as we see in Locke's delimitation of his political power: "Whatever evil I suffer by obeying him in other things, he can make me amends in this world if he force me to a wrong religion, he can make me no reparation in the other world."[55] Beyond making the obvious point that the magistrate has no power to resist God's decisions, Locke here indicates that the magistrate *can*, in this world, make reparations for laws that were not in the people's best interests. Human laws, lacking recourse to universal truths, are formed out of judgments that are, at least at some level, revisable, shaped not only by prior observations but also through a kind of testing. If the sole measure of a law is its practical efficacy in securing the public good, then it may be tested—and revised—in light of subsequent experience. Legislating effectively demands an adaptive engagement with practice and with the particular that breathes life into what would otherwise be a rigid power arrangement.

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[55] *EOT*, 137, emphasis added.

This view of the law sets up Locke's intervention in the second part of *EOT*—a practical case for a change in state policy that models the kind of inquiry described in the first. Whereas the first part of *EOT* concerns what the magistrate *must* do in accordance with his duties, the second part turns to "what he ought to do in prudence." And because "the duties of men are contained in general established rules, but their prudence is regulated by circumstances…it will be necessary, in showing how much toleration is the magistrate's interest, to come to particulars."[56] Thus, Locke turns his attention to the particular circumstances facing England to argue for toleration on instrumental grounds:

> To consider…the state of England at present, there is but this one question in the whole matter, and that is, whether toleration or imposition be the readiest way to secure the safety and peace, and promote the welfare, of this kingdom?[57]

Locke's most basic commitments have not changed. The practical question of how to "secure the safety and peace, and promote the welfare, of this kingdom" is not discernably different from the one that motivated the *Tracts*, and Locke again turns to experience to answer it. What *has* changed is the conclusion to which experience leads: uniformity is an ineffective if not counteractive means of pursuing societal harmony.

In the years since the *Tracts* Locke had vastly enlarged his own body of experience in a way that likely contributed to his change of perspective—notably, through his observations of the effects of uniformity laws in England,[58] his firsthand encounter with toleration during a

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[56] *EOT*, 151.

[57] *EOT*, 151.

[58] It is perhaps telling that Locke devotes a significant portion of *EOT* to stressing the political repercussions of persecution. While he had supported a strengthening of the Anglican Church, the Corporation Act of 1661, the Act of Uniformity of 1662, the Conventicle Act of 1664, and the Five Mile Act of 1665 had done so primarily through the large-scale ostracization and persecution of non-conformists. Locke's hope was that uniformity would prevent the kind of religious divisions that led to the civil war—instead it tore the wounds of war back open.

formative trip to Cleves,[59] and his rapid entry into politics through his work as personal physician and assistant to Anthony Ashley Cooper, a powerful politician, who was to become the first Earl of Shaftesbury five years after Locke joined his household.[60] The result is an entirely different understanding of human nature and, in particular, the possibilities for forming communities around shared understanding and compatible interests: "force cannot master the opinions men have, nor plant new ones in their breast, yet courtesy, friendship, and soft usage may."[61] Locke, we've seen, never favored coercion. But in *EOT* he takes more seriously the diverse religious commitments within his own society, while appearing confident that such differences need not preclude cooperation on secular matters.[62] In the *Tracts*, references to other cultures served as points of contrast that helped to project a unified image of the English people and/or Western European Christians;[63] in the latter work, examples intercultural differences become parables for intranational ones.

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[59] In November 1665, Locke left England for the first time at the age of 33, when he accompanied Sir Walter Vane on a three-month diplomatic mission to Cleves, serving as the latter's secretary. Locke was impressed by the climate of tolerance: Lutherans, Calvinists, and Catholics were free to worship openly, and he attended church services by each with much interest, marveling at their peaceful coexistence in his correspondence. See in particular Locke's letters to John Strachey and Robert Boyle: L180 (e.g. 246) and L.175 (e.g. 228), respectively, in *Correspondence Vol. 1*.

[60] *EOT* was the first work Locke produced while under Ashley's patronage, likely shortly after joining his household in June 1667. While he initially intended to serve in a predominantly medical capacity, he quickly became entangled in Ashley's political and personal dealings to an extent that proved transformative. As the latter's career advanced, and particularly after he became the Earl of Shaftesbury, Locke was forced to abandon his hopes of a career in medicine and devote himself entirely to politics. As Locke lamented in a letter following Shaftesbury's death, "[I]f I had spent those years I lived with [Shaftesbury], in the publique practice of physique…I might have made my self an other manner of establishment, then now I have." Locke to Thomas Herbert, 28 Nov./8 Dec. 1684 (*Correspondence Vol. 2*, L.797, 663).

[61] *EOT*, 156.

[62] In marked contrast with his position in the *Two Tracts*, Locke expresses hope that toleration will persuade fanatics to "lay down their animosities and become friends to the state, though they are not sons of the church" (*EOT*, 154).

[63] E.g. Locke, "Second Tract," 60: "You would not easily persuade an inhabitant of the East or a devotee of the Mahomedan profession to embrace the faith of Christian worshipping his God (as he would consider) offensively with a bare head. It would seem no lighter an offence to them, the custom being unknown among them, than praying with the head covered to us."

Locke, however, is not simply making an argument based on personal experience: he is compiling a history. The second part of *EOT* is rich with examples of contemporary and historical failures of force: observations about the effects of uniformity in present-day England, familiar stories of the forced conversions of Turkish slaves and indigenous Americans, and so forth.[64] A particularly informative contribution to this collection appears in his argument for tolerance toward fanatics, which culminates in the following "experiment," intended "to show what the nature and practice of mankind is, and what has usually been the consequence of persecution."[65]

> I desire nobody to go further than his own bosom for an experiment whether ever violence gained anything upon his opinion; whether even arguments managed with heat do not lose something of their efficacy, and have not made him the more obstinate in his opinion; so chary is human nature to preserve the liberty of that part where lies the dignity of a man…[66]

In a distinctly topical maneuver, Locke is taking personal experience and articulating it into a history of human responses to coercion, making the personal common and the common personal. Indeed, this passage and the history to which it contributes gives us a first look at the political uses of the topically guided historical inquiry that he alludes to in the *Essay*, performs in his commonplace books, and prescribes as political salve in the *Conduct*.

Viewed in as historical inquiry, the second part of *EOT* is also noteworthy for its apparent audience. Locke regularly uses the second person in this portion of the text, as if speaking to a sovereign (e.g. "But if you persecute them, you can make them all of one party and interest against you, tempt them to shake off your yoke…").[67] Given that *EOT* was his first major writing under the patronage of Anthony Ashley Cooper, who had likely advised the King on the

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[64] See *EOT*, 154 and 156 respectively.
[65] *EOT*, 155.
[66] *EOT*, 154.
[67] *EOT*, 157.

toleration debate, it is certainly possible that that sovereign was in fact Charles II himself.[68] But in any event, in presenting himself as advising the magistrate on the matter of toleration, implicitly rejects the *Tracts'* assumption that the magistrate alone possesses the wisdom that legitimizes his legislative power. Of course, Charles was largely in favor of toleration to begin with and had opposed a number of Parliament's moves to impose religious uniformity. But by assuming an advisory role—by amassing a body of shared experience and discerning what is common across it, and by urging the magistrate to attend to this common character and legislate accordingly—Locke demonstrates the epistemic capacity for perception and judgment upon which political authority supposedly rests, decoupling it from the governing body and vesting it entirely in a *mode of inquiry* that, it seems, anyone can perform.

To the extent that Lockean authority is an instrument, we may now begin to discern its most general operations. Over the course of *EOT*, Locke layers observations, constructing a history of persecution and consent, from which to glean a general conception of human nature—essentially a commonplace, a heuristic for persuasion or, as I will argue, consensus. At the same time, this heuristic, to be used as an effective basis for governing, must be rearticulated into the practical and particular—in *EOC*, to what is prudent in present-day England. It is, in this sense, generative resource for inventing standards that, because they are appropriate for the people in question, may serve as stable, sustainable foundations for collective life. In his "experiment," Locke tests this understanding against experience and declares it common sense—anyone who applies his claim to their own experience will arrive at the same conclusion: force hurts rather than helps the project of collective life. And informatively, this conclusion is the opposite of the one in the *Tracts*, which, again, failed the test of experience in the intervening years.

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[68] See John Marshall, *John Locke Resistance, Religion and Responsibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 42.

No longer synonymous with the magistrate, authority now resides in a mode of inquiry that bears a remarkable resemblance to the topical inquiry surveyed in Chapter 2. It is a means of producing laws that shape and are shaped by custom, tested and adapted through practice, and essentially heuristic—a means of inventing (and reinventing) the common from the particular. While the *Tracts* also connect authority to this kind of epistemic capacity, they treat it as a property of the magistrate. In *EOT*, it becomes a *way of seeing*, not property but habit: it is through engaging in the kind of inquiry that Locke promotes and performs that one cultivates the wise adaptability necessary to invent standards that characterize the people in both a descriptive and normative sense. *EOT* thus imagines authority as residing not in an individual, but in a kind of practical, productive knowledge. But it is more than just a *techne*—a sheerly instrumental and often unilateral means of producing social cohesion—as it is a *technology* for creating standards capable of sustaining collective life through ongoing inquiry into what is common.[69]

To review: The *Two Tracts* offers a primarily political conception of authority, wherein magistrates are instruments valued primarily for the stability they afford—rulers whose primary function is to rule, legitimized largely by Locke's insistence that societies cannot function without common standards. But beginning with *EOT*, his growing concern with the means by which such standards are established and tailored to their society—and his growing awareness of the variability within societies—leads him to consider more seriously the role that inquiry plays in legitimating and sustaining authority. Like the *Tracts* but more explicitly, *EOT* presents the

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[69] This reading of Lockean authority as interweaving art and inquiry is indebted to scholarship that conceives of rhetoric in a similar vein—notably, Richard McKeon's treatment of rhetoric as architectonic in McKeon, "Uses of Rhetoric,", and David Marshall's rejection of the common treatment of rhetoric as merely a *techne* or art of persuasion, in favor of a Vichian conception of rhetoric as topically guided inquiry into "the conditions of possibility for human community" in Marshall, *Vico and the Transformation of Rhetoric*—e.g. 196-197. (The cited account pertains to Vico's mature work, the *Scienza nuova* (1725), wherein the topics are no longer presented as such, but are instead rearticulated as axioms that together "constitute a rich array of lenses through which to perceive and reconceive the conditions of possibility for human community.")

magistrate as a kind of expert of the common—as one with a deep, historical knowledge of particulars and the judgment to form useful generalizations from them—and it is this expertise that allows them to create appropriate and therefore sustainable laws for the people. But while the *Tracts* merely hint at the political import of such expertise, in *EOT*, it becomes the *sole justification* for the magistrate's political capacity to create and enforce laws. More importantly, this expertise is no longer inherent to the magistrate or linked to his privileged access to truth; rather, it is cultivated through a mode of inquiry that, in theory, anyone serious inquirer may perform. Authority, in short, is Locke's technology for creating common ground—the field of common experience, upon which societies are formed and maintained.

Crucially, though, this inquiry is still the work of the individual. The inquirer compiles a history by observing the people, but the people do not actively contribute anything of their own, nor do they have a means of resisting the inquirer's characterizations if incorrect. Locke's own generalizations may be evolving as he tests them against experience, but only on the basis of his own experience and observations of others. Thus the question of legitimacy resurfaces in modified form: if authority's political capacity rests upon an external epistemic capacity that may be exercised by anyone *but only one*, on what grounds (apart from divine right) is an individual or group granted supreme authority? Locke's solution emerges in his best-known political work, his *Second Treatise of Government*, published in 1689, but begun nearly a decade earlier.[70]

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[70] Locke composed the *Two Treatises* in the years following his 1679 return from France, though he kept the works hidden, lest he be charged with subverting the state—the penalty for which could be imprisonment or execution. In his extant correspondence from the time, he appears to refer to the work almost exclusively by a code name: *De Morbo Gallico*—"the French Disease," a common term for syphilis that may have, as political unrest stirred in France, also alluded to the absolutism of Louis XIV (Roger Woolhouse, *Locke: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 181). It was only after the Glorious Revolution that Locke pursued publication.

4.3 *Second Treatise of Government*

In contrast to his more ambivalent early works, Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* categorically reject the divine right of kings. The *First Treatise* focuses primarily on this rejection; the *Second Treatise* argues positively that humans are born free and equal, and works to imagine how such free and equal individuals might come to live together. As we will see, Locke remains anxious about war and committed to reducing the disagreements that he sees as eroding the peace. Further, he continues to champion common standards, created and imposed by a supreme earthly authority, as a means of reducing and resolving such disagreements. But the *Two Treatises* pursue these commitments in a way that more fully realizes the vision of authority that we've seen Locke developing—a collective authority that both rules the individual and is made by the individual. Each of the *Treatises* offers new insights that illuminate the most pressing questions raised by earlier works. The *First Treatise* models the historical inquiry that Locke proposes and a demonstration of its political necessity; the *Second Treatise* represents his clearest answer to the question of how earthly authority—authority among equals—is legitimized: consent.[71] The present account of Lockean authority culminates with a reading of the latter work, wherein Locke explores the basis for legitimate government and presents his mature vision of authority as rooted in collective inquiry and productive of consent. With this vision so established, Chapter 5 will begin with a reading of the *First Treatise* as the clearest manifestation of this inquiry in Locke's political works.

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[71] John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), II.viii.95: "Men being…by nature, all free, equal, and independent, no one can be put out of this estate, and subjected to the political power of another, without his own consent"

In the *Second Treatise*, Locke draws upon a rich selection of historical examples to argue that all societies begin in a "state of nature," wherein humans, as inherently social beings,[72] live "together according to reason, without a common superior on earth, with authority to judge between."[73] In the absence of such earthly authority, individuals are beholden only to natural law—universal moral principles that are, in theory, discoverable through faculties with which all are born.[74] Life in Locke's state of nature is not, as Hobbes famously wrote, "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."[75] But the more Hobbesian Locke we saw in the *Tracts* remains: the state of nature is highly precarious, always at risk of descending into a "state of war," "wherein there is no appeal but to heaven, and wherein even the least difference is apt to end*, where there is no authority to decide between the contenders.*"[76] Echoing his earlier arguments for the magistrate's authority over particular matters, Locke maintains that Natural Law is too general to adequately address particular disputes. Further, it is enforced only in the next life. Peaceful coexistence requires situated laws—laws attuned to the society and enforceable in the present. Individuals enter civil societies when they agree to be bound by such laws—when they agree, in other words, to relinquish their natural freedom to an earthly governing body, granting it the legislative power to create laws and the executive power to enforce and apply them. What

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[72] Two Treatises, II.77.

[73] Two Treatises, II.19.

[74] These faculties include reason (*Essay*, IV,xvii), perception, retention, discernment, comparison, composition, enlargement, and abstraction (*Essay*, II.ix-xi.) Locke claimed that natural law was discoverable through reason and experience alone in *Essays on the Law of Nature* (lectures delivered while he was Censor of Moral Philosophy at Christ Church between 1663 and 1664), though he struggled to explain *how* one might make such a discovery for much of his life. As his health deteriorated in his final years, he gave up the cause and embraced revelation as a more practical source of moral guidance—the subject of *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695): "It is too hard a task for unassisted reason to establish morality in all its parts, upon its true foundation, with a clear and convincing light….Some parts of that truth lie too deep for our natural powers to easily reach…without some light from above to direct them" (*The Reasonableness of Christianity as Delivered in the Scriptures* in *The Works of John Locke in Nine Volumes*, (London: Rivington, 1824 12th ed.,), vol. 6, 139-144, 146). While this move represents a marked departure from Locke's prior position, as a practical revision based upon experience and aimed at his lifelong pursuit of shared understanding, it may be viewed as entirely within character.

[75] *Leviathan*, XIII.9.

[76] Locke, *Two Treatises*, II.21, emphasis added.

distinguishes the state of nature from civil society—and what drives individuals from the former to the latter—is, in a word, authority.[77]

This authority that serves as a foundation for collective life mediates between individual and society through Locke's conception of consent, at once a forfeiting of individual authority and the ultimate act of authority: an authorization, the very creation (and, we will see, maintenance) of authority. In simple terms, consent is each individual's supposedly rational agreement to give up certain powers to government in exchange for the benefits of civil society: namely, the power to do "whatsoever be thought for the preservation of himself, and the rest of mankind"[78] and "to punish the Crimes against the Law [of Nature]."[79] Through consent, the governing body, whether an individual or assembly, is granted supreme epistemic and political authority—it becomes the sole judge of what is best for the people, and it alone has the power to create, enforce, and interpret laws.[80]

Locke often speaks of consent as a one-time act—the moment when an individual agrees to join a society and live by its laws—but his argument for the people's right to revolt (explicitly denied in both the *Two Tracts* and *EOT*) suggests that it may be better understood as continual process of tacit reauthorization. For when individuals consent to cede their authority to the government, "it be only with an intention in everyone the better to preserve himself his Liberty and Property." Accordingly, the government "can never be suppos'd to extend farther than the

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[77] Two Treatises, II.21.
[78] Two Treatises, II.129.
[79] Two Treatises, II.128.
[80] Importantly, Locke divides these aspects of authority into legislative and executive powers—the power to make laws and the power to enforce and interpret them, respectively—though the executors of these powers vary depending on the kind of government to which the people have consented. Both powers interweave the political and epistemological capacities discussed earlier in this section: the legislative power has a capacity to judge what is best for the people and create laws accordingly; the executive power has the capacity to judge the applicability of a law to a particular situation and impose the appropriate sentence.

common good."[81] Indeed, governments that do not promote the ends of civil society—"Peace, Safety, and the publick good"[82]—are illegitimate and may be overthrown.[83] So while consent entails giving up the right to determine (and pursue) what is best for oneself and others, the government's actions remain subject to the judgment of the governed.[84]

At first glance, consent appears to return authority, both political and epistemological, to the individual: Through experience and reason, every individual knows what is in their best interests and authorizes—and tacitly, continuously reauthorizes—a governing body to serve those interests. But for practical reasons, individuals cannot give or revoke consent independently—such judgments only become politically viable if they are shared by a majority of the populace. While the original decision of whether to consent to a particular government is theoretically a matter of individual judgment, one's ability to act upon that judgment requires (among other things) that others agree with it or else share a similar vision for a new society.[85] Likewise, Locke stresses that the question of whether to revoke that consent—the question that

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[81] Two Treatises, II.131.

[82] Two Treatises, II.131.

[83] E.g. *Two Treatises*, II.xix. 222.

[84] Locke, it should be clear, does not mean that people should be constantly and actively engaged in judging the actions of the government and deciding whether to revolt. Anticipating concerns that his view will invite endless rebellion, he argues that people will be driven to revolt only after repeated experiences of injustice *Two Treatises*, 225.

[85] While most individuals are born into civil societies rather than the state of nature, Locke stresses anyone can decide to leave one society and form another (II.115). There are, of course, countless ways to problematize the position that one can simply walk away from the society into which one was born. While such considerations were undoubtedly far from Locke's mind, it's worth noting that this capacity to walk away is presented primarily as it is evidence for his normative claim that consent rather than paternal authority constitutes the foundations of all societies: "[A]s far as we have any light from history," he writes, we have reason to conclude that all peaceful beginnings of government [that is, excluding conquests] have been laid in the consent of the people" (II.112). The innumerable societies that have been formed by those who have "withdraw[n] themselves and their obedience from the jurisdiction they were born under," are, in his view, "so many testimonies against paternal sovereignty," which "plainly prove that it was not the natural right of the father descending to his heirs that made governments in the beginning" (II.115). That is, Locke's insistence that individuals are free to give or deny consent should be read in the context of the argument to which he was responding, wherein the inability to truly consent was treated as evidence of the naturalness and thus validity of our obligation to paternal sovereignty.

subjects the actions of *all* governments to the people's judgment[86]—is not the individual's to make:

> [E]very man, by consenting with others to make one body politic under one government, puts himself under an obligation, to every one of that society, to submit to the determination of the *majority,* and to be concluded by it; or else this *original compact,* whereby he with others incorporates into *one society,* would signify nothing, and be no compact, if he be left free, and under no other ties than he was in before in the state of nature.[87]

The distinction between civil society and the state of nature—that is, authority—is maintained only because individuals enter a binding agreement to henceforth defer to the majority's judgment on matters of governance.[88]

Two questions arise. First, how might individuals, each with their own experiences and investments, arrive at a shared judgment of what is best for all? Locke attempts to address this question by turning to majority rule, which he presents as more practical alternative to unanimous agreement.[89] But while majority rule is an effective way to *politically* authorize a collective assessment of the public good, the question of epistemic authority—of judgment—remains: if Locke's hope—and the persistent aim of his political works—is to create the conditions of possibility for collective life through the creation of societally appropriate standards, what guarantees that the majority will correctly judge the appropriateness of such standards? The gravity of this question increases when we recall Locke's earlier works, wherein

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[86] While the *Second Treatise* allows for a range of governing arrangements, some of which permit the citizens more input than others, *all* forms of government, from rule by individual to rule by assembly may be overthrown if the people agree that revolution is necessary.

[87] Locke, *Two Treatises*, II.97.

[88] Locke offers a characteristically pragmatic argument for majority rule: If a society is ruled, directly or indirectly, by individual decision, it will be left with no way to decide disputes and thus be back in the state of nature. Conversely, if it requires unanimous agreement, decisions will be practically impossible (health and occupation would prevent many people from attending the public assembly; divergent opinions and interests would almost certainly foreclose consensus) and it will rapidly dissolve, again leading back to the state of nature. *Two Treatises*, II.98

[89] Two Treatises, II.98.

the magistrate's sole purpose is to reign in the masses—the "untamed beast," the "confused multitude," destructive, furious, impatient.[90] While Locke's views on human nature do appear to have grown more charitable over time, his reservations about the masses persist, as in the *Conduct*, where he insists, "The multitude reason but ill, and therefore may be well suspected, and cannot be relied on, nor should be followed, as a sure guide."[91] Individuals, this later work makes clear, are fully equipped for rational thought, but nevertheless prone to prejudice and partiality—defects of the understanding that tend to worsen in groups. But on what grounds does Locke trust this unreliable multitude to arrive at a transcendent understanding of the public good—precisely what it was incapable of attaining in the *Tracts*? What, in other words, keeps the majority from descending into the mob?

The answer to these questions lies in the inquiry-based approach to creating common ground that Locke has been developing since his early works. Lockean authority, we've seen, has always entailed—and at least tacitly rested upon—an epistemic capacity to judge what is best for the people. This capacity derives from historical inquiry into shared experience—through the accumulation of individual experiences and a judgment of what is essential, what is common across them. Through such inquiry, we arrive at a generalized understanding of the whole, whose legitimacy rests upon its being collectively recognizable. The epistemic capacity to judge what is best for the people is neither fully external (as in received wisdom) nor fully internal (as in the state of nature), but conditioned upon the collaborative production of a shared way of seeing—a common understanding of the public good that one recognizes as true because one contributed to its making.

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[90] "First Tract," 39.
[91] *Conduct*, 34.

In grounding his vision of authority in consent—from the Latin *consentīre*, "to feel together, agree, accord harmonize, (*con-* together + *sentīre* to feel, think, judge, etc.)"—Locke refashions the mode of inquiry laid out in *EOT* into a simultaneously individual and collective endeavor capable of generating common ground through the layering of individual experience.[92] A tool for the governed and not just the governor, Lockean authority-as-inquiry is a means by which people may come to sense together—to *see together* and therefore know together—while still seeing for themselves.[93]

In the *Two Treatises*, the clearest and arguably most important example of this collective inquiry appears in Locke's description of the circumstances under which the people might legitimately revolt. "Revolutions," he writes, "happen not upon every little mismanagement in public affairs," but only "if a long train of abuses, prevarications and artifices, all tending the same way, make the design visible to the people, and they cannot but feel what they lie under, and see whither they are going."[94] People, in other words, are moved to revolt only after evidence of malice accumulates to the point that they cannot help but discern a pattern. It is through this accumulation of individual experiences that a common object—the inept or tyrannical government—emerges in the public consciousness and forms the basis for revolution.

Importantly, this kind of accumulation functions negatively as well as positively. In pursuit of public judgment, its role is as much to remove the purely personal as it is to identify the common. While the young Locke fully trusted the magistrate to determine what was best for the people, the mature Locke, put plainly, trusts no one. The accumulated perspectives thus serve

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[92] "consent, v.". OED Online. March 2019. Oxford University Press.
[93] See again Locke, *Conduct*, §24.
[94] Two Treatises, II.225.

as checks against each other, creating common objects of understanding, much as Locke did in his commonplace books.

Indeed, while the *Second Treatise* does not anchor this kind of accumulation and synthesis to a material site or institution, the process that emerges looks remarkably like the topical inquiry practiced in Locke's commonplace books. Before turning to these commonplace books directly, let us reflect on the notably rhetorical theorization of authority that emerged over the course of his career. The *Second Treatise* advances a vision of authority that Locke outlined decades earlier: authority is a technology—a mode of inquiry—with which to create common ground, comprising 1) a political, productive capacity to create and enforce the standards necessary to stabilize society and 2) an epistemic, inquiry-driven capacity to determine what constitutes the public good. In the *Tracts*, epistemic authority is an assumed property of the magistrate—a kind of instrument for seeing what is common, what is appropriate; in *EOT* it is vested instead in a mode of inquiry that is generally but not necessarily performed by the magistrate. In the *Second Treatise*, epistemic authority is built from the ground up through accumulation—Locke's adaptation of *copia*, which aims to collect the testimony of experience in place of *auctoritates*, and which works to produce a picture of the whole instead of a reservoir of vantages. Like topical inquiry, this accumulation-driven inquiry mediates between individual and collective: through the accumulation of perspectives on matters of shared salience, individual experience is rearticulated into a history of collective experience. In this manner, the epistemic capacity for judgment becomes a capacity for *shared* judgment. No longer a property of the magistrate as it was in the *Tracts*, judgment flows from and facilitates the collectivization of perception, Locke's long-sought means of seeing together while seeing for ourselves.

This chapter, like the one before it, began with a quandary: the apparent incompatibility of Locke's commonplacing practices with his political and epistemological privileging of the individual. At last, we have the beginning of an answer: The kind of inquiry that provides the foundations for authority—and thus collective life—in the *Treatises* is akin to the kind of topical inquiry that Locke performs in his commonplace books. Locke's notebooks are not collections of received wisdom; they are accumulations of individual experiences that together form shared objects of understanding—fever, lightning, a new species of fish. In his political works, these objects of understanding—whether the character of the people or the tyranny of the magistrate— are, like these natural historical topics (and, indeed, all rhetorical topics), provisional articulations of shared salience, built and remade through the accumulation of experience in a way that makes it possible to read the individual into the collective and the collective into the individual. If the objects in question appear somewhat more nebulous, it only underscores the rhetorical achievement of the inquiry Locke proposes. Just as isolated particulars only coalesce as a species once we have identified their common features and unified them under a name, it is through this inquiry into what is common that isolated experiences of disservice materialize into an authorization for revolution. Authority in this sense is neither imposed nor received, but distributed, co-created: the validity of the contents of commonplace books is contingent upon mutual recognition, a recognition made possible by their topical organization.

But imagining authority as this kind of technology requires a more precise, concrete account of its inner workings than what the *Second Treatise* provides. One concludes the work knowing not how individual experience becomes collective, but only that it *must*, for it is only through this process that revolution—central for sustaining civil society founded upon consent— may be legitimately pursued. Accumulation, of course, is the crucial practice, but where and how

might such accumulation take place? What, in other words, are the actual sites, institutions, practices, and so forth through which individuals people might combine and compare their experiences to collectively judge the legitimacy of revolt? The remainder of this dissertation turns to Locke's commonplacing activities for an answer.

5.0 Locke the Inquirer: The Lockean Commonplace Book as a Rhetorical Technology for Object Making

This chapter and the next turn to Locke's natural historical commonplace books as the most concrete expression of the inquiry that he places at the heart of his civil society. More specifically, I argue that the topically guided practices of accumulation and selection that Locke employed in his own commonplace books represent the habits of inquiry that define his ideal political subject. We may view these individual habits, outlined in *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, as Locke's means for producing the shared objects of understanding upon which his civil society depends.

Locke's commonplace books are in this sense rhetorical technologies. To read them as such, we must first address his relationship with rhetoric directly. As the preceding two chapters worked to show, Locke's rejection of humanist commonplacing book is rooted in a rejection of its supposedly rhetorical features—it's concern with the eloquent, the pleasing, the customary, the revered. Put very briefly, the humanist commonplace book's commitment to eloquence and received authority suspends individual reason and sense, distancing the compiler (and their audience) from the world in a way that leaves them vulnerable to the demagogic suggestions. The remaining two chapters turn to the features of the commonplacing tradition that Locke embraces and the ways in which he adapts these features to address the aforementioned challenges.

As we saw in the earlier chapters, Locke's political and epistemological writings are united over time and across subject matter by a concern with finding, articulating, and producing common ground. This concern, we've seen, is exacerbated by his ambivalences toward language

and authority. Language is the means by which we construct common ground, but its ambiguities can just as quickly dissolve it. Authority is a means of resolving these ambiguities, but it too often turns the common ground it repairs against itself, fracturing those who defer to different authorities and becoming a basis for clannishness and bigotry. In both cases, Locke sees rhetoric as tipping the scale in favor of destabilization, generating confusion through figural speech, halting critical thought with citational authority, and facilitating the eloquent pandering of demagogues who profit from division.

Yet rhetoric is distinctly, deeply invested in common ground. Indeed, Richard McKeon argues that it is precisely in times of fragmentation that rhetoric becomes ascendant, functioning architectonically to discover and invent new ways of being together, new resources for producing common ground. "An art of producing things and arts, not merely one of producing words and arguments," rhetoric, in its architectonic capacity, adapts the rhetorical technologies of past eras into new resources for collective life—new ways of relating individual to collective, particular to general, content to form.[1] It is, in this sense, a technology of technologies for inventing common ground.

Locke, of course, has no conception of or interest in this view of rhetoric—in his view, "rhetoric" is devoted exclusively to eloquence, in the most superficial sense of the word. Yet what we see in his transformation of the commonplace book is exactly the process by which rhetoric becomes architectonic. McKeon, observing the dual meanings of "topic" in the rhetorical tradition—as "an empty place by which to order things to be remembered" and as "a subject matter…on which to speak, to think, or to act"—argues that both meanings are

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[1] McKeon, "Uses of Rhetoric," 53.

inadequate in isolation.[2] Treated as exclusively formal or material, the topics are limited to collecting and supplying, offering little opportunity for the transformation that occurs at the intersection of form and content, theoretical and material. At these points of intersection, McKeon explains,

> we do not find subject-matters ready made nor do we encounter problems distributed precisely in fields. We make subject matters to fit the examination and resolution of problems, and the solution of problems brings to our attention further, consequent problems, which frequently require the setting up and examination of new fields.[3]

This reciprocal, continual production of subject matters and the fields that organize it is precisely the work of the Lockean commonplace book. Under Locke, the commonplace book is no longer a storehouse—whether a preparation for eloquence or a storehouse of observations—that serves, in the best case, as a handmaiden for truth. Rather, it is a mode of inquiring into the conditions of possibility for common ground, as well as the concrete site of production for both these conditions and the inquiries through which they are articulated. It is a technology, in McKeon's rich use of the term, for creating shared objects of understanding. The aim of this chapter is to explore and illustrate the ways in which Locke transforms the commonplace book into this kind of technology, allowing us to recognize the rhetorical orientation of his political and epistemological works—and thus the centrality of rhetorical inquiry and production to his vision of civil society.

My argument is that Locke's engagement with rhetoric is the means by which he overcomes the apparent impasse created when his ambivalences toward language and authority collide in the *Second Treatise*. In making consent the basis for authority, Locke reframes authority as agreement, thereby reframing it as a problem of language. To put it as briefly as

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[2] McKeon, "Creativity and the Commonplace," 28-29.
[3] McKeon, "Uses of Rhetoric," 57.

possible, language is the means by which free individuals learn the terms of the political arrangement to which they might consent, and it is the means by which political subjects accumulate and make commensurable their respective experiences in a way that renders tyranny collectively legible. Hannah Dawson, historian of political thought, argues that Locke's deep skepticism about words creates a significant—but largely unaddressed—problem for his political theory: "the very genesis of political life depends on linguistic actions which are themselves dependent on a common understanding which Locke denies."[4] While the legitimacy of authority hinges on consent, consent is itself legitimate only if all parties share an understanding of its terms—a possibility that the ambiguity of language seems to foreclose. When we recall that Locke's solution to such ambiguity is authority, the bind becomes clear. Locke's solution to the problem of language is authority, but his solution to the problem of authority is consent—an agreement upon terms, an achievement of language.

Scholarly approaches to this impasse may be divided into three general camps. The first dismisses Locke's indebtedness to language and conversation, treating him as a "man of reason," "craving…silence and order," pursuing a language tantamount to "a logic…designed to determine with the greatest certainty the 'things' of a reality external to the knower, ultimately to master it."[5] The second dismisses Locke's concerns about language, treating him as an ironic rhetorician, his disavowal of rhetoric something of a rhetorical ploy itself.[6] The third path,

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[4] Dawson, Locke, Language and Early-Modern Philosophy, 292.

[5] See, respectively, Torrey Shanks's review of feminist scholarship of this orientation in *Authority Figures: Rhetoric and Experience in John Locke's Political Thought* (State College: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014), 70-72; Peters, "John Locke, the Individual, and the Origin of Communication," 394; Catherine Hobbs Peaden, "Understanding Differently: Re-Reading Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (1992), 77.

[6] For example, see Shanks, *Authority Figures*, Edward P. J. Corbett, "John Locke's Contributions to Rhetoric," *College Composition and Communication* 32, no. 4 (1981); Jerry Weedon, "Locke on Rhetoric and Rational Man," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56, no. 4 (1970); Wilbur Samuel Howell, "John Locke and the New Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 53, no. 4 (1967).

charted by Dawson, takes Locke at his word and resides in the resulting paradoxes: "To seek for a resolution of his paradoxes may be to labour under a misapprehension about our nature….Locke's gift was not only the splendid architecture of his state…but also the clear sighted perception that it can only be built with frail men."[7] Dawson's perspective takes seriously both Locke's misgivings about language and his reliance upon it, without entirely abandoning his political project. But it also raises serious questions about the extent to which Locke's political vision was sustainable in practice.

To these three interpretive possibilities, I wish to add a fourth, instrumental reading: Locke is not after a political philosophy; he is after a technology that makes political life possible—or, more accurately, a technology of technologies, an architectonic art of authority that we may recognize as rhetoric itself.

To understand how this rhetorical reading of Locke differs from the second perspective described above, let us turn to perhaps the most compelling of recent arguments in the latter vein, political theorist Torrey Shanks's *Authority Figures*.[8] Shanks confronts Dawson's dilemma directly, drawing upon figural rhetoric to discover in Locke a more viable political project. Drawing upon Grassi, she argues: "To critically orient ourselves to the situated world of politics, rather than idealizing detachment, requires the creative power of rhetoric, unleashed through metaphor."[9] Thus the "the capacity for invention that generates plurality and…create[s] anxieties for Locke in the *Essay*" is "indispensible" to Locke's program of inquiry—the source of its "creative power."[10] In this manner, Shanks may be seen as rescuing Locke from the dilemma

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[7] Dawson, Locke, Language and Early-Modern Philosophy, 303-304.
[8] Shanks, Authority Figures.
[9] Shanks, 5.
[10] Shanks, 68.

identified by Dawson, while also rejecting the view of the Lockean subject as a detached and individualistic "man of reason," disdainful of rhetoric and devoted to logic.

