

Toleration and its Epistemic and Anthropological Bases

The John Locke Workshop
Western University
1145 Stevenson Hall
June 22-25, 2017

Thursday June 22

Arrival in London

Dinner: The Root Cellar (<http://rootcellarorganic.ca/>), 7:30 pm

Friday June 23 (1145 STVH)

8:30-9:15 Coffee and Pastries

9:15-9:30 Welcome and Opening Remarks (Benjamin Hill)

Locke among the Dutch: Completing the Epistola and the Essay (Chair: Lorne Falkenstein)

9:30-10:15 Geoffrey Gorham (Macalester)

"Insights from the van Limborch Correspondence: God, Space, Action, and Identity"

10:15-11:00 Michael Hickson (Trent)

"Secularism and Toleration in Bayle and Locke"

11:00-12:15 Open Discussion

Lunch (Catered onsite by La Noisette, <http://www.lanoisettebakery.com/>)

Certainty, Probability, and Reasons: Reasons for Toleration (Chair: Benjamin Hill)

2:00-2:45 Douglas Casson (St. Olaf)

"Toleration without Sovereignty: Locke on Reasonableness, Judgment, and Absolute Dominion"

2:45-3:30 Michael Borgida (Independent Scholar)

"Civil Interests and