There is, I agree, something markedly rhetorical about Locke's argument in the *First Treatise*—something that cannot be reduced to mere eloquence, to an ornamental supplement to logic. But Locke's record of attacks on rhetoric and his undeniable investment in reason raise the question of what *kind* of rhetoric Locke employs and what kind of reason—or, more accurately, logic—he sidelines. His engagement with commonplacing practices in the *First Treatise* and the *Conduct* offers an opportunity to investigate how he adapted both enterprises to address the challenges that emerged at the nexus of his epistemological and political thought.

5.1 Locke on Rhetoric: The *First Treatise* as Topical Inquiry

Among Locke's political works, his oft-slighted *First Treatise of Government* gives us perhaps the fullest illustration of accumulation as a tool for political consensus. The *First Treatise* is a systematic dismantling Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha: On the Natural Power of Kings* (published in 1680, but written before the English Civil War), an argument for the universality of patriarchal power.[11] Locke summarizes Filmer as follows: "Men are not born free, and therefore could never have the liberty to choose either governors, or forms of government…Adam was an absolute monarch, and so are all princes ever since." [12] Unsurprisingly, Locke rejects the universalist conceit of this argument and sets out to disrupt it, most notably by accumulating examples that undermine Filmer's central construct, which Locke calls "a strange kind of

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[11] John Wallace, "The Date of Sir Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha*," *The Historical Journal* 23, no. 1
[12] Locke, *Two Treatises,* I.19.

domineering phantom, called the *fatherhood,* which, whoever could catch, presently got empire, and unlimited absolute power."[13] God, Eve, and the maternal body evince authority outside of the earthly father; hypotheticals about daughters, nephews, and grandchildren muddle Filmer's account of the succession; stories of a cannibalistic, child-eating society satirize unchecked paternal power.[14]

But importantly, while the *First Treatise* is often read as a negative argument against the universal validity of paternal power (in contrast to the positive political vision articulated in the *Second*), Locke is doing more than simply rejecting Filmer's views. As Torrey Shanks argues, the work does not necessarily seek to deny Filmer's vision of the fatherhood, as much as it seeks to *particularize* it—"substituting and pluralizing the particular images that lend meaning to Filmer's timeless universal claim of patriarchal authority."[15] Locke's aim, in other words, is neither to present a positive articulation of some alternative basis for authority nor to reject patriarchal power categorically, but rather to destabilize and decenter Filmer's assertion of fact— his image of the all-powerful, divinely sanctioned Father—by revealing patriarchal power's wide range of manifestations, its practical limitations, and all of the ways it can be otherwise. Locke inquires into what is common in Filmer's supposedly universal formulation of authority, and he comes up dry.

What *is* common, however, is authority's general relationship with civil society. Locke's inquiry thus serves not only to dismantle Filmer's theory of authority, but also to support his own. In spite of the *First Treatise*'s reputation as a negative argument, the accumulative approach therein leads us to a view of authority that is consistent with the rest of Locke's oeuvre:

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[13] Two Treatises, I.6.
[14] On Locke's use of satire in the *First Treatise*, see Shanks, *Authority Figures, 79-85.*
[15] Shanks, 82.

authority is foundational to all civil societies but must be articulated in a way that is deeply situational.

As Shanks rightly argues, the *First Treatise* is an inventive and sophisticated argument that cannot be reduced, as it so often is, to a series of meticulous, at-times repetitive efforts to "poke holes" in Filmer's logic. Rather, the work goes beyond logic, employing the resources of rhetoric in a way that allows Locke to engage with "the affective and imaginative forces of rhetoric" necessary to "dispel the specter of royal absolutism."[16] Locke, she contends, is not simply pointing out errors in reasoning; he is transforming the object of Filmer's argument through a creative and decidedly rhetorical maneuver.

This powerful insight is, for Shanks, a testament to the centrality of style to Locke's political critique—in her reading, the creativity and potency of the *First Treatise* lies in its use of rhetorical figures. Observing Locke's persistent focus on the way that Filmer argues and his concern with how the language of *Patriarcha* "smuggles in its absolutist principles," she locates in Locke's argument a number of rhetorical devices—prosopopoeia, metonymy, and satire—that reveal how he particularizes the patriarchal authority.[17] For example, in the case of prosopopoeia (Shanks uses the *OED* definition: "a rhetorical figure by which an imaginary or absent person is represented as speaking or acting"), Filmer's construct, "the fatherhood," serves to hypostatize patriarchalism, making it seem universal and timeless.[18] Locke critiques this move with his own use of prosopopoeia, personifying Filmer's fatherhood alongside what had been, in the latter's argument, the absent mother. By placing the supposedly universal fatherhood in relation to a "contingent and plural femininity" (numerous and seemingly contradictory accounts of Eve and

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[16] Shanks, 74.
[17] Shanks, 74.
[18] Shanks, 74.

her relationship to power and of maternal authority more generally) Locke reveals the phantom nature of the former: if we are to understand the fatherhood as a universal, it appears entirely transient, incoherent, vacuous—a construct (in Shanks's characterization, a *rhetorical figure*) that conceals an absence.[19] For Shanks, this apparent use of rhetorical figures shows that "the unruly creativity of language that Dawson sees as threatening to undercut Locke's political thought is instead the very capacity that enables the force of his critique."[20]

Voicing more traditionalist commitments, Ted Miller resists Shanks's efforts to recuperate Locke as an exponent of rhetorical invention by pointing to the latter's extensive discussion of language and ambiguity in the *Essay*. Shanks's rhetorical re-reading, he argues, fails to take seriously enough the depth of Locke's concerns about rhetoric and his pursuit of clarity. Locke, he says, "did indeed wish to show that some philosophical and religious doctrines claimed impossible knowledge, but this did not stop him from thinking himself the enemy, not the friend, of ambiguity."[21] But these investments—the desire to refute baseless claims to knowledge on one hand and reduce ambiguity on the other—should not be seen as opposed. Indeed, it should be clear from the preceding discussions of the *First* and *Second Tract* alike that such refutations are a necessary first step in *resolving* ambiguity. Locke seeks to dislodge received principles and create them anew through a process of accumulation that continually checks the emerging object against experience.

In this light, one could object to Miller's critique on the grounds that Book III demands rather than precludes the kind of rhetorical criticism that Shanks discovers in the *First Treatise*. Locke casts *Patriarcha* as the very embodiment of what he sees as the dangers of rhetoric—his

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[19] Shanks, 75-78.
[20] Shanks, 86.
[21] Ted H. Miller, "Selective Memories: John Locke, Politics, and Shanks' Authority Figures," *Theory & Event* 18, no. 3 (2015)

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chief concern, in his own words, is that it will "persuade all men, that they are slaves, and ought to be so."[22] In response, he performs the kind of historicization or "bottoming" he regularly recommends in his epistemological works—practices that today could easily be classed as rhetorical criticism.[23]

But such criticism must be followed by the kind of inventive work that is so central to Locke's vision of authority: the creation of common ground. Indeed, Shanks argues that rhetoric gives Lockean political critique a crucial positive dimension—it is, she says, "a practice of political argumentation that depends on the productive power of rhetoric to invent new spaces for contesting and reimagining figures of authority."[24] More specifically, Shanks seeks to place *ingenium*—in her words, "a distinctive human ability for making meaning…by joining the diverse and disparate"—at the heart of Locke's engagement of rhetoric. This kind of rhetoric, she argues, goes beyond "'mere' persuasion"—it "does not simply adorn or destabilize philosophy's reasoned arguments…it makes possible the production of new spaces for arguments and shared meaning."[25] Again, I agree: in Chapter 4 I worked to present Lockean authority as a technology for creating exactly these spaces for shared meaning. And, as I will argue shortly, we must understand Locke's work in this vein as decidedly rhetorical and look to it, rather than his comments on persuasion, to fully appreciate his contributions to rhetorical theory and practice. But for Shanks, this capacity for *ingenium* arises out of figural language—a mode of rhetorical invention that Locke adamantly opposed for reasons that, as we saw in the prior section, are

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[22] Locke, Two Treatises, I.1.

[23] To be clear, Locke sees no critical value in identifying specific rhetorical figures in text (e.g. *Essay, III.x.34.* Thus, for example, he feels no need to point identify Filmer's use of prosopopoeia as such, even as he describes the corresponding stylistic maneuver in Filmer's argument. On Locke's discussion of bottoming—that is, following "the connexion and dependence of ideas…till the mind is brought to the source on which it bottoms" (*Conduct,* §7), see for example *Conduct,* §44.

[24] Torrey Shanks, "Feminine Figures and the "Fatherhood": Rhetoric and Reason in Locke's First Treatise of Government," *Political Theory* 39, no. 1 (2010), 50.

[25] Shanks, Authority Figures, 5.

inseparable from his political project. Verbal ambiguity, exacerbated by figural rhetoric, arguably fosters "the greatest parts of the disputes in the world," not only by creating disagreement where it would not otherwise exist, but also by entrenching misguided opinions— beautifying nonsense, obscuring contradiction, and ultimately charming authority from the people.[26] Hence Locke's repeated calls for plain language. But even plain language would not resolve these political concerns, given his awareness that definitions are themselves the constructs of individual minds and thus subject to the question of authority—of whose definition we should use. Like opinions, words are embedded with perspectives that can shape beliefs, if not perception itself, in a way that both alters the balance of power and precludes collective understanding. What motivates Locke's reconceptualization of authority, we've seen, is precisely this set of political problems—a lack of common ground and shared understanding on one hand, the uncritical acceptance of received wisdom on the other—and the threat they pose to collective life. So while I will argue, alongside Shanks, that Locke's efforts to produce "new spaces for arguments and shared meaning" are indeed rhetorical, one must also acknowledge that they were driven by problems for which figural rhetoric was, in his view, a cause rather than a cure.

Here we see the merit in Miller's critique and the persistence of Dawson's. Locke is confronting a rhetorical problem, the very question of collective existence, but, as we have seen, he dismisses the most obvious rhetorical means for addressing it—eloquent verbal persuasion— as corrupted from the start. At the same time, Shanks is right in observing that there remains something rhetorical in the means Locke *does* employ: pluralizing and decentering. The problem is her decision to label these activities with rhetorical figures—an inclination that, recalling Gaonkar's critique of rhetorical hermeneutics, speaks to the expansiveness of the rhetorical

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[26] Locke, *Essay,* III.xi.7.

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lexicon more than it does Locke's interest in using it.[27] *Prosopopoeia* describes Locke's strategy of decentering Filmer's father figure by layering historical and religious examples that give presence to the missing mother. *Metonymy* names Locke's charge against the reductiveness of the fatherhood, as well as his efforts to critique it through pluralization—again by offering a far-ranging collection of examples. As an alternative, we might turn from these rhetorical figures to the operation they name: accumulation.

Accumulation, we've seen, underpins the mode of inquiry that makes possible Locke's vision of authority as founded upon collective judgment. It is, further, at the heart of his commonplacing activities, wherein individual observations form a basis for provisional, collective judgments of what is common, salient, appropriate. And in in contrast to figural rhetoric, we need not read Locke as insincere to appreciate the rhetoricity of his engagement with accumulation. This is not, in other words, a case where rhetoricians must re-describe Locke in rhetorical terms rather than his own. In Locke, one finds a *concrete, traceable connection* between the classical rhetorical tradition and the practices that he embraced in his commonplace books and espoused in his writings. As I will argue in the next chapter, what gives Locke's commonplacing practices the power to address the rhetorical problem at the heart of his political project is precisely the approach to topical inquiry he adapted from Bacon and practiced with Boyle. But even now it is evident that, while Locke refuses the humanistic investment in stylistic proliferation and ancient wisdom, what he retains from the commonplacing tradition has much deeper roots in the rhetorical tradition. The mode of inquiry that underlies his pursuit of collective judgment is topical inquiry itself—the process of simultaneously mapping and placing

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[27] Gaonkar, "The Idea of Rhetoric,", see in particular Gaonkar's attack on the "thinness" of rhetoric's "productionist vocabulary" as it is used in contemporary rhetorical criticism (33-34), as in Alan Gross's ostensibly neo-Aristotelian critique (60-65).

the matter at hand, wherein one explores and relates particulars through generalization, while vivifying the general through particularization. For Locke as for the humanist commonplacers before him, this mode of inquiry consists in accumulation and judgment.

By way of example, let us return to the *First Treatise*. Locke, recall, critiqued figurative speech on the grounds that it enthralls the beholder with its beauty, masks contradiction, and generates ambiguity. The *First Treatise* opens by charging Filmer—and his language—with these offenses, and it proceeds by uncovering contradictions and resolving ambiguities in a manner that is so far from enthralling that the work can scarcely be mentioned, even in scholarly discourse, without reference to its tediousness.[28] It is, of course, possible to describe Locke's technique of accumulation in figural terms, but the effect of this accumulation is not the one that Shanks's figural reading attributes to it. Locke is not tapping into the "unruly creativity of language"—an unruliness that, we *must* remember, appalls him—nor is he introducing ambiguity into the notion of the fatherhood. Locke's objection to universalism indicates a deep investment not in ambiguity, but its opposite: specificity. This investment is clear in his strategy throughout the *First Treatise*, which is to situate the fatherhood through disambiguation—to render it clear and distinct and, in that manner, confine it to a narrow range of applicability, outside of which it rapidly loses its coherence.[29]

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[28] Shanks acknowledges and resists these readings of the *First Treatise* as "exhausting, exhaustive, and exhausted," but interprets the repetitive nature of the work as evidence of Locke's investment in rhetorical style. *Authority Figures,* 70.

[29] Locke charges Filmer with deliberate ambiguity, for example when he argues that the latter "should have told us what his fatherhood, or fatherly authority is, before he had told us in whom it was to be found, and talked so much of it. But, perhaps, [Filmer] found, that this fatherly authority, this power of fathers, and of kings, for he makes them both the same, would make a very odd and frightful figure, and very disagreeing with what either children imagine of their parents, or subjects of their kings, if he should have given us the whole draught together…and therefore, like a wary physician, when he would have his patient swallow some harsh or corrosive liquor, he mingles it with a large quantity of that which may dilute it, that the scattered parts may go down with less feeling, and cause less aversion" (*Two Treatises*, I.7).

The difference between this topical approach and a figural one is subtle but important: Locke's topical accumulation works to destabilize Filmer's argument of universality for the purpose of localization, not sheer multiplication or, even less characteristically, obfuscation. By reading Filmer's claims against different instantiations of authority, Locke uses accumulation to repeatedly engage the reader in the practice of judging which characteristics of authority are essential and which are not, revealing every aspect of fatherly authority to be nonessential. In this manner, he chips away at the universality of Filmer's concept of fatherly authority by inviting a more precise consideration of a particular mode of governance. Pointing, for example, to the Israelites, he argues that Filmer and his supporters "must confess that the chosen people of God continued a people several hundreds of years, without any knowledge or thought of this paternal authority, or any appearance of monarchical government at all."[30] By way of illustration, he directs the reader to the final chapters of Judges (commonly cited as evidence that the Israelites had a representative form of government[31]), wherein "the Levite appeals to *the people* for justice," and "it was the tribes and the congregation that debated, resolved, and directed all that was done on that occasion."[32] Thus, he forces a judgment: one must conclude that either "God was not 'careful to preserve the fatherly authority' amongst his own chosen people," which "will seem very strange and improbable;" or that "fatherly authority may be preserved where this is no monarchical government"—and, thus, that fatherly authority does not necessitate monarchical government.[33]

Locke's approach in this example is noticeably and classically topical. He begins with the premise of his opponent; he locates the places in which it can be shown logically inconsistent

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[30] Two Treatises, I.164.
[31] See Peter Laslett's notes in *Two Treatises,* 301.
[32] *Two Treatises*, I.165, emphasis added.
[33] Two Treatises, I.165.

and determines an argument strategy in response; he joins the argument strategy to a commonplace and thereby forms an argument against the original premise that is, in they eyes of his opponent, seemingly irrefutable. But Locke's broader goal is not simply to attack the logic of Filmer's argument—to do so, as Shanks has noted, would not have required such a plethora of examples. Rather, Locke might be seen as using Filmer to explore—and, ultimately, to make a positive argument about—the nature of authority.

Locke is unmasking the obfuscations and elisions whereby Filmer presents certain decidedly peripheral and particular aspects of authority as its center. He is, as Shanks argues, historicizing a political concept to "open [it] to revision." But he is also doing something constructive, producing a view of authority that is both inspired by and productive of the vision he had from the start—authority as a source of situated, clearly articulated common ground that is appropriate for the society in question. By reading the *First Treatise* as an exercise in commonplacing, we see how Locke transcends the paradox Dawson perceives—that authority is both predicated upon and prerequisite for linguistic agreement. Locke uses topical inquiry to amass and relate a collection of far ranging but familiar texts, thereby producing an authoritative understanding—an understanding constituted through historical, "collective" inquiry into what is common—of authority itself.

Curiously, this historical investment in what lies beyond the particular, the immediate, and the actual, is, as Shanks observes, often taken as evidence of the "rationalist and ahistorical" character of Locke's political works.[34] Locke, in this view, pursues what is common as a means of detaching from what is particular, embodied. There is some validity to these readings: Locke's investment in his political works is not with what applies to some, but rather with what applies to

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[34] Shanks, Authority Figures, 12.

all. But the generality of his political concepts should not be mistaken for universality, nor their capaciousness for aridity. The vision of authority that emerges in the *First Treatise* is not a hollow abstraction devoid of the particular; it is an opening for particulars—an invitation as well as a vessel capable of accommodating the full range responses. In accumulating these responses, Locke does not pursue an "objective" view of authority, wherein the particulars of each perspective are stripped away to reveal a universally applicable mode of governance beneath. Indeed, what emerges as universal is only that human communities must contend with the question of power and that they must do so in a way that is attends to their particularlities, their situatedness. "Authority" thus becomes the mode of inquiry that the *First Treatise* itself performs—an exploration of the means through which free individuals may render collectively legible the conditions of possibility for living together. Less an answer than a question that invites us to rearticulate individual observations into a common history, "authority" emerges in the *First Treatise* as a history of authority—simultaneously a shared object of understanding, produced through the layering of situated perspectives, and an ongoing call to inquiry. It is, in a word, a topic.

What is, for our purposes, the crucial insight of the *First Tract* is that Lockean authority is not only a rhetorical technology, but also a rhetorical invention, much like the topics themselves. It is a shared object of understanding, produced through collective inquiry into what is salient—which is to say both recurrent and useful—across the range of collected accounts. The Lockean commonplace book, I've argued, is a technology for being together, a site of rhetorical inquiry that interweaves discovery and invention to produce shared objects of understanding, constituting the ground upon which it becomes possible to negotiate the terms of our collective existence. In the *First Treatise*, one begins to appreciate the commonplace book's architectonic

nature: it is not only a technology but also a technology of technologies, its products not only objects but also entire fields of inquiry. Of course, we've seen the topics serve in this capacity from the start: the topics are an art of topics, a collection of heuristics in constant conversation with experience, inviting—and evolving through—an ongoing (re)consideration of what is common. Locke's contribution is to redirect this kind of rhetorical inquiry to the sensible, material realm, so that the topics become a way of exploring and making the material world together.

This topical interpretation of Locke's engagement with rhetoric makes possible—and, I would argue, necessitates—a more nuanced treatment of his engagement with reason. While Locke's readers often present reason and rhetoric as opposed in his thought, the topical tradition reveals the complementary relationship between the two enterprises. The next section argues that just as Locke turns from figural rhetorical to topical inquiry to facilitate the production of common objects, he turns from syllogistic logic to embodied reason to theorize the habits of mind—and body—necessary to produce such objects.

5.2 Locke on Logic: The *Conduct*'s "Man of Reason" as the Situated, Sensing Body

Locke's adamant opposition to figural rhetoric is frequently read as a tacit endorsement of logic and certainty. For example in Catherine Hobbs Peaden argues that Locke construes rhetoric as a "seductive woman banished from the masculine arena of pure logic."[35] Such arguments follow a more general tendency in rhetorical studies to assume that rhetoric's

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[35] Peaden, "Understanding Differently."

skepticism toward absolute truth sets it at odds with enterprises such as logic, philosophy, and science. Rhetoric, in this view, is the realm of the "subjective"—the embodied and material, the particular, the contingent, the unruly; logic as the "objective" realm—the disembodied, the abstract, the formal, the universal, the certain. Thus we arrive at what Shanks calls the "man of reason" interpretation, wherein Locke is seen as elevating reason above the other faculties and treating it as operating "without social or material influence" and at the expressed exclusion of rhetoric.

Shanks's work seeks to disrupt the traditional dichotomy of logic and rhetoric by casting Locke's relationship with rhetoric as one of "debt and denial."[36] While acknowledging Locke's disdain for rhetoric, she argues that it is indispensible to his philosophical and political thought. More than a "mere helpmate to reason or its uninvited guest," rhetoric is "necessary for and constitutive of reasoned argument." Quoting Ernesto Grassi, she presents rhetoric as necessary in its capacity to "allow for new forms of meaning and relations…by 'uncovering the "similar in the unsimilar,"'" where logical deduction or induction alone cannot."[37] In Shanks's assessment, rhetoric is not the enemy of logic, but rather its crucial counterpart; it is what gives Lockean political critique its capacity for invention. Against Paul de Man, she argues that Locke's "unruly" and seemingly repetitive style reveals not a hypocritical or helpless penchant for "rhetorical excess," but the path of Lockean reason itself. Rhetoric shares with logic a formal capacity to structure philosophical argument, but is distinguished by its unruliness and engagement with possibility.

Locke disrupts the simplistic and unsatisfying opposition of rhetoric and reason, but not by reducing rhetoric to a merely stylistic enterprise. This is not to say that uncovering "the

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[36] E.g. Shanks, *Authority Figures,* 1-2.
[37] Shanks, 5.

similar in the unsimilar"—Grassi's description of metaphor—does not apply to Locke. When he opens Book III of the *Essay* with an account of the divine origins of language, he presents generalization as a "remedy" for the practical impossibility of assigning a different word to every particular. To make words "so useful as they ought to be," he writes, "language had yet a further improvement in the use of general terms, whereby one word was made to mark a multitude of particular existences."[38] For Locke, the capacity for generalization is a divinely bestowed enhancement of language, necessary for words to serve as "the great instrument and common tie of society."[39] Indeed, a central problematic of his political project—and the crux of his engagement with rhetoric—rests on the question of how best to establish general terms to signify "a multitude of particular existences." But one must also recall his alarm at the prospect of figurative speech guiding such generalizations, as well as his repeated efforts to manage and delimit the kind of unruliness that Shanks sees him as pursuing.

Book III's infamous charge of "perfect cheats" notwithstanding, Locke's most incisive indictment of figural rhetoric arguably appears in Book II of the *Essay*, where he distinguishes between wit—which he explicitly links to metaphor—and judgment. Wit, he writes, entails the rapid "assemblage of ideas" on the basis of resemblance; judgment, the slow and serious work of "separating carefully, one from another, ideas wherein can be found the least difference."[40] Taken alone, this passage appears to associate wit with the combination of ideas and judgment with their separation. But in fact, both of these activities fall under Locke's definition of judgment in Book IV."[41] What distinguishes the kind of combinatorial work done by the

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[38] Locke, *Essay,* II.xi.2.
[39] *Essay,* II.xi.2.
[40] *Essay,* II.xi.2.
[41] In *Essay,* IV.xiv.4, Locke defines judgment as "the putting ideas together, or separating them from one another in the mind, when their certain agreement or disagreement is not perceived, but presumed to be so."

judgment is its engagement with the world. As Locke explains in Book IV, the quality of one's

judgment is measured by the extent to which it "unites or separates [ideas] as in reality things

are"—that is, to which its connections and distinctions are born out by subsequent experience.

Not so for wit, which Locke devalues because it forecloses inquiry. Wit, he observes, is "so

acceptable to all people, because its beauty appears at first sight, and there is required no labor of

thought to examine what truth or reason there is in it. The mind, without looking any further,

rests satisfied with the agreeableness of the picture and the gaiety of the fancy."[42] Given that

Locke sees wit as operating primarily through metaphor and allusion, the parallels between this

passage and his critiques of figural rhetoric in Book III are not surprising. But Locke's treatment

of wit in Book II deepens the critiques that follow, presenting figural rhetoric as not just a

problem of style or even communication, but also, crucially, a problem of habit and individual

conduct. While wit cultivates a quickness of mind and memory, Locke observers that it often

comes at the expense of judgment.[43] The crux of his concern with rhetoric, then, is not just its

use of empty, ambiguous, and beguiling figures, but more importantly, that such figures, made

hastily through specious connections and so pleasing as to be uncritically received, are

antithetical to inquiry.

Locke, we see, is not averse to what we might think of as rhetorical *ingenium*, the notably

topical capacity to discern the possibilities for connection between singular entities. Rather, he is

adamant that *ingenium* be placed in the service of inquiry rather than wit, as it was often

translated.[44] The problem with wit and figural rhetoric is not their supposed subjectivity, but the

opposite: their apparent detachment from the world. Recall Locke's remarks on the non-

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[42] *Essay,* II.xi.2
[43] *Essay*, II.xi.2: "men who have a great deal of wit, and prompt memories, have not always the clearest judgment or deepest reason."
[44] See Rhodri Lewis, "Francis Bacon and Ingenuity," *Renaissance Quarterly* 67, no. 1 (2014), 114-115.

arbitrariness of the nominal essences of substances: "nobody joins the voice of a sheep with the shape of a horse…*unless he has a mind to fill his head with chimeras*." For Locke, it is precisely wit and figural rhetoric that stoke this appetite for the chimeric, the fantastical—the impossible.[45]

But logic is not Locke's remedy for the excesses of figural rhetoric. Indeed, on paper, he deplored "logic" and "rhetoric" alike, and on surprisingly similar grounds: both endeavors traffic in the artificial and remove the would-be inquirer from the world. In the *Essay*, "logic" appears primarily as a pejorative for the formalized reasoning taught by the scholastics—and, in particular, its emphasis on the syllogism—which he presents as wholly artificial and thus detached from experience and the stability of the world.[46] Echoing Bacon, Locke argues that because syllogisms take the term as their fundamental unit—the term, which, as we saw in the *Essay*, bears no necessary relation to the ideas of which all human knowledge consists—they do little to guard against falsehood.

These concerns come to the fore in Locke's unfinished work, *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, which he explicitly frames in opposition to scholastic logic.[47] In what is perhaps his most direct attack, he likens the aspiring scholar's engagement in "purely logical inquiries" to a young painter "counting the hairs of each pencil and brush he intends to use in the laying on of his colours."[48] If painting is a kind of inquiry—an attempt to study and represent the salient features of the perceivable world—logic is akin to preoccupation with the tools of inquiry, to the point that the object of inquiry is no longer the world, but the tools themselves.[49] Indeed, Locke

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[45] *Essay,* III.vi.28, emphasis added.
[46] For Locke's attacks on the syllogism, see in particular *Essay, III.x.6-7, IV.xvii.4.*
[47] *Conduct,* §1; see also Paul Schuurman, "General Introduction," in *Of the Conduct of Understanding*, ed. Paul Schuurman (Utrecht, 2000) on this point.
[48] Locke, *Conduct,* §43.
[49] I am again grateful to Tim Barr for this reading of Locke's painter analogy.

continues, training in logic is far worse than this kind of preoccupation; while the painter will eventually realize that he's wasted his time, young scholars,

> their heads so filled and warmed with disputes on logical questions…take those airy useless notions for real and substantial knowledge, and think their understandings so well furnished with science, that they need not look any farther into the nature of things, or descend to the mechanical drudgery of experiment and inquiry.[50]

In decrying the pursuit of "airy useless notions" over "real and substantial knowledge" and "disputes over logical questions" over material inquiry into "the nature of things," Locke critiques logic for reasons not dissimilar from his attacks on rhetoric as the "the artificial and figurative application of words."[51] For logic as for rhetoric, his chief grievance is with the all-encompassing artifice—with artificial systems of reasoning and communicating that detach judgment from the world.

This illustration of logic's deficiencies also points to what propels and directs Locke's alternative: embodied inquiry into the world of shared experience. Lockean inquiry is an exploration of the rhetorical possibility between situated, sensing human bodies. As such, it is directed toward discovering and inventing the conditions of possibility for being together *in the world*—an orientation that compels us the Lockean subject to engage closely with "the nature of things" via the "mechanical drudgery of experiment and inquiry."[52] In one sense, this call for experiment and inquiry is a clear rejection of logic and rhetoric as Locke conceives of them—or, more precisely, their formalization as syllogistic logic and figural rhetoric. But as I have argued, the kind of inquiry that Locke recommends arises from the topical tradition—a tradition that has from inception interwoven logical and rhetorical considerations to mediate between self and

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[50] Locke, *Conduct,* §43.
[51] *Essay,* III.x.34.
[52] Conduct, §43.

other, particular and general. We have already seen how Locke's engagement with topical inquiry allows him to pursue the ends of rhetoric (producing common ground not through verbal persuasion, but rather by exploring the conditions of possibility for seeing together, sensing together—*consensus*) while refusing the aridity of figurative speech. But how does he extend this treatment to logic—a pursuit seemingly inextricable from the formal and abstract?

Locke's strategy, simply put, is to discard the formal investments of logic by distinguishing reason from logic and abandoning the latter entirely. Reason is our natural faculty for connecting ideas; logic, its formalization into a system of artificial rules. As we will see, Locke's remedy for this formalization is not (figural) rhetoric, but reason—a naturalized reason that shifts the site of its operations from the syllogism to the mind, the body. From this distinction between logic and reason, I offer three claims about the nature of Locke's relationship with logic. First, Locke's privileging of reason as a natural and largely infallible faculty leads him to attend more, not less, to what lies beyond it—and in particular, the formation of the ideas upon which it operates. Second, while Locke is often read dualistically—as seeking either to silence human contingency in the service of disembodied rationality or, as Shanks suggests, to artfully do the opposite—his emphasis on the body as the site of reason transcends easy divisions between the mind and body, nature and artifice, subject and object. The "man of reason," in other words, must be recognized as a reasoning body. Finally, as I discuss in the next chapter, Locke models his "man of reason" not after the logician or even the natural philosopher, but rather the natural historian—one whose work lies not in the pursuit of truth, but rather in an ongoing mediation between the stability of generalization and the contingency of the particular. Understanding the Lockean political subject in this way allows us to depart from the standard logic/rhetoric opposition by casting rhetoric, qua topical inquiry, in a mediatory role between

political stability and possibility, abstraction and embodiment. The remainder of this section develops the first two of the claims above with an eye to their political implications.

For Locke, reason is a natural human faculty, bestowed upon us by our Creator. "God," he argues in the *Essay*, "has not…left it to Aristotle to make [humans] rational…He has given them a mind that can reason, without being instructed in methods of syllogizing: the understanding is not taught to reason by these rules; it has a native faculty to perceive the coherence or incoherence of its ideas, and can range them right, without any such perplexing repetitions."[53] Against the syllogistic logic taught by the scholastics, Locke maintains that reason comes naturally to humans. To reason well, we need not first internalize a repertoire of argument forms; indeed, such forms may needlessly complicate and obscure what is otherwise a fairly straightforward process.[54]

This opposition to syllogistic logic gives rise to a fleshed-out mode of inquiry in the *Conduct*, where Locke revisits many of the themes presented in "Study," now with the epistemological insights—and political quandaries—of the *Essay*.[55] Having thoroughly explored the nature and limits of human understanding, Locke turns to the question of how we might best manage our understandings, a question made urgent by its political implications. For, as he writes in the work's introduction, "though we…give the supreme command to the will…[n]o man ever sets himself about any thing, but upon some view or other, which serves him for a

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[53] *Essay,* IV.xvii.4.

[54] *Essay*, IV.xvii.4-6. As Locke writes in the *Conduct*, "The faculty of reasoning seldom or never deceives those who trust to it; its consequences, from what it builds on, are evident and certain; but that which it oftenest, if not only, misleads us in, is, that the principles from which we conclude, the grounds upon which we bottom our reasoning, are but a part, something is left out, which should go into the reckoning, to make it just and exact" (§3).

[55] In a letter his close friend William Molyneux, Locke shared the title of his new project and remarked on the size and import of the undertaking, declaring: "if I shall pursue, as far as I imagine it will reach, and as it deserves, will, I conclude, make the largest chapter of my Essay" (*The Correspondence of John Locke, Vol. 6, Letters 2199-2664* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), L. 2243, 87). Ultimately, however, his declining health and eventual death kept him from completing the project.

reason for what he does…[T]he ideas and images in men's minds are the invisible powers, that constantly govern them."[56] Even in these initial lines, one can see two commitments that are central to Locke's view of the human understanding: first, that human action is guided by reason, and second, that the source of differences in action owes less to disparities in the faculty of reason than it does to differences in the "ideas and images" upon which reason operates. Locke's concern, in other words, is not that people act without reason, but rather that they reason from ideas that cannot—by virtue of being unclear, indistinct, and/or inconsistent with experience—be used in the world or shared with others.

Though the political implications of "wrong ideas" do not, at first glance, figure prominently into the *Conduct*, they represent a persistent and powerful undercurrent throughout much of Locke's writing, including his earliest political works.[57] Among the most explicit articulations appears in "Study," where he describes the dire consequences of the opinions that are "planted" in people by education and custom and therefore left unquestioned.[58] These unexamined opinions, he argues, form the basis of our political identities and the seeds of baseless disagreement, persecution, and exclusion: they become "the municipal laws of the country," and those who fail to profess and practice them "will be scarce looked on as that society, or at best, be thought but lukewarm brothers, or in danger to apostatize."[59] The result is the clannishness that Locke critiques for its foreclosure of common ground: "[w]hen we are grown up, we find the world divided into bands and companies; not only as congregated under several politics and governments, but united only upon account of opinions and in that respect,

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[56] Locke, *Conduct*, §1.
[57] See section 4.1 of this dissertation.
[58] Locke presents bad premises and opinions as the result of poorly formed ideas (see for example Locke, *Essay*, II.xi.13).
[59] "Study," 100-101.

combined strictly one with another, and distinguished from others, especially in matters of religion."[60] This kind of clannishness—in Locke's mind, the root of political discord—excludes and repudiates as much as it binds, on the basis of arbitrary differences in opinion. While "Study" presents reason as a partial remedy, by the *Essay* Locke is clear that the epistemic origin of clannishness is not faulty reasoning but unfounded opinions, and that these opinions originate in faulty or confused ideas that masquerade as truths beneath the term, proclaimed by the reasonable and unreasonable alike.[61]

As Paul Schuurman observes, the connection between syllogistic logic and faulty ideas is particularly clear in Locke's discussions of "idiots and madmen."[62] Locke is far more concerned with "madmen," who, as he puts it in the *Essay*, "put wrong *Ideas* together, and so make wrong Propositions but argue and reason right from them," than with "idiots," who can neither form propositions, nor reason at all.[63] Schuurman argues convincingly that Locke's emphasis on madness is driven by anti-scholastic sentiment—a connection made more explicitly in the latter's posthumously published essay, "Error."[64] This argument reveals something crucial about the shortcomings of syllogistic logic as a means of guiding the understanding—and, in particular, its failure to commit the arguer to the world. Because terms, as the wholly artificial foundations of the syllogism, have no necessary connection to the things they name, one can reason from them

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[60] "Study," 100.

[61] "Study," 102. For the *Essay*'s attribution of fierce disagreement to ill-formed ideas validated through words, see *Essay, II.xiii.28:* "amongst unthinking men, who examine not scrupulously and carefully their own ideas, and strip them not from the marks men use for them, but confound them with words, there must be endless dispute, wrangling, and jargon; especially if they be learned, bookish men, devoted to some sect, and accustomed to the language of it, and have learned to talk after others."

[62] Schuurman, "General Introduction," 48-49.

[63] Locke, *Essay*, II.xi.13; Schuurman, 48.

[64] In "Error," Locke follows his discussion of the madman with a broader discussion of the knowledge-making process that effectively likens practitioners of syllogistic logic to madmen: "For in the discursive faculty of the mind, I do not find that men are so apt to err; but it avails little that their syllogisms are right, if their terms be insignificant and obscure, or confused and indetermined, or that in their internal discourse deduction be regular, if their notions be wrong." (Peter King, *The Life of John Locke*, 175, quoted in Schuurman, "General Introduction," 48.)

with perfect validity and arrive at a conclusion that is incompatible with that world.[65] Thus the "mad" may "applaud themselves as zealous champions for truth, when indeed they are contending for error."[66] Those who begin with terms not grounded in clear, distinct, world-compatible ideas are liable to "fill their heads with false views, and their reasonings with false consequences," no matter how immaculate their logic.[67] So just as the "mad" are those who, "by the violence of their imaginations, [have] taken their fancies for realities" yet "make right deductions from them," those preoccupied with syllogisms are free to indulge their fancies without considering whether they abide in the world—whether they are clear, distinct, and compatible with experience.[68] What's more, it allows us to proceed—and speak—as if they do.

The *reasonableness* of "madness" threatens not only individual understanding, but also shared understanding, suggesting Locke's investment in idea formation is rooted in not only epistemological concerns, but political ones as well. The "idiot's" inability to reason seems to preclude political participation: not being able to "distinguish, compare, and abstract," would, for example, foreclose language itself.[69] The "madman's" erroneous association of ideas is, by contrast, "the foundation of the greatest…of all the errors in the world; or, if it does not reach so far, it is at least the most *dangerous* one, since…it hinders men from seeing and examining."[70] It may be that the discursively and politically deleterious errors of the "idiot" are greater than those

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[65] A more detailed explanation appears in Schuurman, "General Introduction," 61.

[66] Locke, *Essay*, II.xxxiii.18.

[67] *Essay,* II.xxxiii.18.

[68] *Essay,* II.xi.13. Among Locke's examples are people who believe they are made of glass, and so, very rationally, take the necessary measures to "preserve such brittle bodies."

[69] *Essay,* II.xi.12. Locke notes that individuals may be in "want or weakness" of different faculties of reason and that the combination thereof will determine the precise incapacities suffered. But in every case, the results appear to be politically debilitating.

[70] *Essay,* II.xxxiii.18, emphasis added. Locke gives an example of a man who, having been injured by another, dwells on the episode until his mind "cements" the man who injured him and the injury together, rendering the two ideas indistinguishable. He henceforth has as much an aversion to the man as the injury itself. "Thus," Locke writes, hinting at the political implications of madness, "hatreds are often begotten from slight and innocent occasions, and quarrels propagated and continued in the world" (II.xiii.11).

of the "madman," but the errors of the latter are far more dangerous because they so often go unchecked and undetected, operating behind the term. The urgency of these political implications grows when Locke insists repeatedly that "madness" is an affliction to which all humans are prone, liable to originate in "very sober and rational minds."[71] What makes the "madman" so dangerous is the plainness of his speech and comportment—the orderly and unadorned factuality with which he lays out his argument. Locke charges madness with some of the most serious obstacles to understanding that appear throughout his work: it gives "sense to jargon, demonstration to absurdities, and consistency to nonsense."[72] Thus we see why university disputation so often attracts Locke's ire: the mental habits it cultivates are the habits of the mad, as in the *Essay*, where he attacks those who have maintained authority by "employing the ingenious and idle in intricate disputes about unintelligible terms, and holding them perpetually entangled in that endless labyrinth."[73]

Locke's problem with syllogistic logic is, in sum, its detachment from the world—not only its inability to attend to flaws lurking beneath the term, but also its ability to mask them with formally rational discourse. Indeed, the critique above appears as part of a larger case against obscure language, where Locke outlines the threats that "unintelligible terms" pose to the understanding, while stressing the extent to which they are accommodated by syllogistic logic and encouraged by disputation.[74] Here, one sees not opposition but kinship between scholastic logic and figural rhetoric in Locke's thought. Both enterprises give the appearance of veracity

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[71] *Essay,* II.xxxiii.3-4.

[72] *Essay,* II.xxxiii.18.

[73] *Essay,* III.x.9.

[74] As Locke writes in the *Essay,* "the admired Art of Disputing hath added much to the natural imperfection of languages, whilst it has been made use of and fitted to perplex the signification of words, more than to discover the knowledge and truth of things: and he that will look into that sort of learned writings, will find the words there much more obscure, uncertain, and undetermined in their meaning, than they are in ordinary conversation." *Essay,* III.x.6.

and coherence while trafficking in ambiguous significations and meaningless divisions; both allow us to converse and debate coherently about nonsense, building "castles in the air" at the expense of not only individual understanding, but also shared understanding and collective life.[75]

Locke's empirically inflected remedy is to build such "castles" in and from the world via inquiry. While our knowledge of things is constructed, the "conformity between our simple ideas and the existence of things, is sufficient for real knowledge" and makes it possible to develop an understanding of the world that is more than mere fantasy.[76] Lockean inquiry thus proceeds by examining the collection of simple ideas held together by a given term—that is, checking it for clarity, distinctness, and world-compatibility (or, as I will argue in 6.3.3, *commonness*)—and relying upon "native rustic reason" to guide our understanding of it.[77] As previously noted, many of Locke's readers have interpreted this solution as either a rejection of rhetoric, contingency, and subjectivity *or* a rejection of logic, universalism, and objectivity. But Locke complicates these seemingly dualistic readings by embedding reason and its materials in the sensing body, the body that resides in the world, and through which all knowledge is—and must be—mediated. Thus when Locke rejects disembodied reason as "logic" and empty terms disconnected from the world as "rhetoric," his aim is not to strip away artifice entirely, but rather to build our artificial structures upon the ground. What remains, when we have stripped away all that is not anchored in this manner, is neither the irrational body, nor disembodied rationality, but precisely the "man of reason"—who is, first and foremost, a reasoning, sensing, individual body, situated in the world.

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[75] *Essay,* IV.iv.1.
[76] *Essay,* IV.iv.4.
[77] *Essay,* IV.xvii.6.

The "man of reason," as the Lockean political subject, functions much as the magistrate did in the *Two Tracts* and *Essay on Toleration*: both are capable of creating and adapting *appropriate and useful* generalizations because they are embedded in and perpetually inquiring into the material world of particulars. And, as Locke's discussion of "matters indifferent" in those early works makes clear, even if we had a clear and indisputable common "text"—in this case, Scripture itself—it would not encompass the full range of particulars that constitute human existence.

The *Essay* thus promotes a constructive, embodied, humble approach to the uncertainties of existence by both seeking the limits of the human understanding and stressing the dangers of reaching beyond them. Thus in its early pages, Locke critiques those who extend "their inquiries beyond their capacities…letting their thoughts wander into those depths where they can find no sure footing."[78] The "footing" here is embodied experience, and attempting to speculate about what lies beyond it serves only to "raise questions and multiply disputes," enlarging doubt rather than understanding.[79] The *Essay*, by contrast, attempts to stem such speculation by locating the "horizon…which sets the bounds between the enlightened and dark parts of things; between what is and what is not comprehensible by us," so that we may abandon our pursuit of what we cannot know and dedicate ourselves to what we can.[80] But what initially sounds like a call to devote ourselves to certainty may instead be read as initiating an exploration of the uncertain. Justification for such a reading lies both in the *Essay* itself, where human understanding consists entirely in sensible knowledge and is thus inherently uncertain, and in Locke's ongoing political project (which, again, took "matters indifferent" as its inaugural problematic), where his chief

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[78] *Essay,* I.i.7.
[79] *Essay*, I.i.7.
[80] *Essay,* I.i.7.

concern is with those areas where we must proceed without certainty. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that Locke attributes what he sees as the principal aims of collective existence (maintaining the peace and improving life on earth) to the practical wisdom—indeed, the *practices*—of "unscholastic statesmen" and "illiterate mechanics," a wisdom derived from worldly experience rather than engagement with the artifice of syllogistic logic and its empty promise of certainty.[81]

But embodied reason is not alone sufficient for resolving what Locke sees as one of the prime threats to (and of) collective life: the specious opinions identified in "Study," made dangerous primarily because of our passionate attachment to them. In Locke's list of the three ways in which one may obstruct their faculty of reason, the second (after relying on the opinions of others) is allowing passion to "govern their actions and arguments" so that they "neither use their own, nor hearken to other people's reason, any farther than it suits their humor, interest, or party."[82] At first, Locke's concern with limiting the passions appears to support arguments such as Peaden's, which cast him as pursuing the disembodied rationality of a dispassionate "scientific discourse," while seeking to vanquish rhetoric—and, with it, the contingencies of the body, the passions, the social, and so forth.[83] But in fact, his concern with the passions is not their place in the realm of rhetoric, sociality, embodiment, possibility, and so forth, but rather their capacity to remove us from meaningful engagement in it—to keep us from considering or even hearing the useful and oftentimes corrective insights of others. Through Locke's attacks on the passions as impeding sensory and social engagement, we arrive at the second claim of this section: that the

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[81] *Essay,* III.x.9: "it was to the unscholastic statesman that the governments of the world owed their peace, defence, and liberties; and from the illiterate and contemned mechanic (a name of disgrace) that they received the improvements of useful arts."

[82] Conduct, §3.

[83] E.g. Peaden, "Understanding Differently," 83.

Lockean "man of reason" is not withdrawn and disembodied, but rather a reasoning body—situated, sensing, social.

While we are drawn into conversation with the world through our senses, the passions pull us away. When Locke describes the dangers of the passions, it is primarily in their capacity to bind us to a particular idea or proposition and blind us to other possibilities—for example, in his observation that erroneous but long-held, opinions "are the darlings of our minds, and it is hard to find fault with them, as for a man in love to dislike his mistress," or that passion can, at a moment's notice, "take possession of our minds...as if [it] were, for the time, the sheriff of the place, and came with all the posse, the understanding is seized and taken with the object it introduces, as if it had legal right to be alone considered there."[84] In spite of their bodily origins, the passions threaten the understanding much as artificial reason does: by distancing us from the natural and social world and overriding experience so that those "thus possessed…*see not what passes before their eyes; hear not the audible discourse of the company*; and when …they are roused a little, they are like men brought to themselves from some remote region"[85] The passions adhere us to a single perspective or idea, detaching us from our sensing, situated bodies—bodies capable of seeing, hearing, and understanding differently. More than just cultivate attachments to certain ideas, they foreclose inquiry by impeding our capacity to encounter and consider correctives that would relieve us of those attachments. To be clear, Locke recognizes that the passions are a necessary part of our embodied existence, produced by sense perception and

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[84] Locke, "Study," 102; *Conduct,* §45. Locke explicitly attributes this kind of attachment to the passions in the latter passage. Note that in Locke's view, the passions are themselves "derived from sensation or reflection" (*Essay*, II.xx.18.)

[85] *Conduct,* §45, emphasis added. On the antagonistic relationship between the passions and conversation, so also for instance, Locke's example, also in §45, of the grieving mother who "is not able to bear a part as she was wont in the discourse of the company or conversation of her friends."

reflection as the natural outcome of our experience of pain and pleasure.[86] Indeed, he observes that the best remedy for passionate fixation is often to "counterbalance [the passion at hand] with another"—which, he adds, "is an art to be got by study, and acquaintance with the passions."[87] It is not, then, the passions themselves that Locke rejects, but rather the tendency for passions to narrow our senses and prevent us from recognizing alternative perspectives and possibilities. The passions are dangerous to the extent that they harden the understanding, but this danger owes not to their association with the body, the social, and the world, but rather their capacity to isolate us from these crucial correctives.

Locke's remedy for the stasis imposed by the passions is to turn toward, and not away from, the sensing, situated, social body. Hence the crucial role of embodied experience and conversation—of seeing what "passes before [our] eyes" and hearing "the audible discourse of the company"—in drawing us out of ourselves and lending suppleness to our perspectives by expanding, testing, and correcting our ideas. Both function as reservoirs of political possibility, albeit in a more bounded sense than Shanks seems to suggest. Locke's investment in possibility is driven by a desire for common ground rather than novelty, and thus it operates not through the use of "imaginative language," but rather through historical inquiry into what is coherent, stable, useful, common.[88] We may call such inquiry rhetorical not because it is imaginative, but because it relational—because it serves to align our perspectives with the world in which we live, and the people with whom we share it.

Indeed, Locke's antidote to our attachment to long-held, specious opinions is not to retreat to logic or universal truths, but to converse with a friend. Of course, he specifies that this

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[86] See *Essay*, II.xx.18. See also *Conduct* §45 on the inevitability of being consumed by the passions: "there is no one "of so calm a temper who hath not some time found this tyranny on his understanding."
[87] Conduct, §45.
[88] Shanks, Authority Figures, xi

friend should be "impartial" and capable of "help[ing] us sedately to examine these our received and beloved opinions," evoking, perhaps, the image of what Jordynn Jack, following Dwight Atikinson, calls the "gentleman virtuoso" in seventeenth-century proto-scientific knowledge production: a Christian gentleman—disinterested, pious, modest, polite—commited to the improvement of self and others.[89] Locke too characterizes his "man of reason" as possessing certain virtues—in particular, impartiality. But his ideal subject also differs from the "gentleman virtuoso" in being, first and foremost, an inquirer. Impartiality for Locke is less a matter of self-denial—of stepping outside of one's perspective or setting aside one's passions (something that is, in his mind, impossible)—than of *accumulating* perspectives through a participatory, collaborative mode of inquiry. While modern readers might rightly describe Locke as pursuing objectivity, I will argue that it is a rhetorical rather than philosophical pursuit, aimed at constructing pragmatic, provisional, and common objects rather than achieving truth, permanence, or universality.

Reason serves Locke's political project to the extent that it is a function of the sensing, conversing body, deeply engaged with the world. The distinction between disembodied and embodied reason becomes especially clear in the *Conduct*'s entry on "Reasoning," where Locke presents the "logical chicaner" and the "man of reason" as diametrically opposed—"the two most different things I know in the world."[90] While his charge of chicanery recalls his attacks on the formal maneuvers of disputation, the central distinction in this case does not turn on the use or refusal of particular techniques, nor, he emphasizes, on natural ability, but instead on the

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[89] Locke, "Study,", 102; Jack, "Pedagogy of Sight", 202; Dwight Atkinson, *Scientific Discourse in Sociohistorical Context: The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1999).

[90] Locke, *Conduct,* §3.

extent to which people avail themselves to experience.[91] Among the entry's many examples of those with "narrow" views of the world, we again encounter one of the principal foes of peace identified in so many of his writings: the religious zealot, here described as one who "will not touch a book, or enter into debate with a person that will question any of those things, which to him are sacred." The problem in this case is neither debate nor even reigious enthusiasm itself, but rather the refusal of questions that enthusiasm entails. The "man of reason," by contrast, "surveys our differences in religion with an equitable and fair indifference, and so finds, probably, that none of them are in every thing unexceptionable. These divisions and systems were made by men, and carry the mark of fallible on them" The reward of reason and impartiality is not, then, a recognition of the one true path, but rather a recognition of the limitations of human systems and our various ways of seeing—as well as an awareness of what is common between them. So while Locke likens the narrow thinker to a "mill-horse" walking in circles or staying "within the narrow bounds of a field or two that delight him," the "man of reason" is akin to the geographer who regularly "traverses up and down" the country they study, one who "give[s] the mind its flight, and send[s] abroad his inquiries into all parts after truth." Locke's ideal subject, represented by the geographer, is one who inquires into the world and who orients themselves outward to the numerous ways of seeing that lie beyond their immediate vantage. In distinguishing this inquirer from the mill horse, Locke characterizes human agency as a capacity to see from multiple vantages and thereby remain adaptive, rather than a capacity to act upon one's will. As he makes clear in the *Conduct*'s introduction the will is directed by the understanding, and human understanding is extremely limited. What guides the "man of reason,"

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[91] *Conduct,* §3: "All these men, that I have instanced in, thus unequally furnished with truth, and advanced in knowledge, I suppose of equal natural parts; all the odds between them has been the different scope that has been given to their understandings to range in, for the gathering up of information, and furnishing their heads with ideas, and notions and observations, whereon to employ their mind, and form their understandings."

then, is neither a superior faculty of reason nor a commitment to some supposedly absolute truth, but rather a set of *habits* that cultivate a "large, sound, round-about sense" for whatever one encounters.

The next chapter draws upon the *Conduct* in detail to argue that the model for Locke's "man of reason" is neither the logician nor the natural philosopher, but rather the natural historian, the commonplacer. This recognition illuminates the means by which Locke promotes the flexible, collective understanding that his civil society demands: precisely by rejecting the formalism, disembodiment, and universal ambitions of logic, and embracing instead a naturalized view of reason, guided by habits of inquiry that place the sensing body in conversation with the world—habits that navigate between Locke's desire to form useful generalizations and common objects on one hand, and to honor the primacy of the individual and the particular on the other. He adapts these habits, we will see, from topical inquiry, with the aim of producing the shared objects of understanding that make collective life possible. As such, they are emerge as not only epistemic, but also civic virtues, illuminating the *Conduct*'s contributions to Locke's political project of seeing together while still seeing for ourselves. Thus, I argue, the *Conduct*—as a treatise that lays out a program of natural historical commonplacing as a means of creating the conditions of possibility for collective life—may be viewed as central to Locke's political project, as well as his chief contribution to rhetoric.

6.0 Commonplacing and the *Conduct*

Begun between 1697, Locke's *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* is an explicitly incomplete collection of "diseases of understanding" and their remedies, conceived as a practical—and vital—complement to the epistemologically oriented *Essay*. This chapter makes a case for reading the *Conduct* as a political and rhetorical treatise on object formation that presents the habits of the natural historical commonplacer as the civic virtues required to participate in a community founded upon inquiry. These habits, we will see, are closely aligned with those of the natural historical commonplacer, revealing the deep rhetoricity of object formation itself, as well as the importance of this rhetoricity to Locke's vision of civil society. A theoretical and practical exposition of the mode of inquiry that forms the basis for Lockean civic participation, the *Conduct* gives us, if indirectly, two crucial pieces Locke's political vision that have thus far been conspicuously absent: a theory of commonplacing and a political praxis.

Before proceeding, a word on objects: My use of "object" derives from Locke's use of "ideas" in the *Essay* and the *Conduct* to stand for "whatsoever is the Object of the Understanding when a Man thinks…whatever is meant by Phantasm, Notion, Species" (I.i.8) "Objects of the Understanding," as Locke's list makes clear, are not things in the world but rather creations of the mind. I employ the earlier terminology in an effort to capture both the constructed nature of Lockean ideas and their materiality. Notably, this materiality applies to ideas of mixed modes as well as substances; for Locke, all ideas derive from and are constitutive of experience. Ideas of mixed modes and substances alike are stabilized, placed in the world, and made legible, familiar only through naming. In Locke's commonplace books, the placement of entries beneath topical heads performs the work of naming, rearticulating and thereby recognizing a particular and

singular experience as an instance of a general phenomenon in a way that reshapes particular and general alike. The topical head, in other words, names the object that emerges through the accumulation of and selection among experiences it gathers. The *Conduct* describes the habits and practices necessary to form the kinds of shared objects of understanding that he pursues.

Framed as an alternative to syllogistic logic, "the only art taught in the schools, for the direction of the mind," the *Conduct* is, as Paul Schuurman has argued, at its heart a text on the formation of ideas.[1] Schuurman, noting Descartes's influence on Locke, positions the *Conduct* not as a text on education, as it is commonly read, but as an anti-scholastic text on logic, characterized by an investment in the formation of ideas, the mental faculties, and method over the scholastic concern with formalized reason.[2] For Schuurman, the primary inspiration for this reconceptualized "logic" was the new logic of ideas championed by the Cartesians—a logic aimed not at formalizing arguments, but at inspecting the mental faculties from which their most fundamental units, ideas, arise.[3] Proponents of this new logic maintained that syllogistic logic simply reflected the natural operations of an attentive mind. Locke followed the new logicians in this position, as he did in their rejection of a logic built upon subjects and predicates in favor of a more direct treatment of the ideas beneath those terms. For Locke as for Descartes, the focus of logic should not be on formalizing mental operations, but rather examining (and honing) the faculties that supply these operations with fodder—that is, clear and distinct ideas.

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[1] In Schuurman's account, Locke's "two-stage way of ideas" consists of two steps: first, the creation of clear and distinct ideas, and second, the process of reasoning from those ideas—that is, determining the connections between them. While training in the syllogisms aims to assist with the second step, Locke, following Descartes, considers such assistance largely unnecessary. (E.g. *Essay,* IV.xvii.6: "A man knows first, and then he is able to prove syllogistically. So that syllogism comes after knowledge, and then a man has little or no need of it.")

[2] Schuurman, "General Introduction." For a more developed account of Locke's relationship with scholastic logic, particularly as presented in seventeenth-century Aristotelian textbooks, see pp. 47-60.

[3] E.g. "General Introduction," 50.

While my view of the *Conduct* as a treatise on object creation is indebted to Schuurman's study, I depart from the latter's logical orientation via two claims. First, Locke's investment in sense perception pushes the *Conduct* beyond the bounds of logic. Second, the work's underlying political commitments suggest aims that extend beyond the clear and distinct idea.

Locke's privileging of the senses and material considerations troubles Schuurman's proposal to read the *Conduct* as a text on logic—or as significantly Cartesian. As I argued in 5.2, Locke conceives of "logic" in opposition to the kind of embodied reason he pursues—as reason removed from the sensing, situated body. And as Schuurman himself makes clear, Locke departs from Descartes precisely in his position that the senses, rather than clouding the waters of reason, are the very wellspring of clear ideas. While Descartes strives to intuit self-evident truths without recourse to the "fluctuating testimony of the senses,"[4] the senses are to Locke precisely what allow us to apprehend simple ideas with perfect clarity.[5] So even as the *Conduct* embraces the Cartesian focus on forming clear and distinct ideas, its dominant strategies for acquiring such ideas—engaging fully with the "thing itself" so as to choose a method of inquiry most appropriate for it, to develop a sensibility for its salient characteristics, and to test our opinions of it against all the evidence it offers—lie not in the disembodied, abstracted reason of logic, but rather in testing and expanding our ideas through continued, experiential engagement with the world.[6]

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[4] *Regulae,* III quoted in "General Introduction," 64.

[5] See "General Introduction,", 61-69, in particular 64. Schuurman draws this distinction to argue that while Descartes and Locke both pursue clear and distinct ideas, Descartes's chief concern is with clarity—that is, the relation between ideas and things—whereas Locke's is with distinction—the relation between ideas.

[6] The *Conduct* is replete with references to these and related strategies—for examples of each, see "Perseverance" (§37), "Haste" (§25), and "Examine" (§12) respectively. For encouragement to consult "things themselves" see for example "Partiality" (§24), "Distinction" (§31), and "Indifferency" (§35).

Indeed, in the introduction to the *Conduct*—one of the few places where Locke pays explicit homage to an intellectual forbearer—it is Bacon, and not Descartes, whom he names.[7] In a remarkable departure from his theorized and practiced rejection of citational authority, Locke quotes the preface to Bacon's *Instauratio Magna* in the *Conduct*'s introduction, drawing upon "the great lord Verulam's authority" to support his own critique of the scholastics. Praising Bacon as one who "did not rest in the lazy approbation and applause of what was, because it was; but enlarged his mind to what it might be," Locke focuses his attacks on the uncritical acceptance of the syllogistic logic inherited from Aristotle, arguing that "rules, that have served the learned world these two or three thousand years…are not sufficient to guide the understanding."[8] In this respect, he follows both Bacon and Descartes, framing his argument, as he so often does, as a critique of received wisdom. The investments of the *Conduct* become somewhat clearer through his excerpt from Bacon, which he translates from Latin:

> They…who attributed so much to logic, perceived very well and truly, that it was not safe to trust the understanding to itself without the guard of any rules. But the remedy reached not the evil, but became a part of it, for the logic, which took place, though it might do well enough in civil affairs, and the arts, which consisted in talk and opinion; yet comes very far short of subtlety, in the real performances of nature; and, catching at what it cannot reach, has served to confirm and establish errours, rather than to open a way to truth.[9]

The first portion of the passage clearly supports Locke's argument at the start of the *Conduct*: while logic has long sought to guard against errors of understanding, it fails to reach their source—faulty ideas—because it looks no deeper than the term. For this reason, logic more often exacerbates the errors it aims to resolve. But the excerpt continues, articulating a position notably different from his own: while logic is serviceable in civil affairs (a view that Locke definitively

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[7] Ever resistant to appeals to authority, Locke, like many of his contemporaries, seldom indulged in direct quotations or even citations.
[8] *Conduct*, §1.
[9] *Conduct*, §1.

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rejects), it is unsuitable for inquiring into nature's subtleties and discovering its fundamental principles (a pursuit that Locke definitely opposes).[10] Through this inclusion, which comes at the expense of some clarity in his own position, Locke anchors the *Conduct* in "nature" and materiality. The guidance therein appears as concrete practices of inquiry into the world of experience, practices that address the shortcomings of logic much as Locke did the shortcomings of language: by calling for deeper engagement with the world. While his stress upon and treatment of ideas has clear Cartesian undertones, his vision of how to form these ideas begins with sensory experience and proceeds through a mode of inquiry that follows Bacon much more directly than Descartes.[11]

But importantly, the Baconian inspiration for Locke's citizen-inquirer is not the natural philosopher, but rather the natural historian—Bacon's commonplacer, proceeding through a program of topically driven accumulation and selection. The *Novum Organum* very literally proposes a new logic capable of discovering fundamental, philosophical principles in a way that Aristotle's *Organon* could not. Locke, however, does not share these philosophical ambitions. He is not interested in apprehending or being guided by absolute truth; indeed, he vigorously and repeatedly cautions against such pursuits, seeking wise adaptability in the place of truth and cures in the place of causes. He insists that an ongoing attentiveness to the local (the particular, the appropriate) is *necessary* to produce useful, shared objects of understanding—objects that are flexible enough to permit engagement with the particular, but stable enough to constitute a world of shared experience, the foundation of civil society. Accordingly, he has little use for Bacon's

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[10] Counter to Bacon, Locke maintains that both training in scholastic logic (particularly via disputation) and the pursuit of foundational truths undermines the shared understanding upon which civil society depends (e.g. *Essay,* III.x.12 and I.i.7, respectively.

[11] Schuurman notes that Descartes does in fact have some use for knowledge gained by the senses, albeit at the level of hypothesis testing and explanation rather than idea formation. Schuurman, "General Introduction," 66-67.

elaborate method of induction—or indeed, any part of the latter's vision that could be properly be considered a logic. While there is no question that the foundations of Locke's approach are distinctly Baconian, these foundations derive from and extend Bacon's approach to natural history rather than natural philosophy—his reconceptualization of rhetoric rather than logic.[12]

Instead of reading the *Conduct* as a text on logic, then, we might more productively read it as a text on rhetoric, in McKeon's architectonic sense. A natural historical treatise on commonplacing, enacted in and for the world of practice, and figured in explicit opposition to the hollowness of formal logic and eloquence alike, the *Conduct* performs and prescribes a mode of inquiry entirely distinct—in form, in content, in practice, in purpose—from not only the formal, syllogistic logic of the scholastics, but also Cartesian deduction and Baconian induction. Rather than replace figural rhetoric with logic or vice versa, this distinctly Lockean mode of inquiry recovers the logico-rhetorical power of the topics for use in constructing a world of shared experience via collective inquiry—the necessary but previously unelaborated core of Locke's political project. Neither mere techne nor mere logic, it is a *technology* for creating the conditions of possibility for collective life—in Locke's case, a means of seeing together while still seeing for ourselves.

The most pressing question for a rhetorical audience of the *Conduct* is precisely what logical readings risk overlooking: What gives the program of inquiry therein its capacity to sustain Locke's civil society? Schuurman, seeking to align Locke with a Cartesian logic of ideas, presents the *Conduct* as directed at the inspection of one's mental faculties, in pursuit of ideas with two chief characteristics: clarity and distinctness. Certainly, the work offers substantial support for such a reading, and Locke regularly presents the clear and distinct idea as essential to

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[12] For an account of Baconian induction and Locke's relationship to it, see 2.2.6 of this dissertation.

right understanding. If we read the *Conduct* rhetorically, however, these two criteria appear necessary but insufficient as a basis for civil society. While clear and distinct ideas allow reason to operate coherently within the individual mind, they cannot guarantee usefulness in the world or agreement with others—a central aim, we've seen, of Locke's political and epistemological endeavors. Accordingly, I propose an alternative reading, more aligned with the investments of rhetoric: the habits espoused in the *Conduct* guide the reader in a program of inquiry that collects diverse perspectives and tests them against each other, aiming to produce ideas that are not only clear and distinct, but also common—derived from and constitutive of shared understanding.

Locke draws attention to the insufficiency of determined [13] ideas in his entry on "Reasoning," where he examines the three "miscarriages" of reason that persist even when we begin with well-defined, stable ideas and are capable of reasoning from them correctly.[14] The

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[13] Locke distanced himself from the phrase "clear and distinct" in the Fourth Edition of the *Essay* (which he worked on concurrently with the *Conduct*), stating in his "Epistle to the Reader" that it should be replaced with "determinate or determined." Whereas clarity measures the correspondence between an idea and an "outward object," and distinctness an idea's "difference from all other" ideas, an idea is "determinate" if, when "it is at any time objectively in the mind, and so determined there, it is annexed, and without variation determined to a name or articulate sound, which is to be steadily the sign of that very same object of the mind, or determinate idea." This emphasis on stable signification is also part of Locke's account of definition (see in particular Locke, *Essay,* II.xxxix.4-10), though his definition of "determinate" appears to abandon his investment in distinguishing ideas from one another and ensuring correspondence with the world. Still, the terms "clear" and "distinct" remain operative in both the *Essay* and the *Conduct*—and, as we will see, many of the *Conduct*'s recommendations reflect an ongoing and serious commitment to the concerns they encompass, beyond stable signification. Accordingly, I follow Schuurman in maintaining the centrality of these terms (see Schuurman, "General Introduction," 24). I depart from Schuurman's position by arguing, first, that we should read Locke's investment in both clarity and distinctness in terms of his rhetorical concern with seeing together; and second, that even when we acknowledge the rhetorical orientation of clarity and distinctness, they are not alone sufficient for achieving Locke's rhetorical aims.

[14] Locke, *Conduct,* §3: "Besides the want of determined ideas, and of sagacity, and exercise in finding out, and laying in order, intermediate ideas; there are three miscarriages, that men are guilty of, in reference to their reason, whereby this faculty is hindered in them from that service it might do, and was designed for." "Reasoning" has an unusual and uncertain place the *Conduct*, seemingly bookending the rest of the work chronologically. The first portion (wherein Locke outlines the three miscarriages) is likely one of the first entries Locke penned, appearing in his notebook (MS e.1) before the introduction, after which the remainder of the work proceeds largely uninterrupted. The second portion of the entry, where Locke develops the third miscarriage more extensively, follows the *Conduct*'s last completed chapter in MS e.1. "Reasoning," is, further, the only chapter known to appear outside of MS e.1—its two sections were combined by an amanuensis in MS c.28 and marked for use in the *Conduct*, albeit without a chapter number. While Peter King made it the third chapter of his edition, Schuurman has disputed this decision, opting to place it instead at the end of the work. For a more detailed account, see Schuurman, "General Introduction," 122.

first two of these so-called miscarriages entail failures to reason at all, both pointing to faults with which we are already quite familiar: blindly accepting of others' opinions and allowing the passions to overrule reason. The third, which makes up the bulk of the entry, returns to the problem of idea formation—and more specifically partiality (or, as it appears in the marginal head "Partial Views"), apparent in those who "readily and sincerely follow reason; but, for want of having that, which one may call *large, sound, round-about sense,* have not a full view of all that relates to the question, and may be of moment to decide."[15] While the *Conduct* stresses the importance of determined ideas throughout, it places significantly more stress upon this problem of partiality. For even if our ideas are clear and distinct and treated carefully by the mind, they will misdirect us unless they are formed from a "large, sound, round-about sense" capable of offering "full view" of all that is pertinent to the matter at hand. Indeed, Locke argues that the "use and benefit" of reason is "spoiled and lost *only* by assuming prejudices, overweening presumption, and narrowing our minds"—our failure to exercise it "in the full extent of things intelligible."[16] Reason again appears as a natural faculty, proceeding smoothly without intervention. What thwarts the reason and renders it useless is not a failure in its own operations, then, but rather the failure to supply it with a full view of the matter in question—in a word, partiality.

We have already seen that clear and distinct ideas do not address the problem of authority introduced in the *Essay*—the question of which features of an object to include in its definition, or, in Locke's framing, whose perspective to choose. In reframing this question of authority as a problem of partiality in the *Conduct*, Locke indicates the presence of a solution—a way to determine a definition without simply imposing it. This solution, I have argued, is topical mode

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[15] Locke, *Conduct,* §3, emphasis added.
[16] *Conduct,* §3, emphasis added.

of inquiry capable of placing one's experiences in conversation with others. Explicating this means—in effect, elaborating the vision of authority laid out in Locke's political works into a usable technology for pursuing collective life—is the ambition of the *Conduct*.

The remainder of this chapter works to illuminate the foundations, operations, and political promise of this technology through a rhetorical reading of the *Conduct*—a reading that draws out its rhetorical commitments and contributions both through a close inspection of the text, and by placing that text in conversation with Locke's major source of rhetorical inspiration: his work as a natural historical commonplacer. I begin by situating the *Conduct* in relation to Locke's political project, arguing that habits therein guide the individual in contributing to the collective formation of common ground—and, as such, may be viewed as the civic virtues upon which Lockean civil society depends. The "man of reason," as one in possession of these habits, is thus recast as a citizen inquirer, endowed with the wise adaptability of the commonplacer. I then turn to the specific habits that Locke employs to pursue the common objects of understanding of which this common ground consists. These habits, we will see, align closely with the defining activities of the rhetorical commonplacer—accumulation and selection— together comprising a mode of topical inquiry that Locke himself employed in his natural historical commonplace books.

6.1 Habits of Inquiry as Civic Virtues

In his political and epistemological works, Locke's longstanding battle against misunderstanding—the source, in his view, of so much political strife—is in essence a search for common ground in the form of shared ideas. While the challenge of sharing ideas appears almost

insurmountable in Book III of the *Essay*, I have argued that Locke's many discussions of community, Book III included, hint at a possible solution: the creation of common ideas through common habits of sensing—that is, through collective inquiry. The *Conduct* presents this solution as a collection of habits for facilitating Locke's project of seeing together by inquiring together. The work is, I argue, Locke's clearest and most concrete articulation of the mode of inquiry toward which so many of his prior works gesture—a distinctly topical mode of inquiry that articulates isolated observations into a history of human experience, layering individual perspectives into common objects of understanding. Rather than approach the work as a minor pedagogical—or, in Schuurman's case, logical—text, my rhetorical reading positions the *Conduct* as the bridge between Locke's epistemolgoical and political projects. The habits Locke prescribes to remedy defects of the understanding do not silence different perspectives with absolute, disembodied truth; rather, they accumulate perspectives to produce a provisional, common "truth" that is remarkably compatible with the aims of rhetoric.

While partiality is incidental to Schuurman's reading of the *Conduct*, as one of many ailments one might uncover while inspecting one's mental faculties, I argue that it represents the work's central problematic.[17] Let us first consider Locke's explicit mentions of the term. In the first of two entries bearing its name (§22), "partiality" describes the "contempt of all other knowledge" besides the "sciences which men are particularly versed in" (law, physic, astronomy, and chemistry are offered as examples). The second of these entries (§24) offers four additional "partialities," all entailing a similarly exclusive preference—in this case, for specific modes of inquiry, sources of knowledge (ancient or modern in one case, popular or esoteric in the other), and authorities who support one's position. All of these errors explicitly classed as partialities

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[17] Schuurman's sole mention of partiality appears on 28, as one of many examples of the ways in which the will governs the mind, rather than the reverse.

occur in decisions about inquiry—the system(s) and method(s) through which one will inquire, the kinds of sources one will consult, the evidence one will include. In each case, the error lies in making such decisions in advance, before consulting the matter at hand. So, for example, Locke, hardly the antiquarian, discourages shunning ancient sources as much as he does favoring them exclusively, urging his inquirer to instead "gather what lights, and get what helps he can, from either of them, from whom they are best to be had, without adorning the errours, or rejecting the truths, which he may find mingled in them."[18] Blind rejection here emerges not as the opposite of blind acceptance, but rather as its counterpart: both are kinds of blindness, both partialities. It is in this sense that the faults above function as partialities: fixed obstructions in the mind, they block our perception of the specific matter at hand, offering only a partial view of all that is relevant to it—blinding us, in effect, to much of what lies before our eyes.

When viewed as a kind of blindness, partiality emerges as the common feature of all three "miscarriages" presented in "Reasoning" (§3)—all three of the ways in which one who reasons correctly from clear and distinct ideas may still be led astray. More specifically, what unites Locke's three "miscarriages" is not so much a disregard for reason or precision, but rather a disregard for the senses. As we've seen repeatedly, what makes received authority and the passions so dangerous is their capacity to remove us from the world by overriding the perceptive faculty through which we experience it. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that the third miscarriage is presented as the want of a "large, sound, round about *sense*."[19] Partiality in Locke's characterization is precisely as a partiality of sense.

Partiality regularly appears as a kind of blindness in the *Conduct*, establishing thematic continuity with a number of associated entries. The entry most explicitly connected to partiality

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[18] Locke, *Conduct*, §24.
[19] Conduct, §24.

is "Prejudice" (§10), which centers on the "partiality to opinion" (as opposed to the "partiality to studies" discussed in §22), taking aim at "False or doubtful positions, relied upon as unquestionable maxims, keep those in the dark from truth who build on them."[20] Prejudice entails an uncritical adherence to erroneous beliefs, "some lazy anticipation, some beloved presumption," that results from an unwillingness test one's beliefs against all available evidence.[21] It describes, in this sense, both cause and outcome of the failure to inquire fully: blind adherence, not only in the sense of accepting opinions without thinking, but also, and more importantly, accepting them without considering *what else* there is to see. This concern with being kept in the dark is central to his account of several other defects of the understanding—for example, "Bias" (§14), the habit of allowing the passions to shape one's judgment in a manner conducive to one's interests; "Anticipation" (§26), the tendency to adhere to an initial impression, imposing it upon subsequent experience; and "Resignation" (§27), the contrary tendency to shift positions, agreeing with whatever argument one encountered most recently. Under "Association" (§41) Locke explicitly ties these kinds of failings to sense perception, faulting those who associate certain ideas on the basis of "habit or custom" rather than the "visible agreement" between them.

These concerns also give shape to the *Conduct*'s remedies for defects of the understanding. Consider, in particular the two prescribed for prejudice, "Indifferency" and "Examine," among the only remedies to receive their own heads in a text largely organized by ailment. Locke introduces these remedies as the two things that one must do to "acquit [oneself]

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[20] *Conduct*, §10.
[21] In "Partiality" (§22), Locke writes, "As there is a partiality to opinions, which, as we have already observed, is apt to mislead the understanding; so there is often a partiality to studies, which is prejudicial also to knowledge and improvement," evidently alluding to Prejudice (§10).

as a lover of truth, not giving way to any pre-occupation, or bias, that may mislead him."[22] The

first, "Indifferency" (§11), arises from Locke's now-familiar observation that people too often

adhere to tenets "upon no other evidence but respect and custom." As a habit, indifferency

entails a refusal to "be in love with any opinion, or wish it to be true, till he knows it to be so."

Two subsequent entries share the title "Indifferency;" both concern the decision of whether to

assent to knowledge claims. The first (§34) admonishes against incorporating received orthodoxy

in such decisions, the second (§35) against weighing the opinions, interpretations, and disputes

of others—as well as one's own ideological predilections. These three entries on "Indifferency"

return to Locke's familiar attacks on received wisdom in its many forms—custom, orthodoxy,

and views of others—urging inquirers to see for themselves. The second habit, "Examine" (§12),

similarly focuses on the individual, while directing the critical gaze inward rather than outward:

we must regularly test our own principles against all available evidence to determine whether

they "be certainly true, or not, and how far [we] may safely rely upon them."[23] The habits

described under all four of these entries work to strip away barriers to perception—partialities—

allowing the individual to engage more fully and directly with "things themselves."

With this understanding of partiality and its remedies in mind, let us return to the

question of societal aims. How does impartiality, given its emphasis on the individual inquiry

and personal edification, facilitate Locke's aim of common ground? The *Conduct*'s entries on

"Indifferency" in particular seem to direct the inquirer away from others, supporting

Schuurman's depiction of the Lockean subject as a solitary and seemingly apolitical inquirer. For

Schuurman, the *Conduct* contains a Cartesian "subject-oriented logic" directed inward to the "the

errors by which we fool ourselves" rather than the fallacies with which we might fool or be

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[22] Locke, *Conduct,* §10.
[23] Locke introduces both remedies at the end of "Prejudice" (§10), before devoting an entry to each.

fooled by others, and seeking only to achieve "personal assurance" and not to "convince others through discursive means."[24] On one hand, there is no question that the *Conduct* recommends a focus on the self, centering on the inspection of one's own faculties and regularly cautioning against both critiquing others' views and allowing those views to obstruct our own perception and reason. On the other hand, one can discern in these admonishments a call to sociality that reveals the collaborative nature of Lockean impartiality.

The *Conduct* offers two major justifications for its exclusive focus on self-examination, both of which lead us to, rather than away from, engagement with others. First, Locke notes that prejudice "is the mote which every one sees in his brother's eye, but never regards the beam in his own."[25] While no one is free of partialities, few are willing to acknowledge theirs, even as we spot them easily in others. What's more, we regularly use our diagnoses of others' partialities to excuse ourselves from self-examination. (Thus Locke demands: "If others love cataracts in their eyes, should that hinder me from couching of mine as soon as I can?")[26] Self-examination leads us to replace this critical posture with a humbler one, recognizing our blind spots as such and in that manner opening our minds by suspending the prejudices and partialities that limit the scope of our inquiries to the familiar, the traditional, the customarily accepted.[27] Second, "indifferency" towards the views of others is necessary to prevent not only blind reliance, but also blind rejection. Thus Locke cautions: "To prejudge other men's notions, before we have looked into them, is not to show their darkness, but to put out our own eyes," reflecting the equal importance

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[24] Schuurman, "General Introduction," 84 and 63 respectively.

[25] Locke, *Conduct,* §10.

[26] *Conduct*, §10. Locke's use of "couching" refers to an ancient method of cataract removal that was dominant in seventeenth-century England. Locke uses couching as a metaphor for giving or restoring vision in the *Essay* (I.iii.20, I.iii.21).

[27] *Conduct,* §3: "We are all short-sighted, and very often see but one side of a matter; our views are not extended to all that has a connexion with it. From this defect I think no man is free. We see but in part, and we know but in part, and therefore it is no wonder we conclude not right from our partial views."

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of turning to others.[28] This turn to others recalls Locke's comments in "Study" on the need for "the assistance of a serious and sober friend" to help us recognize and relinquish our partialities.[29] In the *Conduct*, the other becomes important not only as an interlocutor and impartial examiner, but also as a potential source of new perspectives. An awareness of the inevitability of partiality

> might instruct the proudest esteemer of his own parts, how useful it is to talk and consult with others, even such as come short of him in capacity, quickness, and penetration: for, since no one sees all, and we generally have different prospects of the same thing, according to our different, as I may say, positions to it; it is not incongruous to think, nor beneath any man to try, whether another may not have notions of things, which have escaped him, and which his reason would make use of, if they came into his mind.

Impartiality, for Locke, is not a matter of denying one's own perspective, but rather the accumulation of perspectives. It is a product of "consult[ing] with others" who have looked upon the same matter from "different…positions" in an effort to form a fuller—and necessarily shared—picture. To foreclose exchange with these other views is to cut oneself off from a vital source of input, akin, in Locke's account, to "putt[ing] out our own eyes"—self-imposed blindness. Rather than isolating us, then, self-examination is a prelude to the kind of engagement necessary to develop the "large, sound, round about sense" described in "Reasoning," where partiality is attributed primarily to the want of broad experience and conversation. If "personal assurance" is the aim of the work, it derives not from conviction that one's position is "true," but rather from confidence in one's ability to expand and adapt one's position in conversation with subsequent experiences, interactions, and applications.

But the aim of impartiality, it should be stressed, is not only personal enlightenment, but also shared understanding. The *Conduct* itself focuses exclusively on the habits of individual

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[28] Conduct, §3.
[29] "Study," 102.

minds, paying comparatively little direct attention to their societal implications. Yet in the many works where Locke does address the possibilities and limitations of civil society, the understanding plays a central role, giving us reason to take seriously the political significance of his text on its management. One may approach the *Conduct*'s political content most directly by turning to its accounts of religious disagreements—accounts that help to anchor the work in Locke's established political concerns.

Locke's political consciousness, we've seen, developed amidst considerable religious turmoil, and religion is regularly at the heart of the misunderstandings that drive his political works and give his epistemological works their urgency. From his support of absolutism in the *Two Tracts* to his attack on the "wrong and unnatural combinations of ideas" that lie at the heart of the supposedly "irreconcilable opposition between different sects of philosophy and religion" in the *Essay*, Locke has consistently pursued an antidote to the hatred—and ultimately bloodshed—driven by seemingly minor differences in religious practice.[30] The stakes are further heightned in the *Conduct*, where Locke presents religion as the area in which all people should inquire.[31] Stressing the laboriousness of the mode of inquiry laid out in the work, he regularly acknowledges that his ambition of making "great advancements…in knowledge of all kinds, especially in that of the greatest concern and largest views" is left largely to the leisure class— those "who, by the industry and parts of their ancestors, have been set free from a constant drudgery to their backs and their bellies" and thus "should bestow some of their spare time on their heads, and open their minds, by some trials and essays, in all the sorts and matters of reasoning."[32] Nevertheless, Locke argues that every individual's assumed concern with salvation

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[30] E.g. "First Tract," 7; *Essay,* II.xxxiii.18.
[31] Conduct, §3.
[32] *Conduct,* §8, §7.

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"engages his thoughts in religion; and here it mightily lies upon him to understand and reason right."[33] Religion, in his view, gives everyone reason to hone their habits of inquiry—as well as the time to do it ("The one day of seven, besides other days of rest, allows in the christian world time enough for this").[34] It is thus through religion that Locke addresses the *Conduct* to *all* members of a community. And tellingly, when he describes the rewards of religious inquiry, his focus is not salvation, but rather values that are central to maintaining his civil society—"freedom, love of truth and charity," and, as we saw in "Reasoning," humbleness, openness.[35]

In presenting needless societal acrimony as a frequent (though by no means unique or necessary) outcome of religious difference, Locke attributes social discord to failures of inquiry. Consider, for example, his argument, quoted above, that the study of theology "would enlarge men's minds were it studied everywhere with that freedom, love of truth and charity which it teaches, and were not made, contrary to its nature, the occasion of strife, faction, malignity, and narrow impositions."[36] Locke is explicitly framing "freedom, love of truth and charity" as virtuous *habits of inquiry* to be gained by studying theology. Thus the problem is not theology itself—which should be, he argues, a font of such virtues—but rather our mode of engagement with it, our failure to approach it through the habits of inquiry it encourages. Still, Locke's frequent use of religious examples to illustrate the mismanaged understanding points to his sense thar religion suspends the reason with particular ease. It is telling, for example, that when he establishes one of the central claims of the *Conduct*—that defects in the understanding owe primarily to a failure to discipline and exercise the mind rather than a lack of natural ability—he

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[33] *Conduct*, §3.
[34] Conduct, §3.
[35] *Conduct,* §3. In "Reasoning," the "man of reason" surveys the religions and discovers that "none of them are in every thing unexceptionable," all being "systems…made by men" (see pages 242-243 of this dissertation) The reward of this discovery, I argue, is an enlarged capacity for communication and understanding (see pages 264-265).
[36] Conduct, §3.

concludes with a reference to religious fervor: "We see men frequently dexterous and sharp enough in making a bargain, who, if you reason with them about matters of religion, appear perfectly stupid."[37] What makes these men appear "stupid" is not their incapacity to reason effectively, but rather their incapacity to reason effectively about religion.

The *Conduct* addresses two reasons for this incapacity, both prevalent in though not unique to religion. First, "it is the great art and business of the teachers and guides in most sects to suppress, as much as they can, this fundamental duty [of self-examination] which every man owes himself."[38] In a refrain familiar from the *Two Tracts* and the *Essay* alike, Locke expresses his persistent suspicion of teachers and leaders, who so often amass power and pursue their interests by denying their followers the opportunity to examine their claims and consider how things might be otherwise. Particularly in his earlier works, these leaders are primarily religious; by the *Conduct*, he frequently acknowledges the capacity for all schools, communities, and systems of thought to impose similar restrictions on individual reason and inquiry—though he frequently refers to them as "sects."[39] Second, Locke finds that people regularly excuse themselves from the demands of reason in the name of religion and similar higher callings. Locke he writes in his entry on "Bias":

> Nobody will be at such an open defiance with common sense, as to profess that
> we should not endeavour to know, and think of things as they are in themselves;
> and yet there is nothing more frequent than to do the contrary; and men are apt to
> excuse themselves; and think they have reason to do so, if they have but a
> pretence that it is for God, or a good cause; that is, in effect, for themselves, their

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[37] Conduct, §3.
[38] Conduct, §31.
[39] In the *Conduct*, see for example §3 and §35. The sect metaphor appears with regularity in the *Essay* and other works—Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* contains a particularly striking example with reference to speculative natural philosophy: "I think the systems of natural philosophy, that have obtained in this part of the world, are to be read more to know the hypotheses, and to understand the terms and ways of talking of the several sects, than with hopes to gain thereby a comprehensive scientifical and satisfactory knowledge of the works of nature" *Some Thoughts Concerning Education,* §193.

own persuasion, or party: for those in their turns the several sects of men, especially in matters of religion, entitle God and a good cause.

Everyone knows what the right conduct of the understanding looks like, Locke argues, but religion gives people the cover over virtue, beneath which they may pursue their own interests—they adopt a biased position that serves "themselves, their own persuasion, or party," under the "pretence that it is for God, a good cause." In this passage, we see two ways in which the *Conduct*'s habits of inquiry, explicitly framed as remedies for defects of the understanding, may also be viewed in terms of a familiar dichotomy within the commonplacing tradition: virtue and vice.

First, Locke's argument against specious but religiously and morally grounded positions invites if not compels a religious and moral warrant. Indeed, he repeatedly underscores the compatibility between the kind of inquiry he recommends and the aims of religion, portraying the habits he recommends as not just epistemologically but morally superior. Thus he continues the passage above: "But God requires not men to wrong or misuse their faculties for him, nor to lye to others, or themselves, for his sake." God, he elsewhere reminds his reader, "is the God of truth," and while "we should contend earnestly for the truth…we should first be sure that it is truth, or else we fight against God, who is the God of truth…and our zeal, though ever so warm, will not excuse us, for this is plainly prejudice."[40]

Second, Locke stresses that right conduct of the understanding is within the reach of all individuals, but observes that people often excuse themselves from making the necessary effort, whether out of an adherence to treasured tenets or simple laziness. Thus, relying on the authority of teachers "mislead[s] those who think it sufficient to excuse them, if they go out of their way in

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[40] *Conduct*, §11.

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a well-beaten track."[41] Those who are not indifferent "look on things through false glasses, then think themselves excused in following the false appearances, which they themselves put upon them."[42] Complicated matters "that in a remote and confused view seem very obscure" can in fact be clearly understood via methodical inquiry if one does not excuse oneself from trying by claiming that they are impenetrable. The problems that appear to the mind as "hideous giants" are in fact "nothing but spectres that the understanding raises to itself to flatter its own laziness."[43] Of course, not everyone has time for extensive inquiry—those whose lives are consumed with work must devote what little time remains to their primary obligation, the study of theology ("that noble study which is every man's duty, and every one that can be called a rational creature is capable of," displayed by "the works of nature and the words of Revelation in characters so large and visible, that those who are not quite blind may in them read and see the first principles and most necessary parts.")[44] But, Locke writes, "one man's want of leisure is no excuse for the oscitancy and ignorance of those who have time to spare."[45] This repeated emphasis on the role that excuses play in deficient understandings suggests that the primary challenge of right understanding lies neither in the faculties (which, he maintains, are "capable almost of any thing," given sufficient exercise), nor in the mechanics or cognitive demands of the *Conduct*'s recommendations (which, he frequently reminds us, are achievable by all), but rather in the individual's will to actualize these recommendations. Right understanding is not, in other words, a matter of inborn ability, but rather a virtuous, unflagging devotion to inquiry.

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[41] *Conduct*, §11.
[42] *Conduct*, §11.
[43] *Conduct*, §11.
[44] *Conduct*, §23.
[45] *Conduct*, §37.

The *Conduct* thus overcomes the difficulties and demands of Lockean inquiry by presenting its habits as virtues. Locke's overarching remedies for partiality, "Indifferency" and "Examine," are "not very common, nor very easy," in part because they ask people to question treasured tenets and traditions, and in part because the critical but neutral stance they represent is, in his view, typically discouraged by cultural, academic, and religious norms.[46] Noting the tendency for religion in particular to "cast great blame on those who have an indifferency for opinions" ("the foundation," he writes, "of great errour and worse consequences"), Locke intervenes by framing these habits as virtues themselves—virtues conceived by reframing religious devotion in terms of inquiry and rethinking its aims in that light. The "indifferency" he supports does not, he argues, imply an indifference to the truth—a truth that God has laid out before humankind. Rather, it is an indifference to which opinions are true. By contrast, "Those who…suppose, without examining, that what they hold is true, and then think they ought to be zealous for it…are not indifferent for their own opinions, but methinks are very indifferent whether they be true or false."[47] If indifference is indeed a vice, Locke contends, then religious zealots are the worst offenders, displaying their indifference to truth itself.

Crucially, the promise of "truth" here is not certainty, but rather common ground. Returning to Locke's example of religious study in the final paragraphs of "Reasoning," we see that the reward of seeking religious "truth" through the means prescribed in the *Conduct*— reading widely and openly, aiming to accumulate rather than contest—is neither a definitive resolution to the disputes between faiths nor a capacity to determine which is superior (again, Locke argues that all religions are "made by men, and carry the mark of fallible on them"), but rather an enlarged capacity for communication and understanding: "[I]n those, whom he differs

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[46] *Conduct*, §10.
[47] *Conduct*, §12.

from, and till he opened his eyes, had a general prejudice against, he meets with more to be said for a great many things, than before he was aware of, or could have imagined."[48] The Lockean inquirer's impartial accumulation and comparison of perspectives builds an awareness of what is common between perspectives and reframes what is not as a resource for developing a "large, sound, round-about sense" of the matter at hand—for seeing in new ways. Perhaps more than any other passage in the *Conduct*, this example explicates the rhetorical and political promise of the mode of inquiry prescribed therein: a space of commonality, a basis for conversation, common ground.

In and beyond these examples from religion, Locke is doing more than urging his readers to inspect their mental faculties in pursuit of personal assurance, as Schuurman suggests; he is making a moralistic argument for the importance of such inspections—an argument that is rooted consistently if implicitly in a concern for limiting misunderstanding and sustaining the foundations of social life through a commitment to inquiry.[49] It is in this sense that we might understand the *Conduct*'s prescriptions not only as the habits of a rational mind, loosely akin to a logic, but also as civic virtues, integral to Locke's political project.

To the extent that these habits are both civic virtues and the detailed operations of a well-defined mode of inquiry, we may read the *Conduct* as a political praxis, outlining the individual activities necessary to collectively produce the common ground upon which civil societies may be built. Having established the work's political orientation and organizing virtue of impartiality, we may now turn to these activities—the precise operations of inquiry that it seeks to make habitual—and their rhetorical origins.

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[48] *Conduct*, §12.

[49] For Schuurman's case for classing the *Conduct* as a "new logic" partly on account of its turn from formalized reason to an "inspection of the mental faculties," see for example "General Introduction," 50 and 95. For his presentation of its aim as "personal assurance," see 63.

When Locke presents his "man of reason" as a "good geographer" who "traverses [a country] up and down" without necessarily "visit[ing] every mountain, river, promontory, and creek, upon the face of the earth," he draws attention to two complementary pursuits that run through the *Conduct* and give shape to the vision of impartial inquiry therein: first, cultivating a "large, sound, round-about sense," and second navigating the space between partiality and excess to ground knowledge in what is relevant. Tellingly, these pursuits bear a remarkable resemblance to the central activities of the commonplacer: accumulation and selection. I now consider each of these activities in detail, both as they are described in the *Conduct* and as Locke performed them in his work as a natural historical commonplacer. By drawing connections between these two endeavors, I work to develop and contextualize as full a picture as possible of the Lockean inquiry this dissertation has thus far pursued and, ultimately, to reimagine Locke's place in the commonplacing tradition—and the place of commonplacing in Locke's thought—by presenting his adaptation of topical inquiry as the foundation of his civil society.

6.2 Accumulation: Toward a "Large, Sound, Round About Sense"

Locke presents accumulation as essential to overcoming partiality while taking care to distinguish it from the *copia* he associates with rhetoric. Immediately after acknowledging the usefulness and necessity of "taking a taste of every sort of knowledge," he stresses that he is not talking about "fill[ing] the head with shreds of all kinds" in an effort to appear learned and worldly, as if one's "head was so well stored a magazine, that nothing could be proposed which

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he was not master of, and was readily furnished to entertain any one on."[50] Locke dismisses this ambition as mere "frippery," recalling his attacks not only on rhetoric in general, but on the accumulation practices of traditional commonplacing laid out in "Study." He reprises this argument in one of the *Conduct*'s later entries, attacking "topical and superficial arguments, of which there is store to be found on both sides, filling the head with variety of thoughts, and the mouth with copious discourse, serv[ing] only to amuse the understanding, and entertain company."[51] As in his prior works, the chief concern with traditional *copia*, particularly as it is used in university disputation, is that it trains us to gather arguments that delight us or serve our needs without pausing to examine their merit, leading us to parrot the claims of others with little understanding of what we're saying or its implications. Locke explicitly distinguishes the kind of accumulation he derides and the kind he promotes in terms of both means and ends.[52] Let us examine each of these distinctions.

6.2.1 The Ends of Lockean Accumulation: Wise Adaptability

For Locke, the goal of accumulation is not to win someone over to one's own perspective, but rather to place one's perspective in relation to others. He tasks the inquirer with gathering all the different ways of seeing a thing and through this gathering produce a common, composite vision—a shared object of understanding. Such objects offer both a stable, generalized view of the whole—a history with the collective power to resist individual desires and biases— and, more consistent with humanist practices, a collection of particulars from which to select

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[50] Locke, *Conduct*, §19.
[51] *Conduct*, §44.
[52] *Conduct*, §19: "I do not here speak against the taking a taste of every sort of knowledge; it is certainly very useful and necessary to form the mind; but then it must be done in a different way, and to a different end."

according to the needs of particular situations. While significant continuity exists between Lockean accumulation and the literary *copia* embraced in humanist commonplace books, the two practices differ in the work that they facilitate. Locke sees his approach as promoting consensus—sensing together, seeing together—rather than persuasion, seeking to align a range of diverse perspectives rather than reduce them to a rhetor's chosen way of seeing.

What Locke takes to be the guiding investments of literary *copia*—investments in what is pleasurable, personally advantageous and/or conducive to victory—are in his mind partialities that restrict one's view of the matter at hand. In deliberate contrast to this supposed aim, he approaches accumulation as the pursuit of the impartiality that lies at the heart of the *Conduct.* This concern with the limitations of a single perspective is particularly clear in the work's other major attack on topical argumentation, where Locke argues against topical reasoning by arguing *for* accumulation.[53] Disputation, he argues, "insist[s] on one topical argument, by the success of which the truth, or falsehood, of the question is to be determined…as if one should balance an account by one sum, charged and discharged, when there are an hundred others to be taken into consideration."[54] His concern is that when the topics are used for disputation and persuasion— endeavors wherein one argues for an established position—they amass different ways of articulating a single perspective, when the goal should be to gather a full range of perspectives on the matter at hand. That is, he sees *copia*, when directed toward disputation or persuasion, as aimed at amassing a collection of possibilities for leading any audience to a particular way of seeing. His goal, by contrast, is to consider in earnest the collection itself, placing the accumulated perspectives in relation to each other and thereby forming a collective sense of the object in question. Against Peters's view of him as "craving [the] silence and order" of a public

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[53] *Conduct*, §7.
[54] *Conduct*, §7.

sphere guided by a monolithic truth, Locke's issue with literary *copia* lies not in its excess of

perspectives, but rather its shortage of them. This poverty of perspective owes, in his mind, to the

humanist focus on the eloquent and the revered, and the failure to recognize perspectives as

such—as ways of seeing that are inherently partial.[55]

Locke's vision of accumulation, laid out in the *Conduct*, has two goals. The first is the

cultivation of a clear, distinct, and multifaceted understanding of the matter at hand—the

collective production of Lockean ideas, shared objects of understanding. The second and

arguably more important aim is the cultivation of habits capable of producing such objects—the

production of citizen-inquirers. Locke presents the latter ambition with particular clarity in the

Conduct's entry "Universality," where he argues that the "business of education" is not

> to make [pupils] perfect in any one of the sciences, but so to open and dispose
> their minds, as may best make them capable of any, when they shall apply
> themselves to it. If men are, for a long time, accustomed only to one sort or
> method of thoughts, their minds grow stiff in it, and do not readily turn to another.
> It is, therefore, to give them this freedom, that I think they should be made to look
> into all sorts of knowledge, and exercise their understandings in so wide a variety
> and stock of knowledge. *But I do not propose it as a variety and stock of
> knowledge, but a variety and freedom of thinking; as an increase of the powers
> and activity of the mind, not as an enlargement of its possessions.*[56]

The aim of accumulation is not, in Locke's view, to *possess* a greater store of knowledge (or

repertoire for eloquence), but rather to cultivate a freedom from the blinders imposed by

partiality, whether the result of learning, the passions, the machinations of others, or indeed any

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[55] Again, I do not deny that Locke was, in his final years, drawn to the Newtonian physics for their promise of certainty, even pointing to Newton's discovery of gravity in one of the *Conduct*'s final entries an example of the "teeming truths" that we should pursue—those "fundamental truths that lie at the bottom, the basis upon which a great many others rest and in which they have their consistency" (§43). From such teeming truths, it should be possible to arrive at demonstrative knowledge about the world in the manner of Cartesian deduction. But such truths might be seen as the exception that proves the rule, which, like Locke's remarks on mathematical demonstration (§7), appear only once in a treatise that otherwise focuses almost entirely on the habits required to proceed without them.

[56] Locke, *Conduct*, §19, emphasis added.

imposition upon the understanding that might prevent us from "readily turn[ing] to another" way of thinking or seeing, another science, another way of inquiring into the matter at hand.

In presenting a "variety and freedom of thinking" rather than a "variety and stock of knowledge" as the proper end of accumulation, Locke is not, perhaps, departing from the rhetorical tradition as much as he suggests. Recall, for example, Quintilian's reluctance to name specific *loci communes* and to engage the topics theoretically rather than pedagogically. Insisting that while "we derive what is common to all cases from general rules, we have to discover for ourselves whatever is peculiar to the case which we have in hand," he recommends *copia* (and indeed, topical inquiry as a whole) as a means of cultivating this capacity for discovery and accommodation, rather than amassing a store of widely applicable arguments.[57] While the *florilegia* and commonplace books that followed certainly functioned as storehouses in some respects, the capacity to determine the appropriate angle of approach for a given situation and to adapt a general rule or argument to a particular set of circumstances remains central, as it is from Aristotle to Quintilian to Erasmus to Locke. Indeed, the "wise adaptability" that Quintilian is the "all-important gift" of not only his orator, but of Locke's "man of reason" as well.[58]

Locke makes his own call for wise adaptability in "Universality," arguing that the "end and use" of broad learning is

> to accustom our minds to all sorts of ideas, and the proper ways of examining their habitudes and relations. This gives the mind a freedom, and the exercising the understanding in the several ways of inquiry and reasoning, which the most skillful have made use of, *teaches the mind sagacity and wariness, and a suppleness to apply itself more closely and dexterously to the bents and turns of the matter in all its researches*.[59]

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[57] Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 5.10.103.
[58] Institutio Oratoria, 2.13.3.
[59] *Conduct,* §19, emphasis added.

"Freedom" here appears as an adaptable approach to inquiry that is closely linked to two features of the mind: first, a "sagacity and wariness" that allows one to discern the connections and contradictions between the perspectives collected, and second, a "suppleness" that allows it to adapt to the "bents and turns of the matter" in question. Accumulation, as the practice by which we become attuned to the range of ways in which a matter might be apprehended, adapted, and accommodated, is, for Locke as much as for Quintilian, the source of the mind's sagacity, its suppleness, its wise adaptability. And for Locke in particular, it is a process of expanding and refining our capacity for inquiry—a process that draws observers into conversation around the objects of inquiry that form on the pages of the commonplace book. Commonplacing is in this sense a means of producing both shared objects of understanding and a capacity to approach and articulate those objects in ways that are best suited to a particular situation. As such, it cultivates the freedom that sustains Locke's civil society—a freedom to see for oneself that fosters rather than forecloses opportunities to see together.

The kinship between this kind of freedom, as the end of Lockean accumulation, and the wise adaptability that Quintilian espouses is not accidental. In both cases, the rhetorical habits of mind that allow one to adapt to and intervene in any given situation are cultivated through rhetorical practice—and in particular, practice in adapting topics and commonplaces. But while Quintilian promoted such practice in the context of verbal persuasion, Locke directed it primarily towards technological interventions in medicine and, less explicitly, politics. Further, his embrace of the commonplace book transforms the practice significantly. In one respect, he follows Quintilian in forming or gathering general observations based upon a survey of particulars, then adapting those generalizations for particular applications. On the other hand, his appropriation of the commonplace book extends this classical approach to topical inquiry by

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making it possible to not only collect but also *connect* the particulars that underly his generalizations by studying—and at times mapping—the relations between them. The following section turns to the means by which such collection proceeds under Locke: natural historical commonplacing.

6.2.2 The Means of Lockean Accumulation: Natural Historical Commonplacing

In the *Conduct*, Locke's preferred method for inquiry is natural history.[60] Under the title of "Mathematics," he explains that in cases where demonstrative knowledge is possible, reasoning effectively is a matter of tracing the "connexion and dependence of ideas…till the mind is brought to the source on which it bottoms"—a skill honed through training in mathematics.[61] But, as he notes in the *Essay, "*He that, in the ordinary affairs of life, would admit of nothing but direct plain demonstration, would be sure of nothing in this world, but of perishing quickly."[62] Our survival depends upon our ability to act under the uncertainty that characterizes, for Locke, the human condition. Our understandings is thus devoted almost entirely to the pursuit of probable knowledge, wherein "it not enough to trace one argument to its source, and observe its strength and weakness, but all the arguments, after having been so examined on both sides, must be laid in balance one against another, and, upon the whole, the understanding determine its assent."[63] Natural history is the means by which one, in the absence of certainty, accumulates perspectives in this manner and places them in relation to each other,

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[60] Schuurman makes a similar point with reference to Locke's inquiry into the human understanding specifically (38-45).
[61] Locke, *Conduct*, §7.
[62] *Essay*, IV.xi.10.
[63] Conduct, §7.

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such that it becomes possible to apprehend the object under consideration as a whole—and from that whole, discern a reasonable way to proceed in specific situations.

This historical approach, while central to the *Conduct*, is most explicitly and practically treated in two unpublished medical essays, written while Locke was practicing medicine with the physician Thomas Sydenham, immediately following a period of close collaboration with Boyle: *Anatomia* (composed in 1668) and *De arte medica* (begun in 1669).[64] These essays, written shortly after Locke began his employment with Anthony Ashley Cooper in 1667, written during a period of active collaboration with the physician Thomas Sydenham and immediately following a period of extensive collabroation with Boyle: In these works, Locke approaches cures much as Quintilian, for example, approaches *loci communes*: as largely instrumental, derived from accumulated experience, and judged on the basis of their utility and commonality, rather than accordance with an overarching theory. As he writes in *De Arte Medica*, "The beginning & improvement of useful arts, & the assistances of human life, have all sprung from industry & observation," rather than "philosophical speculations."[65] For Locke, "perfect[ing] the art of physick" is a matter of being able to prescribe remedies that will "assure a sick man of recovery" as reliably as rabbits & chicken well-dressed are known to nourish the healthy"— "though," he adds parenthetically, "perhaps even that kind of wholesome diet will not agree with

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[64] While these two works have in many cases been attributed to Locke's friend and collaborator, the English physician Thomas Sydenham, Anstey and Burrows's 2009 study not only finds decisive evidence of Locke's authorship, but also compelling evidence against the prevailing assumption that Locke's views on methodology were heavily influenced by Sydenham. On the contrary, they conclude, "it was through the mediation of Locke that Sydenham came to understand the power of [neo-Baconian natural historical methods] in medicine" (42). Peter Anstey and John Burrows, "John Locke, Thomas Sydenham, and the Authorship of Two Medical Essays," *Electronic British Library Journal* 3 (2009).

[65] John Locke, "De Arte Medica," ed. Craig Walmsley, *'John Locke's "Anatomia" and "De arte medica": New Transcriptions* (2014), https://medium.com/@craig_walmsley/john-lockes-anatomia-and-de-arte-medica-new-transcriptions-fe368fb5c5b0, f. 52r, f. 54r.

all constitutions."[66] What appears as merely aside is in fact a crucial facet of the natural historical

approach to medicine that Locke envisions: successfully applying a cure—even for an affliction

as familiar as hunger—requires the physician to consider the particulars of the situation. Locke

makes this point with particular clarity in the conclusion of *Anatomia*:

> [I]t is not any sensible qualities by which medicines work their effects on our
> bodies & so cannot by those criterions be chosen & adapted to our hypothesis (all
> our knowledge of their efficacy being to be acknowledged rather old women's
> experience than learned men's theories) appears in that wormwood & colcynthis
> are of different uses in physick, that sugar in some stomachs turns to acidity, &
> that milk—the most universal & innocent food in the world—is to some men as
> bad as poison.[67]

In this passage, one sees four features of Locke's approach to medicine, or "physick," that link it

to the rhetorical enterprise. First, medicine is to be seen not as the philosophical pursuit of truth,

but as an effort to inquire into and produce provisional strategies for directing change in the face

of uncertain and/or incomplete information. Second, as Locke's discussion of cures for hunger

suggested, the practice of medicine requires adaptivity—"sugar in *some* stomachs turns to

acidity" and even milk, "the most universal & innocent food in the world…is to *some* men as bad

as poison."[68] As generalizations made for use, cures cannot be one-size-fits-all solutions; they

are drawn from an accumulation of particular experiences and must be rearticulated into the

particular to do their work. Third, medicine is anchored in the accumulation of experience, rather

than theory. Because medicines work in a way that cannot be intuited from the sensible realm,

we are incapable of forming reliable hypotheses about *why* they work, and must instead rely

upon the accumulated experience of their effects. Finally, and for these reasons, medical prowess

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[66] "De Arte Medica," f. 56r.
[67] "Anatomia," ed. Craig Walmsley, *'John Locke's "Anatomia" and "De arte medica": New Transcriptions* (2014), https://medium.com/@craig_walmsley/john-lockes-anatomia-and-de-arte-medica-new-transcriptions-fe368fb5c5b0, f. 38r.
[68] "Anatomia," f. 38r, emphasis added

derives from "old women's experience [rather] than learned men's theories"—from lived experience and practice, rather than the possession of specialized, esoteric—and, for Locke, uselessly speculative—knowledge.

Locke's deference to the experience of old women is one of numerous instances in the *Anatomia* and *De arte medica* where he grants epistemic privilege to the supposedly unlearned— in the latter work, "the plowman tanners smiths bakers dier painter," and all "those who imploid their time & thoughts about the works of nature," focusing their efforts on engaging with things in the world, rather than only speculating about them from a distance. [69] A particularly informative example appears in Locke's account of "illterate" indigenous Americans who had no experience with dissection, but through "enquirys suitable to wise though unlearnd men" developed a knowledge of cures that "exceeded the skill of the best read Drs that came out of Europ."[70] Anticipating his ambivalence toward education in both "Study" and the *Conduct*,

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[69] "De Arte Medica,", f. 54r. While these comparisons are particularly prominent in Locke's medical essays, they appear throughout Locke's epistemological works (see for example his reference to the ease with which the country gentlewoman forms connections between ideas "without tying them together in those artificial and cumbersome fetters of several syllogisms" in *Essay* IV.xvii.4). Importantly, one should not overstate the egalitarianism and/or progressivism of these examples. While one of Locke's most important and respected interlocutors, Damarais Masham, was a woman, he often invokes women as if to say "*even women!*" *De arte medica* gives some justification for reading other his references to the supposedly unlearned in a similar light: "[T]he most acute & ingenious part of men being by custom and education ingagd in empty speculations, the improvemt of usefull arts was lefte to the meaner sort of people [formerly "men"] who had weaker parts & lesse opportunitys to doe it, & were therfor branded with the disgrasefull name of mechaniques" (f.53r). On the other hand, Locke is explicit in the *Conduct* that differences in capabilities and proclivities are almost entirely due to habit and practice rather than natural differences (§3). This position historicizes the disparities between people and makes it possible to read his vision of civil society as considerably more egalitarian than the earlier passage suggests, particularly when read alongside the *Two Treatises*, where he argues, for example, that because humans are "furnished with like Faculties, sharing all in one Community of Nature, there cannot be supposed any such *Subordination* among us practical experience"(II.6, see also II.4). In any event, one may read Locke's examples of people distinguished by practical experience rather than erudition, in both the in *De arte medica* and the *Conduct*, as attempts to reclaim truth and knowledge from philosophy by anchoring it in the marginalized realm of the useful, the mechanical, the practical. As he writes of natural philosophy in the former work: "[A]ll speculations…however curious or refined or seemeing profound & solid, if they teach not their followers to doe something either better or in a shorter & easier way then otherwise they could, or else leade them to the discovery of some new & usefull invention, deserve not the name of knowledg. or soe much as the wast time of our idle howers to be throwne away upon such empty idle phylosophy" (f.54r).

[70] "Anatomia,", f. 31v See also "De Arte Medica,", f. 54r: "So those who had read & written whole volumes of generation & corruption knew not the way to preserve or propagate the meanest species of creatures. He who

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Locke is here separating wisdom from learning, anchoring the former firmly in the world and treating it as a product of accumulated experience.

The Lockean commonplace book may be seen as a means of aggregating and comparing such lived experience so that we might learn from it, add to it, and determine what of it is most useful in a given situation. The pages of Locke's own notebooks reflect this orientation: Drawing upon ancient and contemporary sources, respected scholars and common people, he assembles a multi-faceted view of the matter in question—a history, indifferent to causal hypotheses, out of which emerges a generalized picture of the whole that may be rearticulated into the realm of particulars for use.

Locke practices a distinctly Baconian approach to natural history that he appears to have inherited from his mentor and collaborator Robert Boyle. Boyle, in turn, was a devoted follower of Bacon and the Royal Society member best known for generating lists of topical queries or "titles."[71] Not known for his organization, Boyle explicitly embraced Bacon's revision of the topics as a resource for structuring inquiry and storing his copious experimental observations.[72] Speaking of his *New Experiments and Observations Touching Cold* in *Philosophical Transactions*, he writes: "being unwilling to huddle my Experiments confusedly together, I thought it an expedient…to draw up a company of comprehensive Titles." As with Bacon's histories, these titles were developed to capture, in effect, all of the questions one might ask of the matter under consideration, serving the memory as a structure "under which might

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could dispute learnedly of nutrition, concoction & assimilation was beholden still to the cook & the good housewife for a wholesome & savory meal, & whoever desired to have fair gardens & fruitful fields, had more reason to consult the experience of the dull plowman & unread gardener then the profound philosopher or acute disputant."

[71] While there is no question that Boyle celebrated the use of titles, Hunter and Anstey have argued against the longstanding view that he drove the Royal Society's embrace of the practice, offering compelling evidence that the opposite may in fact be true Hunter, "Robert Boyle and the Early Royal Society: A Reciprocal Exchange in the Making of Baconian Science" See 2.2.6 of this dissertation for a more detailed account of Bacon's use of topics as queries.

[72] Hunter, "Robert Boyle and the Early Royal Society," 5-6.

commodiously be rang'd most of the Particulars I had observ'd," while also offering the inquirer "a general Prospect" of the matter at hand.[73] But while Boyle's idiosyncratic propensity for what he called "loose notes" led to the physical dispersion (and at times loss) of observations that had been conceptually united beneath the titles, Locke adopted Bacon's technology of the natural historical commonplace book to house his inquiries.[74] Under Locke these commonplace books become a crucial source of stability in order, making it possible not only to accumulate experiential and experimental content, but also, I will argue, to reformulate the act of accumulation as the production of *knowledge itself*, rather than the raw materials thereof.

Locke's insistence upon order and stability complements rather than conflicts with his vision of impartiality. Consider his case against received wisdom at the start of the *Essay*.[75] Having argued, much as he does in the *Conduct*, that "the floating of other mens Opinions in our brains, makes us not one jot the more knowing" regardless of whether they are true, Locke writes: "What he believes only, and takes upon trust, are but shreads; which however well in the whole piece, make no considerable addition to his stock, who gathers them."[76] Knowledge, in this view, consists not in the possession of ideas, but in understanding how to place those ideas in relation to others. Accepting ideas without placing them in this way leaves them "floating…in our brains"—in the same language that the *Conduct* uses against *copia*, mere "shreads." Disconnected from the rest of what we know, these "shreads," however enlightening they were to those who conceived of them, are totally useless to us—akin to "Fairy-money" that turns to dust when one tries to use it, they feel like solid knowledge in our hands until we discover that we have no way of applying it to the world. In the context of the commonplace book, order is

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[73] Quoted in Hunter, 5.
[74] Yeo, Notebooks, English Virtuosi, and Early Modern Science, 152.
[75] See pages 171-173 of this dissertation.
[76] Locke, Essay. I.iv.23.

what places otherwise disaggregated ideas in relation to each other, so that accumulation is no longer a matter of blindly amassing the wisdom of others, but rather a process of knowledge production that permits—indeed, requires—individuals to see and reason for themselves as they determine where to place what they collect. To the extent that Locke views humanist commonplace books as merely collections of "shreads," we might say that what distinguishes the Lockean commonplace book from its humanist counterparts is, in his mind, order itself.

Of course, as discussed in Chapter 2, order has always been central to the commonplace book. Indeed, Moss's chief criticism of Locke is that he sheds this concern with order by designing a method of commonplacing that promoted the ad hoc generation of topical heads, rather than insisting upon a pre-defined "conceptual grid. But a closer look at the *Conduct* and his commonplace books suggests otherwise, revealing the extent of Locke's commitment to order as an epistemic and, ultimately, rhetorical resource—as well the extent to which his open-ended approach to the topics (discussed at length in 2.2.6) serve this commitment.

The topics, under Locke, institute order in a way that balances the primacy of the individual with the need for stability and external accountability. The *Conduct*'s entry on "Wandering" provides a useful point of departure.[77] Wandering is a defect of the understanding wherein "foreign and unsought ideas" derail our train of thoughts, leading the mind away from the matter in question. Acknowledging the "constant succession and flux of ideas in our minds," Locke seeks habits of mind to "direct that train of ideas…that none may come in view, but such as are pertinent to our present inquiry, and in such order as may be most useful to the discovery we are upon"—habits, in other words, that are capable of ordering and directing

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[77] *Conduct*, §30.

inquiry by judging which ideas are relevant to the matter at hand.[78] But the habits he actually identifies are, by his own admission, somewhat underwhelming: "I must acknowledge," he writes "that hitherto I have discovered no other way to keep our thoughts close to their business, but the endeavouring as much as we can, and by frequent attention and application, getting the habit of attention and application." While "Wandering" offers little more elaboration, Locke's own habits of inquiry provide a useful supplement.

Part of the reason Locke fails to conceive of a more robust means of cultivating "attention and application" is, perhaps, because he was rather prone to wandering himself. He confesses as much in "Study" (composed, again, in 1677, during his time in France): "I have changed often the subject I have been studying, read books by patches and accidentally, as they have come in my way, and observed no method nor order in my studies."[79] Locke's solution, as portrayed here, was not to refrain from wandering, but rather to accommodate it with his carefully systematized note-taking practices: "to draw out and have frequently before us a scheme of those sciences we employ our studies in, a map, as it were of the mundus intelligibilis," a map of the intelligible world.

Locke's response to wandering is, quite literally, the topically organized commonplace book. The "mundus intelligibilis" to which he refers is in essence, a scheme of topics, as we see when he likens it to "a regular chest of drawers, to lodge those things orderly, and in the proper places, which came to hand confusedly, and without any method at all."[80] Presenting the topical heads of his notebooks as a means of storing and relating the information he encounters, Locke establishes a clear if fairly straightforward connection between the topics he employs and the

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[78] *Conduct*, §30.
[79] "Study," 107.
[80] "Study," 106-107.

ones used by humanist commonplacers. Significant differences between humanist and Lockean commonplacing aside, the topics retain their role as Moss's "conceptual grid," laid upon the world of experience.

The above passage in "Study" also reveals two related ways in which Locke appropriates traditional features of the commonplace book for his own purposes. First, he embraces the malleable organization of topical heads as a way of ordering the world in a manner commensurate with his philosophical and practical commitments. His topics are anchored in the user's perception of the world but explicitly provisional—a "crude draught," he says, resulting from "making now and then some little reflection upon the order of things as they are, or at least I have fancied them to have in themselves." Relatedly, they interweave a commitment to the stable external world and an investment in what the individual deems salient: they are created "by every one himself for his own use, as best agreeable to his own notion, though the nearer it comes to the nature and order of things it is still the better." Locke's argument that the topics should originate from the individual inquirer should be read in the context of his views on authority. "[I]t cannot," he writes, "be decent for me to think my crude draft fit to regulate another's thoughts by, especially when, perhaps, our studies lie different ways." At the same time, we known that he often defers to divisions established by other thinkers, in line with Erasmus's advice to consult the topics of others before generating a list of one's own.[81] The topics, performing their traditional role as adaptive heuristics, again appear as a crucial resource

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[81] On the origins of Locke's topical heads, see 2.2.6 of this dissertation. On Erasmus's recommendations for generating topics, see Erasmus, *De Copia*, 2.11, 88.

for resolving Locke's ambivalence toward authority—a means of establishing order without imposing an ordering principle.[82]

Second, Locke embraces the stable but adaptive structure afforded by the topics as a resource for impartiality. The problem with wandering is not that it draws us beyond of our particular line of inquiry—something that Locke is in fact quite eager to do—but that it derails the pursuit of *any* line of inquiry.[83] Commonplacing allows us to pursue multiple lines of inquiry, freed from the expectation of linearity—and with it, the limitations of a single perspective. The compiler may, in other words, outsource the need for order to the provisional structure of the heads, so that "attendance and application" no longer imply adherence. The compiler is thus freed to accumulate perspectives on a range of topics without becoming entrenched in a particular subject matter, method, or school of thought. In this sense, the topical heads of the commonplace book are more than organizational aids; they promote an approach to inquiry that is particularly conducive to the broad and open learning that Locke sees as foundational to impartiality.

Order, in this capacity, plays a central if somewhat understated role in the *Conduct* as Locke's means for producing meaningful objects of thought. Of the many faults in the understanding identified in the work, the first, addressed under the title of "Observations," occurs in the movement between the particular matters we encounter and our generalizations about them:

> Particular matters of fact are the undoubted foundations on which our civil and
> natural knowledge is built: the benefit the understanding makes of them, is to

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[82] As noted in 2.2.6, Locke's topical heads in many cases follow divisions made by others (e.g. Sennert and Sydenham).

[83] "Reasoning" (§3) and "Universality" (§19) contain particularly clear articulations of Locke's call to inquire broadly; the *Conduct*'s final entry, "Transferring of thoughts" (§45) presents the inability to redirect one's attention as one of the most serious diseases of the understanding.

draw from them conclusions, which may be as standing rules of knowledge, and consequently of practice. The mind often makes not that benefit it should of the information it receives from the accounts of civil or natural historians, by being too forward or too slow in making observations on the particular facts recorded in them.[84]

In keeping with his view of knowledge as beginning in particulars and consisting in "the perception of the agreement or disagreement of two ideas"—that is, precisely in the connection of such particulars—Locke make clear that while our knowledge of the world is necessarily general, it must be rooted in the particular.[85] The flaw addressed in this entry encompasses two seemingly opposed tendencies—"being too forward or too slow" in moving from particular too general—but the consequences are the same for both: the mind fails to make good use of the information that history provides it. With this emphasis on history, Locke draws attention to the role of historical inquiry in furnishing the materials of knowledge—or, more specifically, in collecting the experience from which "all the materials of reason and knowledge" derive.[86] Further, he shows what we gain by generalizing from such collections: "standing rules of knowledge, and consequently of practice"—stable yet ultimately provisional guidelines for acting in the world.

On one end of the spectrum are those "who draw general conclusions, and raise axioms from every particular they meet with." Locke argues that these "busy men" are more dangerous than their "sluggish" counterparts, alluding to a recurrent theme in the *Conduct*: those who espouse falsehoods and build belief systems upon false axioms pose a far greater threat to Locke's vision than those who are merely ignorant, actively contributing to partiality.[87] To the extent that partiality is an almost literal obstruction to one's vision, those so afflicted must

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[84] Locke, *Conduct,* §13.
[85] *Essay,* II.i.2, IV.vii.11, IV.i.2.
[86] *Essay,* II.i.2.
[87] C.f. *Conduct*, §35.

effectively pass through ignorance on the path to right understanding, stripping away one's

partialities to get back to a state of ignorance, then building from there.[88] In "Observations," the

source of partiality—the failure to accumulate a sufficiently rich store of particulars—is

presented less as a kind of blindness than as a failure of induction, a hasty generalization,

remediable by accumulation.

Indeed, Locke explicitly connects the activities of historical inquiry and induction in his

remedy, treating them as a middle road between hasty and sluggish generalizations:

> Between these, those seem to do best, who taking material and useful hints,
> sometimes from single matters of fact, carry them in their minds to be judged of,
> by what they shall find in history, to confirm or reverse their imperfect
> observations: which may be established into rules fit to be relied on, when they
> are justified by a sufficient and wary induction of particulars.[89]

Locke here appears to be prescribing something quite like Baconian natural philosophy, while

promoting a number of habits central to the *Conduct*: testing and revising one's ideas against

experience, attending to what is material and useful, and forming stable but provisional standards

that are rooted in shared or sharable experience—the contents of histories.[90]

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[88] Conduct, §35.

[89] *Conduct,* 13. Notably, Peter Anstey comments that this passage contains Locke's only explicit reference to induction in the sense of inference in any of his published works. But, as he also points out, "induction" was, at the time, often invoked to differentiate experimental natural philosophy from more speculative approaches. Anstey, *John Locke and Natural Philosophy,* 69n11.

[90] This quoted passage further indicates that the project of forming general observations need not wait until individual inquirers have accumulated a massive collection of "matters of fact"—indeed, we may in some instances begin with just one entry. This position meshes with Locke's own commonplacing practices (where it is not uncommon for heads to appear only once or twice) and is, further, made viable by two features of the approach to inquiry presented in the *Conduct*. First, inquirers must be committed to the virtuous habits of impartial examination, testing their observations against "what they shall find in history" and adjusting them accordingly. Second, historical inquiry is a collective and ongoing endeavor. History in the quoted passage is the expression of what is, in Locke's mind and particularly in the *Conduct*, one of the most politically valuable features of the material world: its refusal to bend to the desires or perspectives of the observer. Natural history, as a collection of human interactions with this world, appears as a stable and impartial authority that is simultaneously external to the individual's perspective and composed of nothing but individual perspectives.

But in his natural historical activities, Locke appears to eschew the aims of even Baconian natural philosophy, preferring to produce knowledge of the world through history alone. The most developed articulation of this position appears in *De arte medica.* For example:

> [T]he begining & improvemt, of useful arts, & the assistances of human life, have all sprung from industry & observation true knowled grew first in the world, by experience & rationall *operations* & had this method beene continued & all mens thoughts beene imploid to adde their owne tryalls to the observation of others noe question physick as well as many other arts, had been in a far better condition then now it is …but proud man not content with that knowledg he was capable of & was useful to him, would needs penetrate into the hidden causes of things lay downe principles & establish maximes to him self about the operations of nature, & then vainely expect, that Nature or in truth god him self should proceede according to those laws his maximes had prescribed him.[91]

Given the limitations of our faculties, humans cannot establish maxims about nature with sufficient nuance to capture all of its operations. Accordingly, Locke presents such maxims as ill-advised efforts to abstract away the richness and diversity of natural phenomena that thereby bend the world to one's own perspective. He proposes natural history as a humbler alternative: a source of useful knowledge, created by collecting one's experiences and combining them with others, forming general observations about effects rather than maxims about their underlying causes. Further, he presents the useful knowledge of natural history as "true knowledge," presenting his rejection of (supposedly) universal, eternal truths ironically as a rejection of relativism.[92] Having argued earlier in the work the maxims of "the Learned men of former ages" are "accommodated…to the fashion of their times and countries," Locke makes clear that maxims do not exist in world, but are rather articulations of a worldview.[93] He favors natural historical collection for its resolute accountability to the world—its refusal to say anything besides what

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[91] Locke, "De Arte Medica," f.52r-f.53r, emphasis in original.
[92] Interestingly, Locke originally wrote "useful knowledge," before replacing "useful" with "true." "De Arte Medica," f.52r.
[93] "De Arte Medica," f.50r.

can be apprehended through experience. When one recalls that the commonplace book is the vehicle for such collection, one begins to see its centrality to Locke's vision of knowledge production. And because Locke does not wish theorize from his collections, the organization of the commonplace book becomes crucial to the work of meaning making.

To understand how natural history might generate knowledge without recourse to natural philosophy, consider the critique in "Observation" of those who accumulate particulars but fail to generalize from them. For these "sluggish" generalizers, the problem is not a failure to accumulate particulars, which they do quite happily, but rather a seemingly unrelated failure to discern useful connections between them. But when Locke describes his problem, he characterizes it less as a failure of reason than a failure—or, more precisely, an absence—of order. As he puts it (using, interestingly, the metaphor of digestion long used to characterize the work of the compiler): "They dream on in a constant course of reading and cramming themselves; but not digesting any thing, it produces nothing but a heap of crudities."[94] This image of a heap of raw, which is to say not-yet-related, materials hints that connecting particulars is, for Locke, a structural rather than strictly inductive endeavor. Immediately after this statement, Locke continues to focus on the need for order, this time turning to a building analogy that recurs several times throughout the *Conduct*:

> If their memories retain well, one may say, they have the materials of knowledge;
> but, like those for building, they are of no advantage, if there be no other use
> made of them but to let them lie heaped up together.

Locke again invokes a heap of raw materials, this time contrasting it with a physical structure, presenting the work of building as a means of pursuing his pragmatic aim of advantage.

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[94] *Conduct,* §13. For an account of the digestion metaphor in ancient and medieval discourse on collection, see Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books,* 12-20.

This connection between ordering and building appears in a subsequent entry that points to the inspiration of ordering schemes: not the individual's imagination, but what we might read as the natural order of the "intellectual world:"

> Stones and timber grow of themselves, but yet there is no uniform pile with symmetry and convenience to lodge in without toil and pains. God has made the intellectual world harmonious and beautiful without us; but it will never come into our heads all at once; *we must bring it home piece-meal, and there set it up by our own industry*, or else we shall have nothing but darkness and a chaos within, whatever order and light there be in things without us.[95]

Locke is making a case for ordered accumulation as the basis of knowledge production. The human understanding is incapable of apprehending general truths and must instead begin with particulars. While the world possesses an underlying structure, "harmonious and beautiful," the particulars we draw from it do not form a natural structure in our minds; the work of the inquirer is thus not only to gather these materials of knowledge, but also to place them in order—to "set up" a structure that adheres not to an invented order, but rather to a stable if unperceivable order of the world. The goal, of course, is not to represent the world as it really is, but rather to discover common, useful, operative connections between particulars that are consistent enough to maintain a stable if provisional order. It is in forming (and refusing) these connections that knowledge exists.[96] Locke thus departs from Bacon's view of natural history as a "storehouse of things, not comfortable accommodation for staying or living in, but a place we go down to when we need to fetch out something useful."[97] For Locke, the natural historian's work of gathering and arranging material is not a matter of filling a cellar, but rather *building a structure* in which to "lodge."

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[95] Locke, *Conduct,* §38, emphasis added.
[96] *Essay,* IV.i.2.
[97] Bacon, "Parasceve," 359.

A similar example elsewhere in the *Conduct* presents order as a remedy not only for

sluggish generalizations, but for hasty ones as well:

> One or two particulars may suggest hints of inquiry, and they do well to take those
> hints; but if they turn them into conclusions…it is only to impose on themselves
> by propositions assumed for truths without sufficient warrant. To make such
> observations is…to make the head a magazine of materials, which can hardly be
> called knowledge; or at least it is but *like a collection of lumber not reduced to
> use or order;* and he that makes every thing an observation, has the same useless
> plenty and much more falsehood mixed with it.[98]

Again likening accumulation to the collection of building materials, Locke presents order very

clearly as the means by which these materials are transformed from a "useless [and likely

compromised] plenty" into a useful structure. *Order* in this sense is what distinguishes the

accumulation he promotes from the *copia* he so often attacks. Against Moss's exclusively

mnemonic reading of his topical heads, these passages not only take memory largely for granted,

they also reveal order to be a crucial epistemic resource—a way of transforming the world of

particulars into a collection of meaningful objects.[99]

The objects that Locke pursues in the *Conduct* may, for this reason, be understood as

fundamentally relational. That is, we elaborate an object not by grasping its essence but rather by

exploring the ways in which it connects to, is distinct from, and interacts with other phenomena

in the world. Locke stakes out this position in *Anatomia,* arguing that the practice of anatomy, as

the study of the internal constitutions of organs and fluids in pursuit of the underlying causes of

disease, is useless in actually curing diseases. Rather than using dissection—or, as he

characterizes it, "riping up all the veins & arteries traceing their branches & meanders in never

soe many dead carcases"—to "shew us the grosse & sensible parts of the body, or the vapid &

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[98] Locke, *Conduct,* §25, emphasis added.
[99] Moss, Printed Commonplace-Books, 279.

dead juices," *Anatomia* suggests useful knowledge is derived from our ongoing experience with and inquiry into the dynamics of the realm of the living.[100]

Locke's resistance to anatomy is not strictly a response to the practical limitations of the human faculties; rather it derives from his position that the pursuit of essences cannot yield useful knowledge. Recalling the *Essay*'s discussion of microscopical eyes, he argues that even if we were able to see the minute constitution of things, anatomy would yield only irrelevant knowledge about the composition of organs, without offering any *useful* knowledge on how we might act upon those organs to improve health:

> for suppose any one should have so sharp a knife & sight as to discover the secret & effective composure of any part, could he make an ocular demonstration that the pores of the parenchyma of the liver or kidneys were either round or square & that the parts of urin & gall seperatd in those parts were in size & figure answerable to those pores, I aske how this would at all direct him in the cure either of the jaundice or stopage of urin what would this advantage his method or guid him to fit medecins….how regulate his dose, to mix his simples & to prescribe all in a due method, all this is only from history & the advantage of a diligent observation of these diseases, of their begining progresse & ways of cure. wch a physitian may as well doe without a scrupulos enquiry into the anatomy of the parts as a gardener, may by his art & observation be able to ripen meliorate & preserve his fruit without examining, what kindes of juices fibres pores &c are to be found in the roots barke or body of the tree.

Simply knowing the inner workings of organs tells us nothing about how to treat the diseases that afflict them. Further, becoming adept at treating diseases requires none of this special knowledge, but only "history & the advantage of a diligent observation"—carefully attending to how diseases proceed in practice, the circumstances under which they occur, how they respond to different treatments, and so forth. For the physician as for the gardener, useful knowledge is readily available to the senses and consists in an understanding of possibilities, transformations, interactions, rather than essences or underlying causes.

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[100] Locke, "Anatomia," f. 35v and f.31r.

Locke's topically ordered commonplace books are central to developing objects that are conceived of relationally. The *Conduct*'s entry "Analogy," concerned with when it is acceptable to treat two ostensibly distinct substances as analogous, lays the groundwork for this connection. The entry centers on a single example that appears to derive from Locke's natural historical interests: the question of whether vinegar or the spirit of nitre (both acids) can be substituted for the oil of vitriol (another acid) in an application where the latter substance is known to have some desirable effect:

> If the good effect of it be owing wholly to the acidity of it, the trial may be
> justified; but if there be something else besides the acidity in the oil of vitriol,
> which produces the good we desire in the case; we mistake that for analogy,
> which is not, and suffer our understanding to be misguided by a wrong
> supposition of analogy where there is none.

For Locke, the question of whether to analogize two substances turns on the question of whether those substances share the property responsible for the desired effect. The salient properties of the oil of vitriol, vinegar, and the spirit nitre are situationally determined.

Locke's natural historical activities lend some valuable context to this example, revealing that correct analogizing, more than just a matter of matching properties, requires a deeply contextual, *historical* understanding of the object in question. As Anstey has observed, Locke's discussion of acidity in the *Conduct* comes at the end of a decades-long concern with the acids and alkali hypothesis, which holds that acidity and alkalinity are irreducible properties of substances. In his 1686 review of Boyle's *Specific Medicines*, Locke argued that what allows certain substances to act as solvents is not such "sensible Qualities as their Humidity and Acidity" but rather, following Boyle, the constitution of their bodies. "If there was nothing but Humidity and Acidity required for the dissolution of Bodies," he writes, "*Aqua fortis* and *Aqua regalis* would be universal Dissolvers, whose force few Bodies could resist." But, in fact, "Dissolvers act by the figure of their Particles, it is not always proper to disunite the Particles of

all sorts of Bodies." The contingency of so-called acidity is supported by "[a]n infinite number of Experiences," he says: cold water dissolves egg whites, while the spirit of vinegar (an acid) coagulates them; the spirit of vinegar dissolves crab eyes immediately but brass filings slowly, whereas the spirit of urine (an alkali) dissolves brass filings rapidly, but has no impact on crab eyes.[101] (Locke, one might note, appears to give "acidity" the same treatment as Filmer's "fatherhood" in the *First Treatise*, dissolving a supposedly self-evident object via historical accumulation) The problem with the acid and alkali hypothesis is that it ignores the relational nature of acidity and alkalinity, treating them as stable properties, without any indication of why they work rapidly in some cases but slowly or not at all in others. For as Locke's comparisons of experimental results show, the speed of dissolution cannot be attributed to a property of either solvent or solute, but rather appears to depend upon some yet unknown relation between the two.

This recognition of so-called properties as relational and situationally determined arguably underpins Locke's commitment to natural history, as we see in a 1693 letter to Molyneux, where Locke rejects the acid and alkali hypothesis as part of a broader rejection of speculative hypotheses: "I fear the Galenists' sour humours, or the chymists' sal, sulphur, and mercury, or the late prevailing invention of acid and alkali, or whatever hereafter shall be substituted to these with new applause, will upon examination be found to be but so many learned empty sounds, with no precise determinate signification."[102] While Locke judges "acid" and "alkali" indeterminate because of the contingency of the phenomena they name, the problem is not the contingency itself, but rather the disconnect between this observed contingency and the

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[101] Anstey, John Locke and Natural Philosophy, 84-86.
[102] Locke to Molyneux Jan 20 1692/3, partially quoted in Anstey, *John Locke and Natural Philosophy*, 87. Full text from H.R.F. Bourne, *The Life of John Locke*, vol. 2: Harper & brothers, 1876) 243-245.

universal claims of the hypothesis. If acidity is an irreducible, isolated property that corresponds to the power to dissolve substances, he can think of no substance that possesses it.

In the letter above, Locke's solution to the "empty sounds" at the heart of speculative hypotheses is natural historical inquiry. He does not oppose hypotheses entirely, acknowledging that when they are generated "[u]pon such grounds as on the established history of disease," they may be "useful as…an art of memory to direct the physician in particular cases."[103] Nevertheless, they remain "suppositions taken up gratis" and must therefore "be relied on only as artificial helps to a physician, and not as philosophical truths to a naturalist." Further, he adds, "he that is this way most sagacious will, I imagine, make the best physician." As in his earlier medical writings, Locke's aim is not to discover the underlying causes, but rather to produce stable but flexible heuristics for practical use. As in Quintilian, wisdom resides in adaptability rather than learning—not simply the possession of knowledge, but the ability to apply what one knows to any given situation—and it emerges out of training in the topics.

Locke's natural historical remedy for the acid and alkali hypothesis illuminates his discussion of analogy in *Conduct*. When Locke classes oil of vitriol, vinegar, and the spirit of nitre as acids and states that "[i]f the good effect of it be owing wholly to the acidity of [the oil of vitriol], the trial may be justified," he does so from the well-considered position that "acidity" is more a property of situation than substance, and that "acid" is an largely incoherent designation. The viability of the analogy rests thus rests not so much upon whether the "good effect" results from "acidity" as whether any of the substances in question would function as acid in the situation at hand. The problem, in other words, cannot be resolved by the philosophical truths of the naturalist, but only the wise adaptability of the historian.

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[103] Locke to Molyneux Jan 20 1692/3.

Locke's account of properties may thus be viewed as an account of relations—a reading supported by the *Essay*:

> [M]ost of the simple ideas that make up our complex ideas of substances, when truly considered, are only powers, however we are apt to take them for positive qualities; v.g. the greatest part of the ideas that make our complex idea of gold are yellowness, great weight, ductility, fusibility, and solubility in aqua regia, &c….all which ideas are *nothing else but so many relations to other substances; and are not really in the gold, considered barely in itself*, though they depend on those real and primary qualities of its internal constitution, whereby it has a fitness differently to operate, and be operated on by several other substances.[104]

The ideas that form our definition of gold are not in fact properties of the substance itself, but rather ways of *placing* the substance in relation to others. This assertion of the relationality of properties transforms the *Essay's* discussion of definition much as Locke's commentary on acidity transforms "Analogy" in the *Conduct*. While the work of definition appears in Book III to be little more than a listing of properties, once we conceive of these so-called properties as relations to other substances, each property must be treated not as a box to be checked, but as a relationship to explore—a topic or an area of inquiry in its own right.

Locke's theoretical and practical treatment of properties as relations offers a natural opening in which to consider the role of the topics in his notebooks. Locke, we've seen, embraces the Erasmian use of topical heads to order the commonplace book—a list that is open-ended and ad hoc, while also culturally informed and stabilized by virtue of being written on the page. Such topics, aligned with what Michael Leff describes as the "material topics," simultaneously inaugurate an object of understanding and an area of inquiry. As the heads of the commonplace book, they are quite literally places in which to accumulate natural historical observations—and the spaces in which natural historical objects appear and take shape. But in some cases, the topics appear in another role, more closely aligned with the so-called formal or

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[104] Locke, *Essay*, II.xxiii.37, emphasis added.

dialectical topics—the topics that originated from Aristotle's concern with predication, expanded into a more general means of exploring relationality in Cicero's *Topica*, and became a strategy for guiding collection in Agricola's notebooks. It is these formal—or, perhaps, *relational*—topics that Bacon adopted and Boyle employed as queries, or "titles," for structuring natural historical inquiry. Locke engages with topics of this kind in two ways, neither of which have received much scholarly attention: First, he employs a set of marginal symbols used to organize his entries on disease; second, he develops and adapts lists of queries for exploring particular objects of inquiry. Both practices, I argue, perform a topical articulation of the objects designated by the commonplace book's heads. The present discussion focuses on the first of these practices; the following section addresses the second.

In several of Locke's notebooks, marginal symbols appear alongside entries on diseases. One of his most developed commonplace books, MS Locke d. 9 (titled "Adversaria 5"), contains a key to these symbols (Figure 2); MS Locke f. 29, a notebook kept from 1683 on, contains what appears to be an updated version.[105] The keys are alphabetically arranged vertical lists consisting primarily of single-character symbols from the English alphabet, with some Greek at the bottom, alongside their meanings: next to p, Locke writes "prognosis;" next to y, "hypothesis" next to θ, "θεραπ" and "curatio" (pertaining to treatments or therapeutics), and so forth. [106] To

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[105] Meynell, "John Locke's Method," 263. Based on the dates of the entries, Locke appears to have used "Adversaria 5" from 1665, shortly before joining the household of Anthony Ashley Cooper, into his final years. The dominant focus is medicine, particularly in entries from the 1660s, a period of rich collaboration with Sydenham and Boyle. The subject matter broadens somewhat as Locke's employment draws him away from medicine. Particularly after his time in France (1675-1679, during which the notebook remained in England), one sees a proliferation of content related to his travels—from lists of grape varietals grown near Montpellier and descriptions of the practices used to grow them (both under head "Uva") to an account of spinning machines, credited to Nicolas Toinard, a close friend made while in Paris. For details on the makeup of the notebook, see John C. Attig, "MS Locke d. 9," *John Locke Manuscripts,* last modified September 5, 2017, https://openpublishing.psu.edu/locke/mss/mslocke-d9.html.

[106] A full transcription of both keys appears in Meynell, "John Locke's Method," 263-265. In both lists, p appears with dots above and below. Meynell suspects these dots were intended to indicate a good or a bad prognosis, a suggestion that is supported by the notation "bona/mala" to the right of the entry (265).

accommodate terms that fall under the same letter, he includes script, roman, secretary hand, and

upper case versions of many letters (e.g. d in script corresponds to "diagnosis," in roman to

"*descriptio,*" in secretary hand to "*dispositio,*" in upper case to "*Dosis*").[107]

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[107] "John Locke's Method," 263. Meynell includes the Greek letters in his list of variants, though they appear to perform a different function, at least in "Adversaria 5," where they are located at the bottom of the list and do not seem to be necessitated by crowding above (e.g. Locke writes "θεραπ" ["therap"] and "*curatio*" beside θ (one of the most frequently used symbols), but there is only one variation of c in use, and t is entirely absent from the list.

Figure 2. Key to marginal symbols in "Adversaria 5" (MS Locke d. 9, fol. 1r). Used with the permission of the Bodleian Libraries, Oxford.

In many cases, this approach appears to have been planned in advance, with variations of each letter appearing, evenly spaced, in the vertical list. Some of these variations go unclaimed; many others, while assigned to a meaning, have not been observed in Locke's notebooks. But in other cases, for example with the letter d, Locke appears to have inserted additional variations after drafting the initial list, either by squeezing them between existing entries or else listing them horizontally, suggesting that Locke continued to expand and adapt the list as he went (Figure 3). In all, the list in "Adversaria 5" contains 55 symbols, 48 of which are assigned to terms; the list in MS Locke f. 29 has expanded to include 68, but only 47 are assigned.[108] The largely vertical and alphabetical organization of these keys—and the fact that Locke only used a small portion of the symbols therein suggest that he drew up the keys in advance, approached them less as an ad hoc system for categorizing observations, than as a topics, a program of inquiry. At the same time, it's clear that Locke *did* add to this list at later points and left room for its expansion—an indication of the adaptability and responsiveness of this topical program to the inputs of experience, practice.
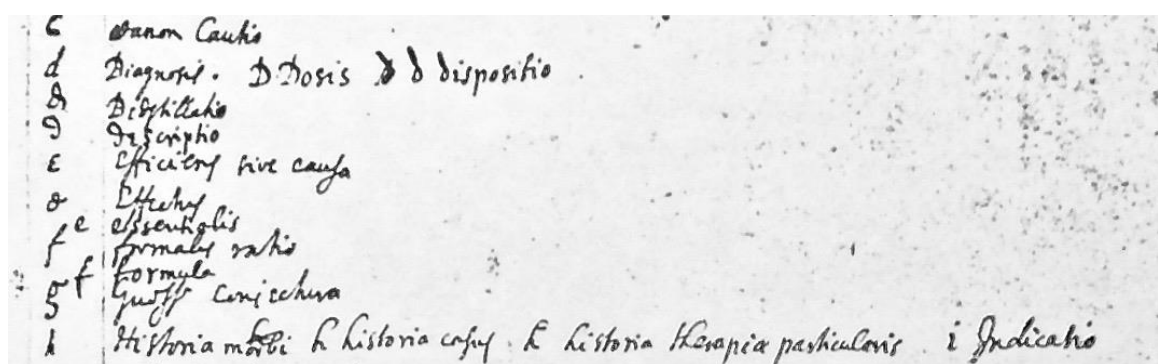
Figure 3. Close-up of key in "Adversaria 5" with visible horizontal and vertical additions.

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[108] "John Locke's Method," 263.

This rather elaborate symbol system arguably expresses Locke's note-taking intentions more than it does his actual practices. Beyond the large number of symbols that evidently go unused, he applies the ones he does use somewhat inconsistently.[109] It is not the case, in other words, that every entry on disease is broken down into a series of queries represented by the symbols. Most often, Locke seems to have recorded entries first, adding one or more symbols to the margins after the fact, rather than using them as queries to inspire closer examination. There are, however, exceptions that show the role of these symbols as *medical topics*, helping to illustrate the power of the practice as a whole. Let us briefly consider one of the more developed examples of how these symbols facilitated the systematic, topical exploration of diseases: a collection of entries associated with the title "*Tussis*" in "Adversaria 5."[110]

The content of these entries derives from Sydenham's essay of the same name (dated 1669 in Locke's notebooks), which Locke had previously copied into a different commonplace book (MS Locke c. 42a).[111] In c. 42a, Locke breaks the essay down via topical heads that correspond to the coughs addressed. Under the first head, "*Tussis*," he copies Sydenham's introductory definition of "cough" as a general class of symptoms. Then, he enters heads corresponding to the different sorts of cough identified in the essay ("*Tussis verna*," "*Tussis pituitosa*," and "*Tussis calida per accidens*").[112] Rather than compiling all observations about each cough under a single head, Locke transcribes the essay in a linear fashion, adding heads, including those already used (or slight variations thereof), as the text moves back and forth between coughs. The full essay, demarcated in this manner, appears between entries devoted to

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[109] "John Locke's Method," 263.

[110] MS Locke d. 9, fol. 207, 1682, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford.

[111] MS Locke c. 42a, fols. 258-259, 1681, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford.
Locke uses an "AE" (Aesculapius) to indicate Sydenham's authorship (Kenneth Dewhurst, *Dr. Thomas Sydenham (1624-1689), His Life and Original Writings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 94n3.

[112] MS Locke c. 42a, fols. 258-259.

kinds of cough not covered in the essay (most also attributed to Sydenham), as well a few pertaining to cures for coughs in general.[113]

In "Adversaria 5," Locke continues to use marginal heads to divide the material according to cough. But in this case, he creates only one head for each cough, beneath which he consolidates and subdivides all pertinent information about it according to the following set of marginal symbols (see Figure 4):

y: *hypothesis* (the supposed cause of the cough)

d (secretary hand): *dispositio* (a list of those most disposed to the cough)

d (roman): *descriptio* (the season or circumstances under which the cough usually occurs)

d (script): *diagnosis* (characteristics that are diagnostic of the cough in question)

MM: *methodus medendi* (an enumerated method of treating the cough)

Locke uses all of these symbols in each entry, though in some cases he adds to them, in keeping with his adaptive approach to the topics. The entries for *Tussis verna* and *Tussis pituitosa* both include prognoses (p in script); *Tussis pituitosa* further includes an entry on *praesagia* (p in secretary hand) listing symptoms such as "running at the nose" as indications of the cough to come.

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[113] MS Locke c. 42a, fols. 258-259. A full transcription Sydenham's essay and additional observations recorded in c. 42a appears in Dewhurst, *Dr. Thomas Sydenham,* 94-100.

Tussis

Tussis verna

Tussis pituitosa

Tussis calida per accidens

Tussis suffocativa sive verna puerorum. Angl: Hooping or Chincough

Figure 4. Entries on *Tussis* organized by marginal symbols in "Adversaria 5"

(MS Locke d. 9, fol. 207r). Used with the permission of the Bodleian Libraries, Oxford.

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Across these entries, Locke's marginal symbols serve as a largely uniform but still flexible collection of medical topics for exploring, relating, and differentiating observations about coughs—and for placing coughs in relation to others. This function becomes particularly clear when he combines two coughs, treated as distinct in MS Locke c. 42 ("*Tussis verna puerurlor,*" from Sydenham's original essay, and "*Tussis suffocativa* Angl: Chin cough" from the surrounding entries) under a single head in "Adversaria Physica" ("*Tussis suffocativa sive verna puerorum.* Angl: Hooping or Chin cough"). The marginal symbols, as topics, serve to mediate between and digest the information under the two original heads, drawing what is common as and distinctive about them into a unified account:

"*Tussis suffocativa* Angl: Chin cough"

About the midle of Apr. '69 many children were take after this manner. 1° They often fainted without any manifest cause they were also drousy. After they had been thus several days the disease not being yet perfectly formed at length they were taken with a very violent cough with which holding their breath they were almost strangled and would looke black in the face, but did cough up very little. Method of treatment, cooling regimen, frequenting the open aire. Syrop of violet often and whey plentifully taken. Bleeding too would have been useful but the cooling regimen cured without it. Syrup of violets was both cooling and loosening. The cause of this disease was too hot regimen. AE.

All coughs that cause vomiting or reaching to vomit are to be cured by bleeding 2 or 3 times a repeated as there shall be occasion and also decoctum pectorale and barly water with reasons and liquirish and diet (without flesh and wine) espetially if it be the hooping or chin cough AE ib.[114]

"*Tussis verna puerurlor*"

Another sort of cough there is incident to children which comes on sometimes before the vernall equinox which is vulgarly called hooping or chine cough wherein the patient expectorates litle but is taken with a long continued act of coughing which rises higher and higher both in the straining and hooping noise

[114] MS Locke c. 42, fol. 258.

until at length the child grows black sometimes bleeds at the nose and foams at the mouth through the violence thereof. AE ib.

This cough being occasiond by a great impulse of the bloud upon the vessells of the lungs the curative intentions are to be directed only to revulsions and accordingly the child is to be blouded 1, and afterwards purged upon which by degrees the cough will goe off without any more adoe save that it may be necessary to let it use the open country aire.[115]

"*Tussis suffocativa sive verna puerorum*. Angl: Hooping or Chin cough"

y	A great impulse of bloud upon the vessalls of the lungs
d [secretary]	children
d [roman]	spring
d [script]	Extreme violent fits of coughing till a' grows black in the face & often bleeds at nose or foams at mouth through violence of coughing little or no expectoration
M	Revulsions 1° bleeding 2° purge 3° Open air
	Apr 69 many children were taken with such a cough which was preceded by fainting & drousyness
M	Cooling regimen frequent open air, syrop violet often which both cooled and loosened, whey plentifully Bleeding too might be used But cooling regimen did it without bleeding. The cause of this disease was too hot a regimen.[116]

This comparison yields three useful insights about the role of Locke's marginal symbols as topics. First, the symbols serve as mechanisms for selection. Apart from the second method of treatment (M), which is largely paraphrased from the original entry (*Tussis suffocativa*), the entry in "Adversaria 5" serves as a quick reference guide that allows the viewer to rapidly apprehend the aspects of the cough most relevant to diagnosing and treating it. In keeping with Locke's argument that the proper end of all speech "is to be the easiest and shortest way of

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[115] MS Locke c. 42, fol. 259.
[116] MS Locke d. 9, fol. 207.

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communicating our notions," these entries embrace topical inquiry as a means of not only exploring and elaborating a disease, but also distilling what is known of it into the most salient, useful, common points—and presenting those points clearly and efficiently.[117]

Second, the distillation in "Adversaria 5" prioritizes what is common between the two prose entries. Nearly all of the content under *dispositio*, *descriptio*, and *diagnosis* appears in both. Still, Locke's decision to include some of the content that only appears in one of the two prose entries is perhaps just as telling. The two earlier entries offer somewhat different methods of treatment. Locke elects to include them as separate entries (both marked "M"), providing the reader with two ways of curing the cough. The first is a generalized method, formed through Sydenham's own experience and training. The second describes a variation of that method that proved effective in a particular situation—an indication of Locke's awareness of the provisionally and contingency of treatments. The goal of commonplacing is not just to provide a view of the whole—a usable, shareable generalization—but also (and more in keeping with humanist commonplacing) to provide the user with a collection of particulars to select from and adapt according to the needs and specifics of the case at hand.

Finally, the symbols that Locke chose to organize the entries in "Adversaria 5" distinguish and relate the different kinds of coughs described by Sydenham. Reading the prose entries through the lens of the symbols Locke selected facilitates a side-by-side comparison that allows us to clearly distinguish, for example, what Sydenham calls *Tussis verna* and *Tussis verna puerurlor*, while recognizing the latter as the same species of cough as *Tussis suffocata*. In all, the content compiled or placed beside each marginal symbol is integral to the decision of how to place certain coughs in relation to each other.

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[117] Locke, *Essay*, III.vi.33.

Much as Moss describes the heads of the humanist commonplace book as a "conceptual grid," Locke's marginal symbols are a way of seeing what is in a text, identifying it as a particular kind of information, and placing entries in relation to each other. Even when Locke adds only a single symbol to the margin of the entry, he is placing that entry into conversation with others, making it relatable (e.g. one can quickly draw connections and distinctions between diseases on the basis of whom they affect, when they occur, whether they respond to bleeding, and so forth). Through this ordered accumulation of perspectives, an object emerges—not independently, but into a network of knowledge and associations that render it legible, useable, common.

6.3 Selection: Clarity, Distinctness, and Commonness as Criteria for Judgment

While Locke rejects humanist *copia* as disordered and indiscriminate collection, the rhetorical practice of accumulation has long been paired with—and conducive to—the complementary activity of selection. The capacity to select from what has been—or could be—accumulated is, I argue, a capacity for rhetorical judgment, honed by commonplacing practices. This section focuses on how topical inquiry facilitates the rhetorical judgment necessary to produce the kind of ideas that Locke pursues. I begin by defining the ideas sought in the *Conduct* in terms of three criteria that allow them to serve as a basis for shared understanding: clarity, distinctness, and commonness. Locke's justification for and pursuit of these criteria in the *Conduct* and the *Essay* reveals how each serves as a criterion for *rhetorical* judgment—a means of selecting among an almost infinite range of particulars and properties to produce an idea capable of serving as the foundation for Lockean civil society. To illustrate the depth of Locke's

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investment in topical inquiry and the ways in which he employed it as a basis for shared understanding, I conclude with an example from his own natural historical explorations.

Locke's emphasis on the cultivation of a "large, sound, round about sense" encourages as full an articulation of an object as possible. In this light, one could reasonably conclude that the work pursues ideas that are, above all, complete.[118] But a rhetorical reading, with its emphasis on the facilitation of collective life, finds that completeness is not as obvious an asset in Locke's thought.

As we saw in Book III of *Essay*, the more an idea converges upon completion (that is, the closer it approximates the real essence of the thing in question), the more complex and cumbersome it grows.[119] Every added property makes the idea harder to communicate and drowns out its salient features. This emphasis on choosing the appropriate resolution is at the heart of the "microscopical eyes" example: While the ability to apprehend the real essence of things would undoubtedly furnish our understandings with more *complete* ideas, it would also place us in a "quite different world from other people," rendering shared experience and thus communication impossible.[120] In this respect, complete ideas would seem to foreclose rather than facilitate Lockean civil society by removing us from the world of common appearances that serves as its foundations. How, then, might one reconcile this need for communicability with the *Conduct*'s requirement of impartiality?

The answer to this question appears to lie in another of the *Conduct*'s central virtues: sagacity, judgment. At numerous points in the work, Locke presents his ideal subject, his "man of reason," as one who builds ideas judiciously rather than comprehensively, from observations

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[118] Locke uses variations of the phrase "clear, distinct, and complete ideas" at times in the *Essay*, as in IV.xii.6, where he presents such ideas as the proper alternative to received principles.

[119] E.g. Locke, *Essay*, III.ix.6. See page 159 of this dissertation for a more detailed discussion.

[120] *Essay,* II.xxiii.12.

of collective salience made at the human scale. The society-sustaining ideas pursued in the *Conduct* are the products of not only accumulation, but also this judicious selection: not clear, distinct, and complete ideas, I will argue, but clear, distinct, and *common*. Let us now turn to the habits aimed at securing each of these criteria.

6.3.1 Clear Ideas

While clarity, which again measures a correspondence between ideas and "the objects themselves from which they were taken," is for Locke primarily a matter of seeing clearly, it nevertheless relies upon judgment.[121] Noting his "testiness concerning scepticism about the relation between our ideas and their sensory cause," Schuurman presents clarity as something of a nonissue for Locke.[122] By contrast, I argue that clarity is not automatic and that its place between "our ideas and their sensory cause" gives it a special place in Locke's thought as the measure of the distance between our understanding and our perceptions—between the focus of his epistemological project and its foundations. Indeed, of the three criteria of judgment I am about to review, clarity is where Locke makes his most distinctive contribution to rhetoric—it is what leads him to anchor objects of thought in one's embodied experience of the world, providing a basis for replacing verbal persuasion with seeing together as a means of shared

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[121] E.g. *Essay,* II.xxix.4: "[A] clear idea is that whereof the mind has such a full and evident perception, as it does receive from an outward object operating duly on a well-disposed organ." Importantly, Locke uses "clarity" very openly and intentionally as a visual metaphor, given that "[t]he perception of the mind [is] most aptly explained by words relating to the sight." There is, in addition, a more literal sense in which clarity is concerned with sight in particular: Not only are our ideas "as it were the pictures of things," but the "trick of the mind" whereby an idea formed by the judgment is mistaken for direct perception (discussed in relation to Molyneux's problem, below) "is not, I think, usual in any of our ideas, but those received by sight" (II.ix.9).

[122] Schuurman refers the reader to *Essay,* IV.ii.1.

understanding. Clarity, as a criterion of judgment, is a means of composing objects of thought from ideas and connections that are (or could be) visible to all.

Clarity depends upon more than our natural ability to acquire the sensory inputs that form our simple ideas: its chief threats in the *Essay* are not only "dull organs," but also "very slight and transient impressions made by the objects; or else a weakness in the memory."[123] Illustrating via visual metaphor, Locke likens these deficits in sense, engagement, and memory to the reasons why wax seals sometimes leave "obscure" impressions: respectively, the wax is too hard to receive an impression, it is "of a temper fit, but the seal not applied with a sufficient force to make a clear impression," or else it is too soft for even a clear impression to hold. The *Conduct* allows us to view the second of these problems (wherein the wax is ready for impression but the contact too faint) as a problem of partiality in which the bias of the seal or the weakness of engagement transfers only a portion of what the seal contains. As we have seen, the work presents partiality as kind of blindness—as a failure to examine something from every angle or as an obstructed view resulting from one's prejudices and interests.

Locke offers a more literal discussion of visual impairment under "Assent," drawing attention to the limitations of sensory experience in securing a clear connection between thing and idea. Posing the question of how "a novice, an inquirer, a stranger" should determine when to grant assent, given the range of competing standards in use, he writes:

> I answer, use his eyes. There is a correspondence in things, and agreement and disagreement in ideas, discernible in very different degrees, and there are eyes in men to see them, if they please; only their eyes may be dimmed or dazzled, and the discerning sight in them impaired or lost.[124]

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[123] *Essay,* II.xxix.3.
[124] *Conduct*, §33.

As with his call to attend to "certain obvious appearances," Locke contends that a great deal of what we need to know is readily available on the surface—if we are willing to look. But in describing the ways in which one who "use[s] his eyes" may still lose "the discerning sight in them," Locke alerts us to a problem with this reliance on perception—that even one who earnestly pursues the truth may in fact receive only a partial view. Crucially, he reminds us that partiality is resolved not only through accumulation, but also discernment, judgment—differentiating between the perspectives that contribute to our view of the object at hand and those that only obstruct it. While he attributes these obstructions to the usual suspects—biases, the passions, training in disputation—he presents them as threats not to the conscious processes of determining and connecting ideas, but to a mental operation that had previously appeared off-limits: sense perception itself.

Locke is in some ways still speaking metaphorically (he does not, of course, mean that our eyes literally dim), but he is nevertheless describing a kind of impairment that is indistinguishable in experience from blindness. Locke makes this point in a well-known addition to the *Essay*, his discussion of "Molyneux's problem," where he shows how "the ideas we receive by sensation are often, in grown people, altered by the judgment, without our taking notice of it."[125] When we see a "round globe of…uniform colour," he argues, "the idea thereby imprinted on our mind is of a flat circle, variously shadowed." Yet because we are "accustomed to perceive what kind of appearance convex bodies are wont to make in us," this flat, shaded circle appears to us as a sphere of uniform color. This image of the sphere is a product of the judgment, which

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[125] Locke's *Essay* prompted William Molyneux to write him with a question—briefly, whether a man who was born blind and able to identify a cube and a sphere by touch could, if he were "made to see," name them by sight alone. Locke agreed with Molyneux that the answer was no, for he would not have yet made the connection between the feeling and the appearance of, for example, the edges of the cube. Locke included the question and his response in the second edition of the *Essay* (1694), II.ix.8-10.

"by an habitual custom, alters the appearances into their causes," yet is often taken for direct perception because it occurs instantaneously and is rendered further imperceptible by custom and habit.[126]

Locke calls back to this argument under "Association" in the *Conduct*, where his primary focus is on the power dynamics associated with this unperceivable intrusion of the judgment into experience.[127] The entry approaches the familiar problem of passively imbibed knowledge with the *Conduct*'s investment in idea formation, turning from received opinion to the ways in which faulty associations between ideas become seemingly self-evident through custom.[128] The implications for clarity become apparent when Locke describes this outcome in terms of blindness: "Many men firmly embrace falsehood for truth; not only because they never thought otherwise; but also because, thus blinded as they have been from the beginning, they never could think otherwise." In presenting blindness as an *incapacity* to think otherwise, Locke disrupts the clear distinction between the immediate and automatic process of sense perception and the supposedly more contingent and self-aware mental process of judgment. In this manner, we see that clarity—the correspondence between idea and thing—is not just a gift of the perceptive faculties but an achievement of the carefully trained judgment.

Locke's remedies for faulty associations further develop this point, revealing clarity to be the result of selection—of exercising the judgment to determine which ideas to include in and exclude from an object of thought. To prevent faulty associations, one should check that ideas are joined only due to "the visible agreement that is in the ideas themselves," rather habit or

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[126] Locke, *Essay*, II.ix.8-10. (Locke notes in II.ix.9 that this problem of mistaking judgment for direct perception seems to occur only with respect to ideas "received by sight.")

[127] E.g. *Conduct,* §41: "There is, I know, a great fault among all sorts of people of principling their children and scholars; which…amounts to no more, but making them imbibe their teacher's notions and tenets by an implicit faith, and firmly to adhere to them whether true or false."

[128] E.g. *Conduct,* §41: "unnatural connexions become by custom as natural to the mind as sun and light, fire and warmth go together, and so seem to carry with them as natural an evidence as self-evident truths themselves."

custom. To correct existing faulty associations, meanwhile, one "must nicely observe the very quick and almost imperceptible motions of the mind in its habitual actions." We must, in other words, not only trace our associations to the sensory experiences from which they originated; we must examine the entire complex of habits that transformed our simple sensory inputs into the objects we "perceived." For while custom cannot interfere with the initial inputs of our senses, it can—through the same sleight of hand that replaces the shaded circle with the globe of uniform color—transform them instantaneously into something entirely different. Accordingly, Locke calls for what is, in essence, a historical treatment of one's habits. [129] In this manner, he foregrounds the relationship between memory and clarity established in the *Essay*, and he conceives of historical inquiry as a means of not only accumulating perspectives, but also honing the judgment: clarity is not a matter of discovering new ways to see; it is a matter of remembering what we saw—and, in a larger sense, what we were, and are, able to see.

It is in this sense that clarity is a criterion for judgment, a means of selection that orients the individual toward the world that we all experience in the same way. [130] While the kind of historical excavation that Locke recommends might be seen as broadening possibility in the individual case, within his vision of inquiry it is a means of narrowing the vast range of possible associations to those exhibiting "visible agreement." In this turn from custom to vision as the basis for judging associations, Locke anchors the work of object making in our shared capacity for perception and makes the world in which those objects are used its standard.

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[129] A similar vision of history appears at the end of "Study," discussed in 135n20 of this dissertation.
[130] Locke, *Essay,* II.xiii.28.

6.3.2 Distinct Ideas

While clarity measures correspondence with the world, distinctness, concerns the relationship between ideas. This relationship is figured in language: An idea is distinct if it is *defined* in such a way that it cannot be confused with others. For example, the definition "spotted beast" affords only a confused idea of the leopard, since it contains too few simple ideas to fully distinguish it from the lynx. While Locke attributes this confusion to the insufficient number of simple ideas alone, he concludes by underscoring the connection to language: "such an idea, though it hath the peculiar name leopard, is not distinguishable from those designed by the names lynx or panther, and may as well come under the name lynx as leopard." The problem of distinction only emerges as such when an indistinct collection of ideas is given a distinct name.

Accordingly, the *Essay* proposes the following guidelines for forming distinct ideas:

> The way to prevent [confusion] is to collect and unite into one complex idea, as precisely as is possible, all those ingredients whereby it is differenced from others; and to them, so united in a determinate number and order, apply steadily the same name.[131]

To the extent that the pursuit of distinctness requires us to form definitions rooted in "all those ingredients whereby [an idea] is differenced from others," judgment entails one's ability to discern what information is necessary to place an idea in relation to others within an established system of signification.[132] Definition and naming thus work in tandem to circle the properties that constitute an idea. The criterion of distinctness presents these processes as efforts to carve up the world into discrete, stable objects of understanding, placed, through the demands of differentiation, in relation to each other—the work of the natural historian.

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[131] *Essay*, II.xxxix.12.

[132] Importantly, the essential properties of things are determined by the name they are assigned—and thus their placement in a system of signification—rather than the other way around. See *Essay*, III.vi.4, discussed on page 156 of this dissertation.

In the *Conduct*, Locke frames his vision of distinctness as striking a balance between "two vicious excesses:" the perceived equivocation of the sophists and the excessive division of the scholastics.[133] He addresses the former concern under "Similes" (§32), an attack on the use of metaphors in definitions. Metaphors, he says, are useful explanatory tools once when we have a clear and distinct idea in our mind. But if our own definition of the idea in question rests on a metaphor, it means we are building our understanding upon imagined or specious associations, rather than the "thing itself."[134]

Locke turns to the opposite problem of excessive division "Distinction," where he promote habits that assist us in perceiving the "difference[s] that nature has placed in things" without creating divisions where none exist—an disease of the understanding that Locke calls "division." At first, this recourse to nature makes it difficult to understand how distinctness differs from clarity. But Locke quickly updates his position: while artificial divisions certainly abound, he acknowledges that many needless divisions derive from nature—what separates distinction from division is its attention to those differences "most necessary and conducive to true knowledge."[135] He explains:

> To observe every the least difference that is in things argues a quick and clear
> sight; and this keeps the understanding steady, and right in its way to knowledge.
> But though it be useful to discern every variety that is to be found in nature, yet it

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[133] *Conduct*, §31.

[134] Locke's resistance to the use of metaphor in definition has a long history in rhetoric. Consider, for example, Cicero's admonition in the *Topica* (VII.32): Presenting the tendency for orators and poets to "define by comparison, using metaphors with a pleasing effect" as a "fail[ure] to distinguish sharply enough between things which must be separated, he shows his audience of jurisconsults how such equivocation occurs in their ranks: "When there was a discussion of shores, which you jurists claim are all public property, and those who were interested in the matter asked what a shore was, he was accustomed to define it as the place upon which the waves play. This is as if one should choose to define youth as the flower of a man's age or old age as the sunset of life, for by using a metaphor he abandoned the language proper to the object and to his profession." Peter Mack observes a similar position in Agricola's treatment of the topic of definition, which he takes as an indication of Cicero's influence. Mack, *Renaissance Argument*, 152-155.

[135] Locke refers, for example, to "the abundance of artificial and scholastic distinctions" and the "the art of verbal distinctions, made at pleasure in learned and arbitrarily invented terms, to be applied at venture, without comprehending or conveying any distinction notions" (Locke, *Conduct*, §31).

is *not convenient* to consider every difference that is in things, and divide them into distinct classes under every such difference. This will run us, if followed, into particulars, (for every individual has something that differences it from another) and we shall be able to establish no general truths, or else at least shall be apt to perplex the mind about them.[136]

Two important features of Locke's view of distinctness appear in this passage. First, distinctness is a necessary complement to clarity, for having a "quick and clear sight" without a capacity to distinguish what is most important can lead to exactly the kind of division Locke seeks to avoid. Second, distinction is a notably practical endeavor. Locke rejects division not because it leads us astray (indeed, he concedes that it is "right in its way to knowledge") but because it is "not convenient." The *Conduct* clearly retains Locke's concern with the shortness of life and the constraints on one's time, and it frames its recommendations in terms of the effective use of one's time.[137] But more than that, Locke stresses that division without discrimination makes it impossible to take advantage of our linguistic capacity for generalization—generalization, which, again, is valuable strictly as a convenience, a means of grouping particulars by "certain obvious appearances, into species, that we may the easier under general names communicate our thoughts about them."[138] In passage above, generalization appears less as a means of communication than as a means of establishing continuity across the range of particulars we encounter in pursuit of knowledge. But as the *Essay* makes clear, generalizations are human constructs—objects created by designating certain properties, which in practice are no more essential than any others, as the defining features of an invented species. Taken together, these emphases on the practical and constructed nature of distinctions indicate that the kind of definitions Locke pursues requires a

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[136] *Conduct*, §31, emphasis added.
[137] E.g. *Conduct*, §20, 21, 43.
[138] *Essay,* III.vi.30, emphasis added.

capacity to recognize salient differences—and these salient differences derive from judgment rather than "nature."

The crucial implication here is that the judgment necessary to produce the *kind* of distinct idea that Locke seeks lies outside of the bounds of distinctness as it is presented in the *Essay*. As a criterion for judgment, distinctness assesses the placement of an idea in a system of signification, without regard for salience—practicality, utility, commonality. Because no property is more essential than any other in Locke's view, neither clarity nor distinctness can assist in making such determinations.

Thus the problem of authority reemerges, again with respect to definition—the question of whose sense of salience should determine the essential properties of a thing. As I have argued, Locke's solution is to reconceptualize authority as collective inquiry, as performed in the commonplace book. This inquiry is facilitated by—and productive of—a judgment capable of discerning collective salience—a capacity to judge not only what is clear and distinct, but also what is common.

6.3.3 Common Ideas

To summarize the argument so far: We have seen two ways in which Locke guides the work of selection in the *Conduct*. If objects of understanding are collections of properties, selection is both a matter of discerning those properties that have a basis in direct perception, in the case of clarity, and those that meaningfully distinguish one definition from another in the case of distinctness. Both of these criteria demonstrate views that Locke has long held: that shared standards are the foundation of civil society, and that the world, while largely opaque to our senses, is a crucial means of creating standards that are rooted in something more stable,

sharable, and mutually verifiable than the individual opinions so often proffered as truths. In the *Conduct*, shared objects of understanding serve in this capacity—as a collection of shared standards, a basis for common ground.

But the criteria of clarity and distinctness alone are not sufficient to produce the kind of common ground that Locke pursues. Standardizing ideas derived from nature could, perhaps, produce a shared way of seeing, but only by imposing certain perspectives upon others in a way that Locke so vigorously rejects. The remaining task is thus to discover the criterion of judgment that intervenes without imposition between clarity and distinctness—the means by which one moves from the innumerable properties apparent in the nature of a thing to a subset of properties that are collectively recognized as salient.

It is in this pursuit of shared salience that the rhetorical judgment of the commonplacer comes to the fore. Just as Quintilian's orator is characterized by their "wise adaptability"—the capacity to adjust one's rules and resources to the demands of the case at hand—Locke's "man of reason" is distinguished primarily by "sagacity and wariness," and "suppleness" of mind.[139] And for Locke as for Quintilian, this kind of judgment is honed by the practice of commonplacing. Observations are gathered impartially under topical heads that designate both objects of thought and programs of inquiry. From this layering of perspectives a sense of shared salience emerges as areas of accumulation—common experiences, common questions—reveal what is, within a particular community, essential to or worth asking of the object at hand.

Judgments of salience, in short, turn on the question of what is common. In his final addition to the *Conduct*, Locke uses the language of commonplacing to describe the work's concern with

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[139] Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria,* 2.13.1-3; Locke, *Conduct,* §19.

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> how hard it is to get the mind, narrowed by a custom of thirty or forty years
> standing to a scanty collection of obvious and common ideas, to enlarge itself to a
> more *copious stock*, and grow into an acquaintance with those that would afford
> *more abundant matter of useful contemplation*.[140]

This gloss of what is arguably the *Conduct*'s central concern appears to perform a curious inversion: the abundance and *copia* that Locke regularly derides appear as remedies for what elsewhere appears to be a crucial epistemic and political resource: our recourse to "certain obvious appearances," perceivable by all. But this indictment of "obvious and common ideas" is less a dismissal of their value than a reminder that what appears obvious and common is nevertheless a particular—and partial—perspective, entrenched by custom. And, as we saw in 6.2, Locke's call to *copia* is not an attempt to multiply meaning of the thing in question, but rather to further articulate it by inquiring into it from a wide range of perspectives. It is through such inquiry that one arrives at both an object—a general and multifaceted view of the whole—and a range of potentially useful ways of seeing it, which we may adapt to the specifics of a situation, much as the wise orator adapts a commonplace to a particular situation or the sagacious physician adapts a cure to a particular patient. The capacity to judge what is common arises from the work of moving from particular to general and back to particular again.

The ideas pursued by the *Conduct* may be understood as common in three ways, each of which draws upon the tradition of topically organized commonplace books to narrow and refine the possibilities for selection. First, the capacity to form these ideas is in Locke's view, achievable by all—not just the elite, the erudite, and revered, but also (and in some cases *especially*) common people. Second, these ideas are derived from and constitutive of shared experience, serving as common standards for being and acting together—common ground.

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[140] *Conduct,* §45, emphasis added.

Finally, these ideas mediate between the particular or individual and the general, serving as local or communal ways of seeing and proceeding.

To begin, consider the first sense in which the ideas pursued in the *Conduct* are common: they are produced by faculties nearly everyone shares, and they are rooted in experience rather than erudition. As in the *Essay*, as well as his medical writings, Locke's epistemic aims lie within the bounds of what is possible for the human faculties and practical for the individual inquirer. Just as the *Essay*'s "microscopical eyes" example shows that we need not look beyond what is accessible to the human senses, the *Conduct*'s geographer example argues that we need not internalize every feature "upon the face of the earth." The "man of reason" possesses a kind of embodied knowledge of a space that comes from frequent "sallies" into it rather than painstaking investigations. In this latter example, Locke's insistence that the human body is equipped to furnish us with the knowledge we need reemerges in the context of human inquiry: the simple act of spending time in a space and "travers[ing] up and down" (rather that only visiting those places that immediately delight us) will give us a sense for its salient characteristics—precisely the characteristics that our senses are designed to capture.

So while Locke is judicious about granting assent, he follows Bacon's more egalitarian approach to collection and does not distinguish between authorities in his commonplace books. Recalling his attribution of "all our knowledge of [medicines'] efficacy" to "old women's experience," one finds, under the head of *Tussis*, cures and commentary from not only Boyle and the physician David Thomas, but also a "Mrs. Pocock," presumed to be the mother of one of Locke's pupils and the wife of Edward Pococke, one of his former professors.[141] Of course,

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[141] While Locke resisted citational authority and rarely cited his sources in his writings, he regularly attributed the entries in his notebooks to specific individuals or works by providing a name or set of initials, often accompanied by the year of publication. Many notebooks also include a list of the titles and authors cited therein.

Boyle and Thomas appear in his notebooks much more regularly. Locke was clear that while all people *are capable* of contributing, few have the leisure. But in the Lockean commonplace book, authority resides not in the individual entry, but rather in the collection.

In the *Conduct*, Locke explicitly states that the right conduct of the understanding results from habit and practice rather than natural (and, as is often supposed, differentially available) ability.[142] Thus the "large, sound round about sense" that is the basis for forming common objects may be achieved through inquiry that anyone can perform. At the same time, such inquiry is shaped not only by the limitations of human sense, but also by individual constraints and capacities—"what the world may expect" of each inquirer and what "time and opportunity" permits. This recognition allows Locke to value the contributions of Boyle, Thomas, and Pocock equally, regardless of differences in the specialized knowledge or credentials possessed by their creators. Further it shows that while the work of amassing a view of the whole is a collective effort to which all may contribute, at an individual level, the *Conduct* aims primarily to cultivate habits of inquiry, rather than a comprehensive knowledge of all that there is to know.[143]

More than stressing the sufficiency of what is possible and practical for the human inquirer, Locke devotes the impartial pursuit of truth to the necessarily situated pursuit of utility. Indeed, while "truth" is the axis upon which he measures impartiality, the value of *truths* is to be "measured by their usefulness and tendency."[144] Of course, this concern with usefulness does not give us license to only accept truths that serve our personal needs; we must inquire into the world

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David Thomas was Locke's classmate, collaborator, and close friend, with whom he shared a lab while at Oxford. On the likely identity of "Mrs. Pocock," see Kenneth 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, 1963), 181 and 181n4.

[142] Locke, *Conduct*, §4.

[143] *Conduct*, §19.

[144] *Conduct*, §25. On truth as the measure of impartiality, see again Locke's inversion of the disdain for impartiality in religious contexts *Conduct*, §12, discussed in 6.1 of this chapter.

openly and broadly, regarding what we find with indifference. Nevertheless, Locke suggests that our interests play a necessary role in the questions we ask, even if we must regard the answers with indifference.

The "microscopical eyes" example links this concern with utility to Locke's contentment with the limitations of human understanding, in part by framing utility in terms of communicability. The ability to see down to the real essences of things would give us a perfect understanding of the clock's inner workings, yet render us unable to discern the superficial features that make it both useful and collectively legible: its hands and its face. But while being able to tell the time would be of modest assistance to the individual, its primary function is to establish a common standard capable of aligning individual experiences and coordinating human activity. The clock, in this sense, represents the sort of common object one would expect to emerge from the inquiry prescribed in the *Conduct*, pointing to the second way in which the objects of thought pursued in the *Conduct* are common: they are collectively produced constructs, rooted in utility rather than real essences, that serve as the common standards necessary for Locke's civil society.

But the clock differs from the objects of the *Conduct* in one crucial way: it lacks a capacity for adaptation. The topical inquiry that produces Locke's objects of understanding permits a more flexible engagement with specific circumstances by allowing one to choose from a range of different approaches or perspectives and determine which are appropriate. As in his medical commonplacing activities, entries collected beneath topical heads provide a cluster of ways in which one might recognize, distinguish, and treat diseases. That these entries are regularly situated in case histories helps one choose between these different approaches by

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exploring the connections between the particular case at hand and the many cases experienced and recorded before it.

Further, a topical approach invites adjustments to the program of inquiry itself. Even in his more systematic collection of medical topics that comprise his marginal symbols, Locke does not approach topics as a closed system, but as a provisional set of inquiries that may be adjusted to accommodate new experiences as well as shifts in salience. As a mode of inquiry capable of "apply[ing] itself more closely and dexterously to the bents and turns of the matter in all its researches," the topics both foster and embody the "suppleness" of understanding, which constitutes, along with "sagacity and wariness," the defining aims of the *Conduct* and the defining characteristics of the Lockean subject—the "man of reason."[145]

This ongoing interaction between general and particular that characterizes the topical and rhetorical enterprise points to a third way in which the *Conduct*'s ideas may be understood as common: they mediate between particular and general, creating a space for commonality between the individual and the universal. Locke, I've argued, rejects the pursuit of complete ideas as both unsustainable and useless. In the *Conduct*, the ability to navigate between the comprehensive and the insufficient—to produce ideas that are *complete enough*—becomes a core civic virtue, shaping not only the work's vision of inquiry, but also the work itself. Defects of the understanding regularly appear alongside their opposites, with Locke recommending a middle or third path.

To grasp the investments that guide the inquirer in determining when an idea is sufficiently complete, let us turn to the most emphatic of these recommendations. In

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[145] *Conduct*, §19, emphasis added.

"Reasoning," where Locke stresses the feasibility of cultivating the "large, sound, round about sense" that, we've seen, distinguishes the "man of reason" from the "logical chicaner:"

> It will, possibly, be objected, "who is sufficient for all this?" I answer, more than can be imagined. Every one knows what his proper business is, and what, according to the character he makes of himself, the world may justly expect of him; and to answer that, he will find he will have time and opportunity enough to furnish himself, if he will not deprive himself, by a narrowness of spirit, of those helps that are at hand. I do not say, to be a good geographer, that a man should visit every mountain, river, promontory, and creek, upon the face of the earth… but yet every one must allow that he shall know a country better, that makes often sallies into it, and traverses up and down, than he that, like a mill-horse, goes still round in the same track, or keeps within the narrow bounds of a field or two that delight him.[146]

Locke's vision of the "good geographer" reflects a theme that runs throughout the work—the importance of locating a space for inquiry between the inadequate and the exhaustive. The key to avoiding partiality, then, is not to catalog every feature of a thing, but rather to develop an understanding of its most salient parts.

While this example of the geographer presents inquiry as an individual endeavor without explicitly considering its social implications, we know that the broad and impartial understanding it promotes is central to Locke's political vision—and, moreover, that this understanding is valued not in spite of its origin in human limitations and interests, but because of them. Further, we've seen that the approach to inquiry that the *Conduct* recommends is oriented toward the collective. While its focus is on the habits of the individual inquirer, these habits direct the individual outward: to experience the world through the senses, to consult others' experiences through conversation—and, I will argue, to proceed in both of these endeavors through a mode of topical inquiry that makes it possible to bring these isolated observations into conversation, in pursuit of what is common.

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[146] *Conduct*, §24.

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Indeed, when Locke turns from his geographer metaphor to a more literal explanation of how a "man of reason" might develop such an understanding, his recommendations are remarkably similar to those laid out by Erasmus for the creation of commonplace books:

> He that will inquire out the best books, in every science, and inform himself of the most material authors of the several sects of philosophy and religion, will not find it an infinite work to acquaint himself with the sentiments of mankind, concerning the most weighty and comprehensive subjects. At least, this is the only way I know…to distinguish the two most different things I know in the world, a logical chicaner from a man of reason. [147]

In advising us to consult "the best books, in every science" and "the most material authors of the several sects of philosophy and religion," Locke sounds very much a scion of the commonplacing tradition, intent on gathering the best of what has been said on matters collective of importance, "the most weighty and comprehensive subjects." But he also departs markedly from the tradition in one respect: His goal in drawing from these exemplary sources is not to build a repertoire of *sententiae* with which to persuade different audiences, nor is it, as it was for Bacon, to create a storehouse of information to be used by the natural philosopher. Rather, he seeks to create a picture of the whole—"the sentiments of mankind." By looking beyond "the narrow bounds of a field or two that delight him," the Lockean inquirer's

> mind will be strengthened, his capacity enlarged, his faculties improved; and the light, which the remote and scattered parts of truths will give to one another, will so assist his judgment, that he will seldom be widely out, or miss giving proof of a clear head, and a comprehensive knowledge. [148]

One should work to compile "the remote and scattered parts of truths" because they illuminate one another, clarifying and testing each other as a way of tempering our biases and enlarging our view of the matter at hand—forcing us, in other words, to recognize and correct the partiality of

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[147] *Conduct*, §3.
[148] *Conduct*, §3.

our perspective. (Locke, we've seen, performs this kind of work himself in the *First Treatise*, a natural historical exploration of authority.) The result is a knowledge built upon ideas that are judiciously rather than exhaustively comprehensive. The aim is not to assemble an exhaustive list of qualities that converges upon a thing's real essence, but rather to consider all of the different ways that humans have approached it, as a way of ascertaining its most salient features—as Erasmus puts it, its "supporting pillars."[149] For Locke, these pillars are not merely tools for eloquence; they are the very basis of shared understanding and thus community, determined by drawing upon as large a swath of human experience as is practical and applicable, and by determining what is most central, most useful, most common across it—with the understanding that what is most essential may shift in different situations and applications.

By reading the *Conduct* with an eye to its rhetorical commitments, we arrive at an alternative view the ideas it pursues: not clear, distinct, and complete ideas, but clear, distinct, and *common*—common in that they are, like the heads of the commonplace book, articulations of collective salience, created through collective inquiry into shared experience, investment, and legibility; constituted by and constitutive of an open community of inquirers; sensitive to the demands of everyday life and the limitations and proclivities of the human body; stable and useful works of co-construction, neither eternal nor universal. The objects of understanding that Locke pursues are, in every sense, the work of a community.

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[149] Erasmus, *De Copia*, 1.5.

6.3.4 Locke's Rhetorical Judgment in Practice: Queries on the Poisonous Fish of New Providence

Particularly when read alongside Locke's natural historical activities, the *Conduct* offers a clear view of how Locke engaged with topical inquiry to produce clear, distinct, and common objects of understanding. A central claim of this dissertation is that the rhetorical character of Lockean inquiry owes considerably to Locke's use of a rhetorical technology, the commonplace book, to conduct it. Having seen, in 6.2, how Locke's commonplace books facilitated collective inquiry as the ordered accumulation of particulars, we may now turn to the ways in which his commonplacing technique functioned doubly as a resource for selecting from such collections what is clear, distinct, and common.

As a way of understanding Locke's own practices of selection, we might turn to his engagement with the Baconian lists of queries that were popular among Royal Society members and Boyle in particular. I argued in 6.2.2 that Locke's marginal symbols were akin to these lists of queries, together serving as a medical topics through which to organize and at times inquire into case histories of diseases. But at times, his engagement with the tradition was much more direct. On several occasions, he used or adapted lists of queries, and, in at least one case, drew one up himself: a collection of thirteen queries concerning poisonous fish that an associate, Richard Lilburne, had reported in the Bahamas. In a response to an apparent request for local "rareities" from Locke, Lilburne wrote in 1674:

> I have not met with any rareities worth your acceptance though I have been dilligent in inquireing after them, of those which I have heard of one seems strange to me: the fish which are here are many of the poysonous bringing a great pain on their joynts which eat them and continues soe some short time and at last with 2 or 3 dayes itching the pain is rub'd of, those of the same species, size, shape, collor, taste are one of them poyson the other not in the least hurtfull and those that are, only to some of the Company; the distemper to men never proves

mortall; Dogs and Catts sometimes eat their last; though it be those which are wholsom the poysonous ferment in their bodie is revived thereby and their pain increased.[150]

Locke was evidently quite intrigued by this account. On May 20, 1675, soon after receiving Lilburne's letter, he copied the portion excerpted above and sent it to Henry Oldenburg, who read it to the Royal Society. Locke's letter—containing both his copy of Lilburne's report account and his comments on it—was published in *Philosophical Transactions* shortly thereafter.[151]

But Locke's comments in his letter to Oldenburg reveal that he was not entirely satisfied with this initial account. Striking an almost apologetic tone, he explains that Lilburne had "been but a very little while upon the Island when he writ this," and thus "could not send so perfect an account of this odd Observation, as one could wish or," he adds, "as I expect to hear from him in answer to some Quere's I lately sent him."[152] Locke's remedy for the perceived deficiencies of the original report is topical inquiry—a set of queries capable of guiding and structuring a novice inquirer's efforts to discern and explore the salient features of what was, to Locke and his associates, a novel phenomenon.

Indeed, shortly before writing Oldenburg, Locke had composed a list of queries on poisonous fish and sent it not only to Lilburne, but also at least one other associate on the same island, Isaac Rush.[153] He entered the list in his commonplace book "Adversaria 5," under the title "*Pisces*:"

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[150] Richard Lilburne to Locke, 1674 (*Correspondence Vol. 1*, L.290, 406-407). E.S. de Beer notes Locke did not receive Lilburne's letter until shortly before he wrote to Oldenburg (406).

[151] John Locke, "An Extract of a Letter, Written to the Publisher by Mr. J. L. About Poisonous Fish in One of the Bahama Islands," *Philosophical Transactions* 10 (1 January 1675).

[152] "Poisonous Fish."

[153] Rush tells Locke he responded to the queries in a 1675 letter, though the response itself has been lost. Isaac Rush to Locke, 19 August 1675 (*Correspondence Vol. 1*, L.301, 427).

1 Whether all sorts of species of fish about that Island have that quality to cause pains in the joints of some of those that eat them?

2 If not all sorts what and how many sorts there are that have that poysonous quallity

3 Whether the same sorts be found in other parts and whether in other parts of the world they have the same poysonous quality?

4 Whether upon nice Equiry and observation there be noe difference to be found between the wholsome and poysonous fish of the same sort or species

5 Whether this quallity be most in the Male or female fishes?

6 Whether they be more poysonous at ane time of the yeare or moone or season of the weather than another?

7 Whether this poyson works alike upon all ages constitutions and sexes, or whether some be more liable to it than others?

8 Whether there be noe other symptoms which are the effects of this poyson but pains in the joynts

9 Whether that pain never lasts above 2 or 3 days and what kind of pain it is, and whether in all persons?

10 Whether those who have been once infected finde the returne of those pains upon the eateing of any sort of fish or of that species only which at first hurt them, and whether the paines soe returneing upon eateing of fish are as violent and lasting as at first?

11 Whether there be noe antidote yet knowne against this poyson?

12 After what manner cats and doges die, when this poyson kills them?

13 How long after eating doe men begin to finde the effects of this poyson and in what manner does it first seise them?[154]

How did Locke generate this list of queries? The first two are fairly straightforward questions of presence and absence that seek to identify which of the island's fishes are and are not poisonous. This orientation around presence and absence is typical of Baconian natural histories, though

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[154] The list of queries, "Some Quaeres concerning the poysonous fish about New Providence sent to Mr. Lilburne," is dated 12 May 75 and spans two pages. On the first page, Locke places it under the title "*Pisces*," on the second, "*Pisces virulenti*" (equivalent, given Locke's indexing system) (MS Locke d. 9, fols. 87 and 236) This list also appears as addendum to *Correspondence* Vol. 8 (Locke to Richard Lilburne, 12 May 1675, L. 298A, 428-429.)

many of the queries that follow are not framed in that way. Rather, the remaining queries appear to interweave, to varying degrees, the details of the subject matter with norms of inquiry apparent in other lists of topics familiar to Locke. Several of these queries appear to be prompted directly by what Lilburne had written and composed, primarily with the aim of gaining more information or precision from the inquirers on the ground. Query 4, for example, regards the claim that fish "of the same species, size, shape, collor, taste are one of them poyson the other not in the least hurtfull" with skepticism, encouraging a closer consideration of features that might distinguish poisonous and wholesome fish. Queries 9, 10, and 12 include similar requests for precision and elaboration (e.g. what *kind* of pain the fish cause, the manner in which poisoned cats and dogs die, etc.). Query 5 builds upon Lilburne's list of "species, size, shape, collor, [and] taste" by adding sex as a potential point of distinction between poisonous and nonpoisonous fish.

Interestingly, though as speculation, all of the queries that do not respond directly to Lilburne's report have approximate analogs in one or more extant collections of medical topics with which Locke was familiar. His questions about differences in season (6) and characteristics of the afflicted (7), as well as his questions about symptoms (8), treatments (11), and initial signs of poisoning (13) reflect similar investments to the marginal symbols used to structure his digest of Sydenham's *Tussis*: respectively, *descriptio*, *dispositio*, *diagnosis*, *Methodus medendi*, and *praesagia* (hypothesis—in this case, a query concerning the anatomical cause of the poison's effects upon the body—is notably absent). In addition, a number of Locke's queries, including some of those mentioned above, have analogs in Boyle's "Præliminary Topicks or Articles of Inquiry, in order to The History of Diseases," which Locke later transcribed into one of his

commonplace books (MS Locke c. 42).[155] Query 3, which concerns the role of geographical

location on the presence and potency of poisonous fish, shares Boyle's interest in the effects of

climate, country, and environment on the presence, absence, and intensity of diseases, captured

in the first four of his twelve topics. Query 6 similarly corresponds to Boyle's eleventh topic on

the "influence [of] the season of the Year." Query 7 ("Whether this poyson works alike upon all

ages constitutions and sexes, or whether some be more liable to it than others?") is perhaps the

clearest sign of Boyle's influence, articulated in terms almost identical to those used in topics 6-8

of the latter's list (which ask, respectively, what sex, age, and "complexions, or constitutions"

are "most or less, or not at all subject to the Disease.") What's more, Query 7 adopts Boyle's

Baconian concern with presence, absence and *degree* in ways that many of the other queries (for

example, Query 5, concerning the sex of the fish) do not, hinting, perhaps, at the eclectic origins

of Locke's queries.

Regarded as a whole, Locke's collection of queries exhibits a number of characteristics

that help to place it in the topical tradition. First, one sees the core features of the topics

(established in Chapter 2 of this dissertation) at work in the production of the list: Locke's

queries are an open-ended list of questions that mediate between the specificity of the

phenomenon in question and existing ways of inquiring into bodily afflictions—the medical

topics used by Locke and Boyle. To the extent that these questions make provisional,

provocative claims about what is relevant, they may be viewed as heuristics that serve to

structure inquiry, guiding independent inquiry in a manner that produces commensurable

findings. As such, they are generative of both shared objects of understanding and new topics, or

queries, themselves. Indeed, whether or not Locke deliberately drew upon existing collections of

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[155] MS Locke c. 42a, fol. 98. A transcription Boyle's collection of topics appears in Michael Hunter, ed. *Robert Boyle's 'Heads' and 'Inquiries'*, vol. 1, Occassional Papers (London: Robert Boyle Project 2005), 33-34.

medical topics in his possession, his ability to adapt the genre of these collections to an entirely new phenomenon, articulating the seemingly singular into a history of human afflictions is itself evidence of the wise adaptability that belongs to the commonplacer, the "man of reason."

But Locke's list of queries display not only his continuity with the tradition, but also his contributions to it, stemming from his commitment to what is clear, distinct, and common. First and most obviously, the queries are committed to clarity: they are designed to accumulate unadorned experiences related to the "thing itself," the poisonous effects of certain fish, rather than an effort to gather, for example, the different ways it has or could be portrayed or transformed via figurative speech, different sciences, and so forth. Locke is very interested in how different people experience these effects, but he does not expect to learn anything from considering how different people have talked about them. Second, the queries regularly manifest as efforts to articulate through distinction—or, more specifically, to apprehend the phenomenon in question by removing equivocations from the terms that Lilburne uses to characterize it: "fish," "here," "pain," "men," and so forth. If Locke's queries aim to better understand the nature of the poisonous fish, it is telling that nearly half attempt to do so by situating it in a web of relations. As in his comments on acidity, he treats "properties" as relations rather than possessions; it is not sufficient to declare that "the fish here" can at times cause pain in people who eat them. (Indeed, such a declaration is precisely the sort of "shred" that Locke derides in the *Conduct*: a snippet of information that one might use to entertain and impress but that— because it is insufficiently connected to the world—contributes nothing to the collective store of knowledge.) Accordingly, Locke uses his queries to deepen Lilburne's account by asking what kind of fish? What kind of people? What kind of environment? What kind of effect? Finally, Locke's queries demonstrate his investment in the common. They outline a program of inquiry

that requires no specialized knowledge and operates at the scale of human perception, making it possible for Locke to his correspondents in the Bahamas regardless of their inexperience in natural historical inquiry. Further, the queries direct one's attention to matters of collective interest and utility. Given what we know of Locke's epistemology, it is not surprising that his list of queries is brief and largely pragmatic: he is clearly not interested in developing a comprehensive knowledge of the fish themselves, or in understanding the mechanisms by which their poison acts on the body. Indeed, he is not interested in learning much about the fish at all, beyond the features by which the poisonous might be distinguished from the wholesome. While Peter Anstey hints at a possible connection between Locke's list and Boyle's heads on the "Store, Bigness, Goodness, Seasons, Haunts, Peculiarities," and so forth of fishes in his 1666 "General Heads for a Natural History of a Countrey," the latter's considerations are noticeably and informatively absent from Locke's list of queries. Locke is not interested in the poisonous fish as fish, but as poisonous, where "poisonous" indicates a relationship between certain fish, humans, and conditions, much as "acidic" indicates a relationship between certain solvents and certain solutes. While Lilburne's initial account already centers on the effects of the poison on people, it leaves the reader with very little usable knowledge: many fish around the island are poisonous when consumed by some people, but there's no way to discern the poisonous from the wholesome or determine what people will be affected. Locke's queries redirect Lilburne toward what is useful by asking whether the poisonous fishes may be distinguished by certain obvious appearances; whether certain people, places, and seasons carry greater risks than others; how poisoning is diagnosed; whether cures exist.

Together, questions such as these transform the passive observer and/or transmitter of information into an inquirer who does not merely accept the accounts of others, but rather locates

opportunities for action within them. In the spirit of the topics from which they were adopted, Locke's queries are efforts to discover what is common, what is useful, and what can be done—by examining what has been said. Indeed, many of Locke's queries have a subtle argumentative inflection reminiscent of the dialectical approach in Aristotle's *Topics*: If you are told that there is no way to distinguish the poisonous fish from the wholesome, here are the questions with which you might respond. Locke is not after a real or full understanding of how the poison works, but he appears determined to *understand* it—to form a useful, stable base of knowledge about how to interact with it.

Locke presents his queries, in sum, as an invitation to inquiry that guides the user in accumulating useful knowledge about a subject matter. They encourage the user not to simply receive the experiences of others, but rather to organize, orient, and select among those experiences by placing them in a loose but considered collection of topics that together work to characterize what is most relevant, actionable, useful to know about a thing. The observations that result are useful not only because the topics conform to existing assertions of salience, but also because they are, through the topics, placed into a history of related occurrences and thus connected to the world of experience.

Queries, or titles, of this nature figure importantly into the *Conduct*'s vision of inquiry. Under the title of "Despondency," Locke addresses the tendency to shy away from large or complex matters because they appear impenetrable. His remedy is methodical inquiry, through which we may gradually assemble a clear view of the matter at hand, whereby that which "in that mist appeared hideous giants not to be grappled with, will be found to be of the ordinary and natural size and shape."[156] An especially clear prescription for inquiry follows: Beginning with

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[156] Locke, *Conduct*, §39.

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"what is most visible, easy, and obvious," one should "[r]educe [things] into their distinct parts; and then in their due order bring all that should be known concerning every one of those parts into plain and simple questions." Speaking, perhaps, to the relational nature of things, Locke presents "all that should be known" about each part of a thing not as a list of characteristics or properties in need of excavation, but rather as set of questions composed with the thing in mind. The work of understanding is, in this sense, a matter of devising as full as possible list of appropriate questions to make sense of the thing under consideration. In presenting this work as ad hoc and aimed toward the appropriate, Locke echoes the *Conduct*'s recommendations regarding method where we see that inquiry itself must be matched to the thing under consideration.[157] In presenting the question as the product of such work, he echoes "Question" (§36), wherein a "fair and clear" view of the whole is only achieved by "stat[ing] the question right." A testament to Locke's vision of authority as collective inquiry, judgment is less a matter of actively determining what is best for a community, than it is developing the list of questions necessary to make such determinations—a process that interweaves the investments of the community with the particularities of the matter under consideration.

The *Conduct* contains an example of what such a list of questions might look like, under second of two entries entitled "Haste" (§25), which contains one of the work's richest examples of inquiry in practice. The entry concerns the mind's tendency to pursue new knowledge and thus its failure to stay "long enough on what is before it, to look into it as it should."[158] To illustrate what it means for the mind to look into something "as it should," Locke gives an account of how to discern the salient features of a country through which one is traveling:

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[157] See for example *Conduct*, §16.
[158] *Conduct*, §25.

He that rides post through a country, may be able, from the transient view, to tell how in general the parts lie, and may be able to give some loose description of here a mountain, and there a plain; here a morass, and there a river; woodland in one part, and savannahs in another. Such superficial ideas and observations as these he may collect in galloping over it: but *the more useful observations of the soil, plants, animals, and inhabitants, with their several sorts and properties, must necessarily escape him* and it is seldom men ever discover the rich mines without some digging.[159]

This passage presents Locke's ideal subject as the natural historian, deeply embedded in and engaged with world, not merely an observer but an inquirer. Rather than simply ride through a country, Locke advises us to dismount and dig, to ask questions of the new terrain. The features he highlights as relevant—"the soil, plants, animals, and inhabitants, with their several sorts and properties"—point not to what we will find, but rather what we might ask.

To the extent that this list of features serves as a list of questions—as places to inquire— it constitutes a rudimentary topics for guiding the natural historical exploration of new countries. This topical approach replaces the haphazard, "loose descriptions" of the hasty traveler ("here a mountain, and there a plain…") with a more systematic and standardized way of exploring a country and gathering the most relevant information.

Notably, this list of topics is both tailored to the object under consideration—the country—as well as to human interests and capacities, assigning salience on practical grounds. In touting his approach as producing "more useful observations" than the hasty alternative, Locke frames his recommendations explicitly in terms of utility. In applying it to soil, plants, animals, and inhabitants—features that are finer grained than mountains and plains but nevertheless graspable by the unassisted human senses—he narrows its focus to the human scale.

Locke's natural historical engagements suggest that the topical character of this list is not accidental, particularly given its similarity to a particularly well-known set of such queries,

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[159] *Conduct*, §25, emphasis added.

Boyle's "General Heads for a Natural History of a Countrey, Great or Small" (1665). Published in *Philosophical Transactions* (during, it should be noted, a period of very active collaboration with Locke), Boyle's list of topics consists of four sections (the Heavens, Air, Water, and Earth), beneath which fall a number of general heads pertaining to each. Under "the Earth," for example, we find 2 subdivisions ("itself" and "its inhabitants and productions"). The first includes heads for the large geographical features (e.g. hills and mountains, valleys and plains), the soil, "Grains, Fruits, and other Vegetables," and the "Arts and Industries" used to make the most of the kind of soil. The second contains heads on the inhabitants and their various features, as well as the "productions" such as plants, animals, minerals, and so forth.[160]

For Locke, historical inquiry of this kind encourages a deep and methodical engagement with the subject matter. Because nature "commonly lodges her treasure and jewels in rocky ground," we must not content ourselves with knowledge of the most superficial features. The inquirer must be willing to pause with an object—to "stick upon it with labour and thought, and close contemplation—drawing out those characteristics and properties that are less readily apparent, until they have "possession of truth."[161] And this truth, I've argued, is the clear, distinct, and common idea—an object of thought that is *clear* in the sense that its constituent parts correspond to our experience of the world; *distinct* in that it is stably defined and sufficiently elaborated to be distinguishable from all other named objects; and *common* in that it can be apprehended by all, is rooted in shared experience and utility rather than truth, and mediates between the particular and the general, the partial and the comprehensive.

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[160] Robert Boyle, "General Heads for a Natural History of a Countrey, Great or Small, Imparted Likewise by Mr. Boyle," *Philosophical Transactions* 1 (1665).

[161] Locke, *Conduct,* §25, emhpasis added.

Locke's example in "Haste" (§25) provides basis for this interpretation. As we've seen, Locke's emphasis on clarity makes the foundation of ideas our primary source of common ground—the physical, perceivable world. In "Haste," the inquiry Locke seeks is presented quite literally as a natural history of a physical space, which one is to explore impartially via open-ended topics, rather than received knowledge. Such inquiry is in part a means of establishing distinct ideas, in that the topics one explores become a means of differentiating one country from another. But it is also and more prominently a means of establishing common ideas. While the "possession of truth" is the stated aim of topical inquiry in the passage, I have argued 1) that the "truth" Locke pursues is common rather than comprehensive, 2) that he espouses a pragmatic rather than convergent relationship with the real essences that underlie such truths, and 3) that "truth" in the *Conduct* is concerned primarily with questions rather than answers.[162] These investments appear united in "Haste," where Locke presents topically guided inquiry as striking a balance between hastiness and its opposite. Immediately after describing the labor necessary to acquire "possession of truth," he cautions against the other extreme:

> But here care must be taken to avoid the other extreme: a man must not stick at every useless nicety, and expect mysteries of science in every trivial question, or scruple, that he may raise. He that will stand to pick up and examine every pebble that comes in his way, is as unlikely to return enriched and loaden with jewels, as the other that travelled full speed.[163]

As in his critiques of disputation and his distinction between the "logical chicaner" and the "man of reason," Locke disparages excessive subtlety and pointless questions, making clear that the task of the natural historian is not to compile a comprehensive account of "every pebble," but

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[162] One might also recall Locke's clarification under "Universality" (§19) that the aim of topically guided accumulation is, in his view, not "an enlargement of [the mind's] possessions," but rather an increase in flexibility, freedom.

[163] This formula appears throughout the *Conduct*, where Locke's strategy for explaining and promoting certain mental habits is to present them as striking a balance between two extremes—typically a preoccupation with the general and a preoccupation with the particular, as in quoted example.

rather to discern the jewels among them—those features or phenomena that are most salient. And in this task, a list of natural historical topics facilitates not only accumulation, when paired with a commonplace book, but also selection.

Locke promotes a demonstrably topical way of clearly apprehending what in a particular country is distinctive and of shared interest. Akin to topical heads, "soil," "plants," and the like are heuristics that promise both specificity and generalizability, directing the traveler's vision to the particular features that are likely to be informative about any country. They are, in short, an attempt to capture the relevant and answerable questions one might ask of any locale. As such, they perform three functions through which individual inquiry produces shared objects of understanding: they prepare inquirers to engage with new countries as "countries," they synchronize observations across observers, and they facilitate comparison—and thus a relational and situated understanding of what is observed—by reading the particular into a history of what is common.

6.4 Coda: Boyle's *General History of the Air*

This chapter has argued that the civic virtues necessary to sustain Lockean society are the habits of inquiry honed through the central activities of the natural historical commonplacer, accumulation and selection. I conclude and summarize this argument by turning to his work on Boyle's *General History of the Air*, an achievement of Lockean commonplacing that illustrates with particular clarity how he engaged the features of topical inquiry explored in Chapter 2 in the service of collective inquiry.

Locke was an active participant in a number of Boyle's histories. Indeed, the latter dedicated his *Memoirs for the Natural History of the Human Blood* (1684) to Locke, and, at the end of his life, entrusted him with overseeing the publication of *The General History of the Air* (1692)—in effect, a commonplace book devoted to the study of air, organized according to a list of queries, or "titles," that Boyle developed and sent to his associates to gather observations. Locke's efforts to prepare the latter history for publication illustrate his vision of the topics as mediatory, provisional, and generative ordering principles directed at the creation of clear, distinct, and common objects of understanding.

The task before Locke was daunting: Boyle's papers were, to put it plainly, a mess. In contrast to Locke, he was known for his chaotic notes, which he typically made on loose sheets of paper.[164] This questionable choice of medium meant that there was, for better or worse, no clear order to his stacks of loose notes, making it easy to misplace things. (The dedication of his *History of the Human Blood* speaks, perhaps, to a real debt. The work's fate had been in question after Boyle lost the associated notes; Kenneth Dewhurst suggests that Locke's commonplace books were instrumental in piecing things back together.)[165] An account by Boyle's friend, William Wotton, shows the extent to which these notes were, in the absence of Boyle, akin to the undigested "heap of crudités" that so distressed Locke in the *Conduct*: "His Papers," Wotton wrote after visiting the late experimentalist's bedchamber, "were truly, what he calls many Bundles of them himself a Chaos, rude & indigested many times God know's."[166] In the case of *Air*, Locke was charged with gathering the sizable collection of scraps, loose notes, and letters that Boyle had accumulated, pulling out the pertinent observations, and determining how to place

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[164] Yeo, Notebooks, English Virtuosi, and Early Modern Science, 151-173.

[165] Kenneth Dewhurst, "Locke's Contribution to Boyle's Researches on the Air and on Human Blood," *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London,* 17, no. 2 (1962), 203.

[166] Quoted in Yeo, Notebooks, English Virtuosi, and Early Modern Science, 151.

them under the work's list of titles. He described this work to Boyle in an October 1691 letter: "I have read them all over very carefully, numbered them according to the titles they belong to, and laid them in that order, the best that I could, according to the state they are in…but yet," he concluded with a note of despondency, "for all this, they are not in a condition to be sent to the printer."[167] Locke's eventual triumph over the heap, I argue, represents a significant feat of rhetorical judgment.

The rhetorical judgment required to complete *Air* consists primarily in Locke's negotiations between Boyle's pre-established list of titles and the actual content collected. Locke reflects on these negotiations in his "Advertisement from the Publisher to the Reader"—a crucial but widely neglected text that explicates a number of Locke's theoretical concerns with respect to commonplacing. Four features make it particularly informative for the present exploration. First, it contains one of Locke's only (published) explicit references to Bacon, whom he credits with the Boyle's approach to developing his list of titles. Boyle, Locke writes, "followed my Lord Bacon's advice not to be overly-curious or nice in making the first Set of Heads, but to take them as they occur."[168] Beyond explicating the provisional, ad hoc nature of the titles in the collection (something I will discuss below), Locke aligns Boyle's approach to natural history with Bacon's and shows his own familiarity with the latter.

Second, Locke's "Advertisement" reveals that he revised some of these heads before publication, evidently to Boyle's satisfaction. He writes: "the Titles, as here printed, and the Orders of the Papers, as now ranged under them, were shewn to the Author, and approved by

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[167] Locke to Boyle, 21 October 1691 (*The Correspondence of John Locke. Volume 4: Letters 1242-1701*, ed. E.S. de Beer. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), L.1422, 4, quoted in Stolberg, "John Locke's 'New Method'," 3.)

[168] John Locke, "Advertisement of the Publisher to the Reader," in Robert Boyle, *The General History of the Air Designed and Begun by the Honble. Robert Boyle* (London: Awnsham and John Churchill, 1692; Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership), iv, http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A28985.0001.001

him as fitter for the General History of the Air, than those he had formerly printed."[169] These revisions are generally quite modest: some heads are combined, some are divided, some receive additional criteria (e.g. Title 8, "Of Aqueous Particles in the Air" becomes "Of Aqueous Particles in the Air and of the Moisture and Driness of the Air"). Still, they reflect the provisional, open-ended nature of the topics, as well as their responsiveness to the observations they gather.[170]

Third, Locke indicates that his own revision of the titles is not final: the publication of *Air* marks the beginning, not the end, of its work as a collective mode of inquiry. The titles guide this inquiry, but they also invite readers to participate in authorship by transforming them: "[N]ow that thus much comes to be published, which perhaps may serve to some Men as a common Place for the History of the Air, the Titles have been a little more increased or methodized, to which any one may add as he finds Occasion"[171] This engagement of the reader as writer displays the dialectical spirit that Moss celebrates in earlier versions of the commonplace book, as well as the rhetorical power of topical texts—evolving collections of common standards—as dynamic sites of community formation.[172] Locke presents *Air* less as a report on air than as a *commonplace book* for others to use and build upon—a foundation, a means of ordering and coordinating accumulation.

Finally and relatedly, Locke portrays *Air*, like its list of titles, as a living document. Noting that it was "a Work too great for one single Man's Undertaking," he calls on the readers

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[169] "Advertisement," v.

[170] For the list of Boyle's titles with which Locke began, see Robert Boyle, "List of titles for *General History of Air*." BP 26, fol. 28v-29, London, Robert Boyle Project. http://www.bbk.ac.uk/boyle/papers/volume-26/volume-26-fol.28v-29r. For Locke's published version, see Robert Boyle, *The General History of the Air Designed and Begun by the Honble. Robert Boyle* (London: Awnsham and John Churchill, 1692; Arbor: Text Creation Partnership), vi-viii, http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A28985.0001.001

[171] Locke, "Advertisement," iv.

[172] I draw this formulation of topical texts as mediating and transposing the roles of reader and writer from Marshall, *Vico and the Transformation of Rhetoric*, e.g. 155-156.

to continue to contribute to the work, noting that Boyle's efforts to engage his colleagues as contributors went largely unanswered. Thus: "the Foundation being here laid, and the Draught made, every one may, if he please, add towards the compleating of the building"[173] This building metaphor recalls the *Conduct*'s frequent depictions of organized accumulation as a kind of building, again invoking the titles as a means of structuring and relating what is collected, while making more explicit that the structure or "Foundation" that they furnish is provisional, adaptable.

An assessment of Locke's work on *Air* reveals considerable continuity with the features of the topical tradition traced in Chapter 2. He approaches and presents Boyle's titles as adaptive, incomplete, generative heuristics that together constitute a conceptual framework for mediating between general and particular, self and other. By reading his approach to *Air* in this light, one sees the extent to which Locke is both indebted and transformative to the topical and rhetorical tradition.

First, the titles in *Air* constitute an organizational and conceptual framework that assists Locke in transforming a literal pile of observations into program of inquiry for understanding air in terms of its relations, its effects. Further, they cultivate a way of seeing together that directs future observers—who are, Locke stresses, necessary to produce the history Boyle seeks—to certain points of interest. Second, the titles serve a mediatory role, transforming individual observations about particular, singular phenomena into instances of general classes of phenomena that are recognizable by all. Third, the titles are evolving. While they shape the way one views and comprehends natural phenomena, they are also shaped by these phenomena. Similarly, though they may be viewed as imposing a particular perspective or sense of salience

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[173] "Advertisement," iv.

upon the use, Locke offers them only provisionally, as we see in both his "Advertisement" and in the work's final title: "*Desiderata* in the History of the Air, and Proposals towards supplying them."[174] Fourth, *Air*, as a topically organized commonplace book, is generative. It is not merely a reference guide, where one can look up information about air; it is a living document—and a malleable framework—that invites contribution and inspires observation, designed to generate collective knowledge about air as a clear, distinct, and common object of understanding.

Locke's own commonplace books were much broader and contained entries covering whatever phenomena he encountered through reading or experience. But the topics serve the same kind of role as described above. Particularly in the case of diseases, Locke drew his topics and their subdivisions from physicians, while liberally adding new topics as he encountered new phenomena or areas of interest. Similarly, while entries under each topic were often copied from his reading, they also included details from his observations and experiments, as well as those of others. And as we trace his entries over time and from notebook to notebook, we start to get a very rounded-out sense of the phenomenon in question.

Further, Locke's correspondence reveals that these notebooks were not just tools with which to collect and organize his personal readings and observation; his commonplace books made him a veritable hub for scientific and medical knowledge for a large portion of his life, providing a means of guiding experimental collaborations and transmitting knowledge about particular phenomena to his numerous correspondents. Locke was, through his commonplacing activities, participating in building a collaborative natural history of different phenomena— particularly diseases—that turned isolated instances into common objects of knowledge while avoiding the kind of imposition of theories and perspectives that Locke was determined to avoid.

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[174] General History of the Air, viii.

My argument is that the rhetorical heritage of these commonplace books made this work possible. Locke's notebooks and the topical inquiry they facilitated allowed him to package, standardize, retain and relate the vast amount of information he took in over his lifetime under an adaptable, evolving scheme of headings and subheadings. Moreover, they mediated between his own observations and the observations of others, producing knowledge that was not only shared, but also sharable. Applying the topics the shared world of human experience allowed individuals observing different phenomena to focus, if not on the same object, then on the same point of interest—to participate in the same program of inquiry. In this manner, the topically organized commonplace book becomes vital to Locke's project of community: a rhetorical technology capable of forming the foundations of his civil society, a means of seeing together while still seeing for ourselves.

7.0 Conclusion: Rhetoric, Inquiry, and Politics

In 2012, physicist and climate blogger Joseph Romm published a rhetorical handbook. Aimed at equipping scientists with the persuasive tools necessary to harness the power of rhetoric at least as well as those spreading disinformation have," *Language Intelligence: Lessons on Persuasion from Jesus, Shakespeare, Lincoln, and Lady Gaga* was celebrated widely by the science communication community, praised by science journalist Chris Mooney as "a powerful treatise on *the neglected art of rhetoric*, the technique mastered by Shakespeare, Lincoln, and the writers of the King James Bible" (emphasis added).[1] *Language Intelligence* opens with a promise to "tune up your tweets and build up your blog," and it provides a strikingly detailed training in rhetorical figures: not only metaphor, but also ploce, chiasmus, antithesis, irony.[2] While Romm characterizes rhetoric in ways that might alarm rhetoricians (e.g. "Getting noticed and getting 'in' have been the twin tasks of rhetoric for over two thousand years"), the tantalizing prospect that scientists have started teaching rhetoric to themselves hints at its promise in our current political environment.[3]

In Rhetoric of Science (RS), meanwhile, a growing number of scholars are directing their expertise toward helping scientists communicate more effectively—to teach, move, and please their audiences by attending to different rhetorical appeals, deploying rhetorical figures, and so

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[1] Joseph Romm, Language Intelligence: Lessons on Persuasion from Jesus, Shakespeare, Lincoln, and Lady Gaga. (CreateSpace, 2012), 181; Chris Mooney. ″Why Everybody Must Read Joe Romm′s New Book Language Intelligence,″ Think Progress, August 13, 2012. https://thinkprogress.org/chris-mooney-why-everybody-must-read-joe-romms-new-book-language-intelligence-d8814fcbedd7/.

[2] Romm, Language Intelligence, vii.

[3] Romm, 1.

forth.[4] For these rhetoricians as for Romm, the hope is that teaching scientists to argue more eloquently and audience-appropriately will both encourage publics to take their findings more seriously and, perhaps, help bring closure to certain science policy controversies.

While acknowledging the value of this work, we might ask whether it encompasses all that rhetoric has to offer. Efforts to enlist rhetoric as a resource for science communication face two challenges. The first concerns the underlying assumption that scientific findings will, if presented effectively, resolve policy controversies and furnish policy solutions—an assumption that might be interpreted as a variant of the deficit model that RS has long problematized. The pitfalls of this assumption are clear in Daniel Sarewitz's argument that while people look to science for policy answers, they ultimately accept only scientific findings that already correspond with their worldview, rejecting others as politicized or "junk science."[5] Surveying twentieth-century environmental controversies, Sarewitz concludes that scientific consensus is only possible when all parties *already* share a way of seeing.

A second and related challenge is that the US political environment lacks the basic reciprocity and common ground upon which arguments may be built. Amidst the destabilizing effects of "alternative facts" and information silos, there is no body of *endoxa* capable of transcending existing community lines, nor are there the shared epistemic norms capable of producing it. Current science policy controversies from climate change to COVID-19 are evidence of the ways in which political polarization fuels and is fueled by this epistemic disconnect. Commenting on the fragmentation and polarization of the country in the weeks after

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[4] Leah Ceccarelli has been at the forefront of this movement (e.g. Ceccarelli, "To Whom Do We Speak?"; "Where's the Rhetoric?"). See section 1.1 of this dissertation for how this view of rhetoric as science communication relates to scholarly engagement in RS more broadly.

[5] Daniel Sarewitz, "Science and Environmental Policy: An Excess of Objectivity," in *Earth Matters: The Earth Sciences, Philosophy, and the Claims of Community*, ed. R. Frodeman (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000).

Donald Trump's election, then President Barack Obama reflected on the need to "create a common set of facts," stating that the "biggest challenge" in addressing the divide was that "the country receives information from completely different sources." People, he said, "are no longer talking to each other; they're just occupying their different spheres."[6] Indeed, scientific research is increasingly judged on personal grounds (e.g. Jenny McCarthy's insistence that her son is her "science,")[7] as part of a broader decline in the traction of institutionalized knowledge in "public" controversies (in McCarthy's case, regarding the safety of vaccines)—a decline that is regularly exacerbated and exploited by corporate, religious, and other special interests—leading to the dismissal of even conclusive and/or established findings in major public controversies.[8] But in this simultaneously fragmented and polarized political environment,[9] even the most eloquent arguments seldom inspire meaningful change.[10] In science policy controversies specifically,

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[6] Jann S. Wenner, "The Day After: Obama on His Legacy, Trump's Win and the Path Forward," *Rolling Stone* (2016), https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-features/the-day-after-obama-on-his-legacy-trumps-win-and-the-path-forward-113422/.

[7] McCarthy has long—and influentially—argued that her personal experience with her son, Evan, is more reliable evidence of the link between certain vaccines and autism than the institutional expertise of medical and scientific professionals. In an interview on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, for example, Winfrey noted that "The vast majority of science to date does not support an association between thimerosal in vaccines and autism." McCarthy's objection: "My science is named Evan, and he's at home. That's my science." For an abridged transcript, see Seth Mnookin, "A Jenny Mccarthy Reader, Pt. 2: Jenny Brings Her Anti-Vaccine Views to Oprah," *PLOS Blogs Network* (July 15 2013) http://blogs.plos.org/thepanicvirus/2013/07/15/a-jenny-mccarthy-reader-pt-2-jenny-brings-her-anti-vaccine-views-to-oprah/.

[8] See Leah Ceccarelli, "Manufactured Scientific Controversy: Science, Rhetoric, and Public Debate," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 14, no. 2 (2011), Goodnight, "21st Century Critical Communication Inquiry" Rachel Avon Whidden, "Maternal Expertise, Vaccination Recommendations, and the Complexity of Argument Spheres," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 48, no. 4 (2012).

[9] Speaking of what Slavoj Žižek has called the "decline of symbolic efficiency," political theorist Jodi Dean argues that the growing suspicion of mainstream representations and symbolic authority "may appear to usher in a new era of freedom from rigid norms and expectations…the fluidity and adaptability of imaginary identities is accompanied by a certain fragility and insecurity.…their very mutability and normative indeterminacy, configure imaginary identities as key loci for operations of control (rather than internalized discipline), particularly those operations affiliated with desire and fear as they promise and provide enjoyment." In this manner, ostensibly private judgments are harnessed by powerful institutions to create and sustain massive political divides. Jodi Dean, *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies,* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 67.

[10] The ineffectuality of verbal interventions is particularly pronounced in the climate change debate where, Banning writes, "It is simply not the case, as modern rationalist approaches presume, that the best arguments will prevail in public deliberation or that public discourse can be accurately characterized by an interlocutor model into which all disputants can—or do—enter in good faith. In this information environment, it is inaccurate to suggest that

scientific findings often appear deeply incommensurate with individuals' worldviews, creating an impasse that cannot be remedied through deliberation.

What is striking about Obama's position on the source of fragmentation is its focus on disparities in knowledge rather than, for example, ideology or identity as the source of political discord. This concern with the epistemic roots of division is in line with Sarewitz's argument that recourse to a supposedly objective truth allows people to avoid politically difficult conversations about values. Sarewitz envisions a more circumscribed role for science in political decision making that creates an opening for such conversations. Rhetoricians, meanwhile, might embrace Sarewitz's diagnosis of the problem while promoting a somewhat different solution: a more open consideration of the ways in which values are—and could be—incorporated into scientific objects and inquiry. This conclusion centers on the ways in which Locke, read as a rhetorical theorist, might serve as a resource for RS efforts in this vein.

RS has, from its inception, been concerned with the intersection of science and politics—albeit from a critical perspective that tends to devalue science for its rhetoricity rather than look for ways to make science more, or more openly, rhetorical. That is, rhetoric, when used as a tool for textual critique, often becomes a means of exposing the ways in which politics and values are smuggled into science via language.[11] A number of RS scholars have taken issue with this position in recent years, while continuing to emphasize the close connection between rhetoric,

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the commercial and political entities are engaging in argumentation; they are not cooperating in the effort to find the best possible solution but rather are acting to obliterate their enemy." Banning, "Poststructural Theory and Contemporary Politics," 296.

[11] The use of rhetoric to discredit or devalue establishment science is traceable to many foundational works in RS—see for example Andrew J. Weigert, "The Immoral Rhetoric of Scientific Sociology," *The American Sociologist* (1970); Philip C. Wander, "The Rhetoric of Science," *Western Speech Communication* 40, no. 4 (1976); Alan G. Gross, "Rhetoric of Science without Constraints," *Rhetorica* 9, no. 4 (1991).

science, and politics.[12] In championing political engagement in RS, for example, Leah Ceccarelli has led an effort to repurpose the tools of textual critique for textual production and reinvigorate rhetoric's traditional political investments in the realm of science communication.[13] Caroline Gottschalk Druschke, meanwhile, has called upon rhetoricians to develop "tools, strategies, and collaborations" for working *within* the scientific enterprise rather than critiquing or contributing to it from without.[14] Notably, Druschke departs not only from what she sees as the "hegemonic version of rhetoric of science…based squarely on rhetorical criticism," but also from Ceccarelli's corrective efforts to reimagine the engaged rhetorician as science communication advisor.[15] "[T]he important work that is to be done through engagement," she writes, "is not—or not only—an issue where rhetoricians should 'pass along our most important findings" or "ensure the 'broader impacts' of our research' (Ceccarelli, 2014, 1- 2), but rather an issue of co-producing knowledge with colleagues outside of [the rhetoric of science, technology, engineering and medicine]."[16] Druschke gives a number of examples of this kind of collaboration at her institution—examples that include the development of science communication training programs, but also delve into the architectonic: the production of new fields of inquiry, in the case of her Society, Ecology & Communication lab, and new sites and modes of communication, in the case of an interdisciplinary effort to "create and study alternative fora for engagement" on dam decisions.

These are unquestionably exciting projects, but what does the rhetorician *specifically* stand to contribute to them? Druschke addresses this question most directly in a 2016 article, co-

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[12] E.g. Ceccarelli, "Manufactured Scientific Controversy," 199; Caroline Gottschalk Druschke, "The Radical Insufficiency and Wily Possibilities of RSTEM," *Poroi* 12, no. 2 (2017).

[13]E.g. Ceccarelli, "To Whom Do We Speak?;" "Where's the Rhetoric?"

[14] Druschke, "Radical Insufficiency," 2.

[15] "Radical Insufficiency," 1-2.

[16] "Radical Insufficiency," 7.

authored with Bridie McGreavy and published for an audience of ecological scientists.[17] Arguing for the importance of rhetoric in improving both science communication and interdisciplinary collaboration, the authors offer what they see as an advantageously broad definition of rhetoric (as concerned with "the way humans communicate with one another and how communication can shape human understanding of and decision making about ecosystems…the way we make sense of each other and our world") before turning to the ways in which rhetoric has and can assist in facilitating and strengthening understanding between different disciplines, stakeholder groups, and the like.[18] The essay presents rhetoric primarily as a perspective or sensibility—a distinctive sensitivity to the situated, nonlinear nature of communication; to the potential for identification amidst difference; to the role that language plays in shaping identities, relationships, ecosystems. This view of rhetoric as sensibility is often useful even without additional support from the rhetorical lexicon. Particularly in interdisciplinary discussions, rhetoricians may contribute meaningfully simply as participants who are sensitive to, among other things, the power of language and the malleability of the systems and perspectives within which we operate.

Yet a number of the examples cited in the essay appear to call for more theoretically and technically elaborated rhetorical resources. For example, Druschke and McGready cite Kenneth Burke to describe the rhetorical emphasis on "identification across differences – when the ecologist and economist unite to talk through but not necessarily resolve their diverse perspectives."[19] As an illustration, they point to the New England Sustainability Consortium, who "conducted interviews with team members to describe the range of perspectives in the

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[17] Caroline Gottschalk Druschke and Bridie McGreavy, "Why Rhetoric Matters for Ecology," *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* 14, no. 1 (2016).
[18] "Ecology," 46.
[19] "Ecology," 50.

project. These qualitative data helped researchers develop a conceptual framework for the project: an opportunity to identify divergent points of view and find ways to combine ideas, while still maintaining unique ways of defining problems."[20] Druschke and McGready identify rhetoric by its ends (fostering identification across difference), a move that I support in the next section. What is missing is a discussion of the means by which these ends were secured—and their relationship to rhetoric. Scientists and decision makers arguably don't need a rhetorician to tell them to look for provisional common ground; they need guidance on *how* to construct it.

What is fascinating about this example is that the means in question is inquiry itself. Confronted with a range of at-times conflicting perspectives, the researchers did not attempt to establish common ground through classical persuasion or transformative language; rather, they inquired into these perspectives via interviews and studied the relations between them through qualitative data analysis. Ceccarelli, responding to an earlier, related piece by Druschke, saw this shift in means as disqualifying: "Caroline Gottschalk Druschke, because she uses methodologies that are not standard for the rhetorician, such as 'qualitative interviews and statistical analysis,' makes me wonder to what degree the insights that she offers to the scientists with whom she works are actually *rhetorical* insights."[21] I share Ceccarelli's desire to see how the methods employed connect to the rhetorical tradition; I am also persuaded by Druschke that her work is indeed rhetorical. This dissertation aims, in part, to help resolve such apparent impasses—to offer one way of closing the gap between the rhetorical spirit or ends of scientific inquiry and its ostensibly arhetorical means. Locke's work allows us to theorize scientific inquiry as *itself* rhetorical, rather than as facilitated, translated, or made persuasive by rhetoric.

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[20] "Ecology," 50.
[21] Ceccarelli, "Where's the Rhetoric?" 6.

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I offer this perspective, then, not as a rejection of current engaged and interdisciplinary scholarship in RS, but rather as an example of how historical and theoretical work in the field might support and enhance such efforts with inventional resources from our own tradition. The vision of RS that most excites me is a productive one in which we seek to embrace and enrich the rhetoricity of science "in order to build," in Donna Haraway's words, "meanings and bodies that have a chance for life."[22] What is missing, as evinced by our frequent engagement of theorists outside our field (Haraway included), are rhetorical theorists who allow us to engage with our tradition, *in its specificity*, to reconceptualize the rhetorical potential of scientific inquiry beyond discourse or argumentation—to imagine new ways of intervening at the level of object formation, in the construction of common ground.

I have worked to present Locke as such a rhetorical theorist. More specifically, I have argued that he is a rhetorical theorist of inquiry, a rhetorical architect whose natural historical commonplace books represent a crucial early modern rhetorical technology through which to inquire into the conditions of possibility for knowing, living, and acting together in the face of uncertainty and fragmentation. The Lockean commonplace book is a rhetorical means of producing the common ground upon which public discourse, argumentation, and persuasion can begin.

To appreciate how this reading of Locke might be useful to twenty-first century rhetoric and rhetoricians, I offer three potentially productive ways of reorienting and/or further developing rhetorical inquiry—particularly within RS—illustrated by this study: 1) Recognizing rhetoric first by its ends and investments, before turning to examine specific technical means; 2) Approaching rhetoric as a mediatory rather than subjectivist enterprise; 3) Appreciating the

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[22] Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* (1988), 580.

process of object-making as thoroughly rhetorical, prior to argumentation, and in need of precise rhetorical theorization.

7.1 Rhetorical Ends

I have argued that one of the major challenges for engaged RS is the inadequacy of oratorical means of persuasion for confronting contemporary rhetorical challenges. Locke's struggles with a similar challenge in his political and epistemic moment cast him as a potentially promising rhetorical theorist—and source of rhetorical resources—for making sense of our own. To approach Locke as a rhetorical theorist, however, requires a shift in how we identify what may and may not be properly considered rhetorical. This dissertation explores what this shift might look like and what we stand to gain from it.

What is rhetorical in early modern inquiry—or, indeed, the work of anyone we claim as a rhetorician—might be more richly and productively understood by looking first to the aims and actions that unite and distinguish rhetorical activity, rather than specific technical means. Rhetoric, as I have argued, is not a particular means, but a capacity to identify, evaluate, and move *between* means in a way that attends to the situation at hand. I am not, of course, suggesting that rhetoric's means are unimportant (this dissertation is at heart a study of rhetorical means), but rather that the diversity and fluidity of means seen in the tradition suggests that we might identify rhetoric by looking first for its distinctive investments and maneuvers—its concern with the conditions of possibility for community, its commitment to adaptation, its proclivity for mediation—before turning to the technical means employed.

Efforts to understand Locke's relationship with rhetoric strictly through the lens of familiar rhetorical means have been largely unsatisfying. Consider, for example, Wilbur Samuel Howell's reading of Locke as a progenitor of the "new rhetoric"—as one who made testimony rather than topical inquiry the centerpiece of rhetorical argument and perspicuity rather than eloquence the aim of rhetorical style.[23] It is true, if not especially illuminating, that Locke lauded perspicuity in writing and held up plain speech as a stylistic ideal. But, as I have worked to show, it is not at all the case that he turns away from the topics; topical inquiry is foundational to his recommendations on medicine, politics, and understanding alike, and it is the means by which his political project overcomes the challenges of his epistemology. But one cannot recognize this crucial feature of Locke's work by focusing on how he speaks about and/or deploys recognizably rhetorical terms, whether figures or topics. Howell takes this approach, citing Locke's concerns about the cases where "the mind is determined by probable topicks in enquiries where demonstration may be had" as evidence of the latter's position that "the topics would have to be abandoned in the new rhetoric, and the procedures of science and scholarship established in their place."[24] What Howell overlooks is this passage's place in Locke's argument for the importance of tailoring one's method of inquiry to the case at hand rather than using the method with which one is accustomed. Locke is not attacking the use of the topics in general; he is attacking the use of the topics "in enquiries where demonstration may be had" and offering it as one of several illustrations of the inappropriate selection of method. Howell neglects these other examples, including the one that appears immediately before it, concerning cases where only probable knowledge is possible but the understanding "contents itself with one argument…as it were demonstration," rather than gathering all of the possible arguments and weighing them against

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[23] Howell, "John Locke and the New Rhetoric."

[24] *Conduct* §16, quoted in "John Locke and the New Rhetoric," 324; 323-324.

each other. In the few cases where demonstrative knowledge is possible, one should not proceed via "probable topicks," but in the majority of cases where it is not, we must proceed via the accumulation of perspectives, which, in Locke's theory and practice, is guided by the topics. By building his analysis around the appearance of the term "topicks," Howell misses an important articulation of Locke's lifelong emphasis on the appropriate, as well as a call for accumulation, while also characterizing the argument in question as commentary on a "new rhetoric"—a phrase that Locke never uttered.

By contrast, beginning with the recognition that Locke shares his most pronounced and persistent commitments with rhetoric licenses further rhetorical consideration of the ways in which he pursued these commitments. This latter approach allows us to read Locke with the openness he recommends, offering a point of departure for exploring his relationship with the rhetorical tradition without re-description.

Departing from earlier rhetorical readings of Locke that began from his attacks on and/or engagement with particular rhetorical means (e.g. figurative speech), I have worked to place Locke in relation to rhetoric by exploring his lifelong concern with the traditional and defining ends of rhetoric. What is common across the range of works surveyed in the preceding chapters is a concern with the conditions of possibility for community and a pursuit of common ground—common objects as common places for shared recognition—upon which reasoning, argument, and public discourse might begin. I have also worked to explore the aspects of Locke's rhetorical project that give it specificity within the tradition: his pursuit of community amidst seventeenth-century England's religious, political, and epistemic fragmentation; in the face of the uncertainty that proliferates out of his own epistemology; and in a moment when, by his assessment, the traditional means of rhetoric—figural speech and verbal persuasion—hurt this endeavor more

than they helped. Locke rearticulates this investment as a markedly early modern—and Lockean—problematic: How might we see together while still seeing for ourselves?

Accordingly, I have focused less on the places where Locke disparages or employs traditional (which is to say oratorical) rhetorical means than on those where he pursues rhetoric's ends by developing new means more appropriate for his moment—means by which we might know, live, and act together without imposition. This means, I have argued, is a distinctly Lockean brand of authority, constituted through the natural historical inquiry that he performs in his commonplace books and prescribes in the *Conduct*—inquiry through which individual experience and judgment is made collective via topical accumulation and selection.

7.2 Rhetoric as Mediatory

Locke's writings and commonplacing practices offer a view of early modern rhetoric and natural history as mediatory—as transcending the divide between subject and object, often taken as the divide between rhetoric and science. His crucial recognition of common objects and habits of inquiry as means of transcending individual perspectives emerges not out of his direct consideration of rhetoric, but rather his work in natural history—or, more specifically, natural historical commonplacing, a simultaneously rhetorical and proto-scientific undertaking. This engagement of natural history as rhetorical inquiry offers a promising point of comparison for reflecting with precision on how contemporary scientific inquiry has retained—or might revive—this capacity.

This re-orientation may be particularly useful within RS, where the focus on the scientific inquiry—characterized by Dilip Gaonkar as "that discursive space in which rhetorical

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considerations are least relevant or welcome"—has led to an ongoing conversation about what rhetoricians can and should study, how they should study it, and how they should distinguish such scholarship from other fields that employ the same objects and methods of study.[25] An early and prominent response to these questions appears in Nelson, Megill, and McCloskey's formative account of "rhetoric of inquiry," which they tie to the decline of Cartesian dualism in the twentieth century—and with it, "the vision of a single, certain, natural, and rational order."[26] On one hand, the authors caution against the "the philosophical tendency to contrast rhetoric and rationality, taking rhetoric to endorse radical relativism (or mere nihilism)"—a tendency to place rhetoric in the realm of the purely subjective, in opposition to science, philosophy, logic. On the other hand, they appear to replicate this divide by defining rhetoric of inquiry in opposition to a "logic of inquiry" and arguing (using Toulmin's terms) that the rhetorical approach would direct "attention away from the abstract and allegedly universal standards of Reason and toward the "warrants" and "backings" of particular reasons."[27] Elsewhere, Nelson and Megill argue for the subjectivism of rhetoric explicitly, writing that objectivist epistemology impairs the role of rhetoric, while "a subjectivist/relativist epistemology is more encouraging to its growth."[28]

But rather than placing rhetoric in the realm of the particular, we might see it as mediating between the particular and the general or "allegedly universal." Locke (inspired partly by the Cartesian "logic of ideas") provides an opportunity for such a reorientation. He disrupts, for example, the distinction between "universal standards of Reason" and "particular reasons:"

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[25] Gaonkar, "The Idea of Rhetoric," 36. While dissertation is driven by a sense for the lasting import—indeed, urgency—of Gaonkar's largely unanswered critique in "Rhetorical Hermeneutics," it is also motivated in part by a rejection of this characterization of science as paradigmatically arhetorical. See section 1.1 for a review of RS efforts to place rhetoric in relation to science.

[26] Nelson, Megill, and McCloskey, "Rhetoric of Inquiry," 7-11

[27] "Rhetoric of Inquiry," 15

[28] Quoted in Dilip Gaonkar, "Rhetoric and Its Double: Reflections on the Rhetorical Turn Inthe Human Sciences," in *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory* ed. John Lucaites, Celeste Condit, and Sally Caudill (New York: Guilford, 1999), 206.

Reason is the natural, embodied, automatic capacity to draw connections between our particular experiences—and to revise these connections as our body of experience grows. As such, it is a matter of situated generalization that cannot be approached in terms of universals *or* particulars. Further, because Locke views reason as a natural faculty that proceeds automatically and without special training, his major concern is not with reason at all, but rather with the formation of ideas, which benefits from a "large, sound, round about sense"—a sense cultivated through inquiry and accumulation.

One sees a similar investment in mediation in Locke's vision of the "man of reason" as a situated, sensing, reasoning body acknowledges the primacy, validity, and value of the individual perspective, derived from experience, while at the same time emphasizing the importance of transcending it through engagement with the world and with others. The aim of this reasoning subject is not the certainty of the logician or the universal truths of the philosopher, but rather the *wise adaptability* of the natural historical commonplacer, Locke's practitioner of topical inquiry. Topical inquiry is so useful to Locke because it fosters this wise adaptability, offering a flexible but stable means of relating the particular to the general, the self to others. It is, I have argued, a rhetorical solution to Locke's rhetorical problem of how individuals, free and equal, might form communities *on their own terms*.

The challenge, and insight, that reappears in so many of Locke's writings arises from his efforts to reconcile what is perhaps the foundational observation of rhetoric—that there is no one-size-fits all way of being together—with a modern, and Lockean, investment in standardization. As we've seen, the solution appears in his natural historical commonplace book, a rhetorical technology that interweaves production and inquiry, flexibility and order through its use of the topics. The topics, a provisional and evolving collection of heuristics, place singular

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experiences in relation to each other, guiding the inquiry out of which common objects arise. The transformation of the commonplace book into a site of common object formation is Locke's crucial contribution to rhetoric; all else is rhetoric's contribution to Locke.

Once we attend to the rhetorical heritage of these commonplace books, as well as their role in facilitating natural historical inquiry, we see that Locke cannot be invoked to support the narrative in which "science," logic, and truth displace rhetoric as the dominant means of knowing in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. His vision of community was not held together by "pure objectivity" of natural science, as John Durham Peters suggests.[29] Rather, he pursued a civil society built upon common objects—provisional, adaptive, and collectively formed—and held together through collective inquiry. So while Peters charges Locke with "fail[ing] to theorize the common world," confronting "an age of passions and madness" by "remov[ing] religion and politics from the public space" to leave it "clear for science and reason," I argue the opposite.[30] Confronting a legitimate problem with rhetoric as it was understood in seventeenth-century England (an understanding of rhetoric that persists in popular discourse today), Locke argues that persuasion *forecloses* a common world and public deliberation to the extent that it informs the understanding by charming the wit rather than encouraging judgment. Further, he charges (figural) rhetoric, as he does scholastic logic, with being *too* abstract, too private—for beginning with obscured, confused, and/or individually held ideas or meanings that are shielded from inquiry and assumed to have real existences through the act of naming.[31] While there is no question that Locke seeks a different way of connecting and that he is eager to reign in the passions and quiet the mob, his remedy is not the elimination of

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[29] Peters, "John Locke, the Individual, and the Origin of Communication," e.g. 393.
[30] "John Locke, the Individual, and the Origin of Communication," 396, 397.
[31] *Essay*, III.x.15: "This, I think, I may at least say, that we should have a great many fewer disputes in the world, if words were taken for what they are, the signs of our ideas only; and not for things themselves."

public debate, but rather the cultivation of recognizably rhetorical habits of inquiry that open us to it, making it possible for us to converse with each other and the world. His emphasis on impartiality is not an effort to abstract away legitimate human difference, but rather to remove the prejudices and received opinions that blind us to what is before our eyes and deafens us to the perspectives of others. The first step to seeing together is, in his view, seeing, listening, inquiring for ourselves. The next step is to make this inquiry collective via the commonplace book, making the vast range of perspectives we collect legible, relatable, shareable, actionable via their placement under the topics, their generalization as common objects.

Studying Locke in this way further allows us consider the possibilities for community afforded by contemporary scientific inquiry. Returning to Sarewitz's argument, science today is approached as a source of incontestable truths, universally "right" answers, political resolution—none of which it can provide. The solution is not, in his view, to make science more objective, but rather to make it more humble, more adaptable—or, I argue, more *rhetorical*. "The problem," Sarewitz writes, "is not one of good science versus bad, or 'sound' science versus 'junk' science. The problem is that nature can be viewed through many analytical lenses, and the resulting perspectives do not add up to a single, uniform image, but a spectrum that can illuminate a range of subjective positions."[32] While Sarewitz appears to bracket the problem of science done in bad faith, he nevertheless highlights something that has long been observed in RS: the findings of science do not articulate an underlying, monolithic reality; rather, "reality" can tell us any number of things depending on what we ask and how we ask it. If science is to serve as a source of common ground, it must be at the level of inquiry rather than the communication of findings.

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[32] Sarewitz, "Science and Environmental Policy," 90.

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Locke offers a host of theoretical and rhetorical resources for conceptualizing and enacting this turn from findings to inquiry. In his work on language and definition, he confronts a problem quite similar to the one Sarewitz articulates above: "nature" permits a vast range of perspectives and cannot serve as a source of answers or resolution. Accordingly, he sets out to imagine a means by which the myriad, particular ways of seeing might be brought into conversation to form a provisional consensus or common object. Sarewitz's vision is strikingly Lockean, though updated to attend to the role of scientific inquiry in twenty-first century policy debates: a relationship between science and politics wherein the former "would not be viewed as an authoritative voice that can cure us of politics, but as a source of insight that can help us understand the inevitable constraints on our knowledge and foresight, and therefore point us toward policy approaches that favor adaptation and resilience over control and rigidity."[33] Like Locke, Sarewitz sees inquiry as a response to the inherent uncertainties of existence—it is not a source of answers or certainty, but rather a call to adaptation that offers the provisional stability necessary for collective action, while remaining responsive, open to the unexpected. Sarewitz, however, still relies upon experts to design, conduct, and interpret studies—and, importantly, to choose among the wide range of available perspectives. These decisions, while informed by conversations among stakeholders and offered provisionally, nevertheless delimit inquiry to a technical rather than public sphere. Further, Sarewitz does not address the extent to which conversations about values may remain nonstarters, even after the cover of "objective truth" has been removed. The promise of Locke's natural historical approach is its deep investment in the common and his adaptation of specific rhetorical resources for producing it—not through persuasion, but rather through mediation. The rhetorical achievement—and inheritance—of

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[33] "Science and Environmental Policy," 93.

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Lockean inquiry is its capacity to place individual perspectives in conversation, establishing a shared and stable way of seeing that is nevertheless open to adaptation. As the mode of civic participation for his vision of society, Locke's natural historical inquiry is a thoroughly elaborated rhetorical technology for engaging with the world and with others, operable by all.

7.3 A Theory of Rhetorical Objects

This study has centered on the ways in which Locke adapted the topical inquiry of the commonplace book to inquire into and form shared objects of understanding, objects that together form the common ground upon which his civil society depends. The implication for contemporary rhetoricians of science is, again, that rhetorical work at the intersection of science and publics need not be limited to science communication—to the discourse that occurs after the study, after knowledge has already been produced within a technical community that, almost by definition, does not include the public(s) conceived as its recipients. Locke's rhetorical work in natural history invites us to expand our view of rhetoric to recognize the formation of scientific objects as a crucial site of rhetorical production—and one in which all may participate.

David Gruber made a similar call for a turn away from science communication in a 2019 performative exchange with Randy Allen Harris.[34] Harris, tasked with portraying traditionally minded rhetoricians of science, espoused the traditional textual approach to RS, arguing

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[34] David R Gruber and Randy Harris, "Scientific Futures for a Rhetoric of Science:" We Do This and They Do That?" A Junior-Senior Scholar Session, RSA 2018, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA; 1 June 2018," *Poroi: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Rhetorical Analysis & Invention* 14, no. 2 (2019) The exchange is characterized as a "Feyerabendian innovation-meets-dogma performative session" aimed at imagining the future of RS scholarship. Harris, the "senior scholar," represented "dogma;" Gruber, the junior scholar, represented "innovation"—taken, in this case, to mean "expand[ing] the field's practices to include neuro-cognitive approaches and other forms of experiment" (1).

"Rhetoric is about texts (broadly construed; the flickering overhead lights in this room are a text.)"[35] Gruber, representing junior scholars, conversely rejected the field's perceived way of "talking about science mostly after-the-fact, after the press release, after the popular media presentation, and not sitting in and amongst the working processes of shaping science," lamenting that "nowhere is [rhetoric of science] characterized as studying experimental processes or as a participant in the development of scientific aims and the structure of experiments."[36] A similar sentiment drives this dissertation, but so too does a sense that we have not yet theorized experimental processes as rhetorical in a way that fully supports such a reorientation. I offer this study of Locke as a contribution to this effort.

Indeed, for all the promise of Gruber's proposed reorientation toward experimental processes, study design, and the like, his rationale for it seems to stray from the rhetorical: "We can't get stuck on scientific texts," he writes, "because we would miss the machines, the living performances, the affects, and florescent lighting in the room that makes us feel crazy or the smell of sewage at a landfill. *(The effects of florescent lighting, like the seething piles of garbage living, breathing, and stealing breath outside the city, are not only textual*.)"[37] This expansive characterization of rhetoric taps into the growing and important interest in the rhetoricity of (some) objects, affects, and processes, while demonstrating the need for richer, more precise— and arguably more historically situated—theorizations of what makes them rhetorical. To declare flickering lights and piles of garbage rhetorical on the basis of personification is to give up many of the powerful inventional resources of the tradition. Gruber's most concrete call for change is an argument for "embracing scientific processes and building our own experiments and making

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[35] Gruber and Harris, "Scientific Futures for a Rhetoric of Science," 4.
[36] Gruber and Harris, 2, 4.
[37] Gruber and Harris, 5.

blended methodologies—not merely critiquing those processes in the sciences," a move that seems to draw him away from both his desired reorientation toward the material, as well as rhetoric itself.[38] Here, we might embrace the characteristic move of the topics: imaging what could be said (or made or done) by looking to what has been said, made, or done—with an eye to present specificities.

As we reflect on how to orient rhetoric in relation to materiality, knowledge, and science itself, Locke offers a theory and technology of rhetorical objects that 1) demonstrates the capacity of rhetoric to respond to situations in which textual or discursive intervention is not possible (or must be made possible through rhetorical intervention), 2) centers on the rhetorical production rather than inherent rhetoricity or textuality of objects, and 3) engages with the richness of the rhetorical tradition without redescription. By shifting emphasis from the translation and presentation of scientific findings (that is, verbal persuasion that *follows* the scientific production of knowledge) to the deeper ways in which scientific inquiry has drawn— and might draw—from local knowledge and investments, Locke allows us to consider how common ground might be cultivated via scientific inquiry, rather than the dissemination of pre-determined scientific "knowledge." And crucially, the point is not just that inquiry is political or in some respects rhetorical, as RS scholars regularly observe. In Locke, inquiry *does the work of rhetoric*, and it constitutes the very basis for politics in a moment when common ground cannot, in his eyes, be taken for granted.

Reading Locke as a rhetorical theorist of inquiry offers rhetoricians imaginative and technical resources with which to reimagine scientific inquiry as an instrument of politics, in his

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[38] Gruber and Harris, 8. Outside of this performance, Harris has proposed a similar embrace of scientific methods, calling for the creation of "cognitive rhetoric" as a sub-field of RS. See Randy Harris, "The Rhetoric of Science Meets the Science of Rhetoric," *Poroi* 9, no. 1 (2013)

case by suggesting the rhetorical and political promise of natural history as a means of constructing common ground together. In this manner, he offers a potential response to Ceccarelli's call to guide contemporary rhetorical practice with specific rhetorical concepts—as well as Druschke's call to engage with the world and the diverse perspectives around us in a way that is distinctly rhetorical: "To embrace the radical insufficiency of tentative answers. And to build anyway."[39] Druschke's eloquent characterization of the rhetorical habitus is, perhaps, an ideal way to make sense of Locke as a rhetorical theorist. Between the poles of certainty and skepticism, ideology and relativism, absolutism and individualism, permanence and change, he enlists inquiry to heal a fragmented political and epistemic landscape with the provisional, the practical, the common, the adaptive—*to build anyway*, together. Lockean inquiry, as rhetorical inquiry, pursues the conditions of possibility for community by placing us—as sensing, situated, reasoning bodies—in relation to each other and the world.

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[39] Druschke, "Radical Insufficiency," 4.

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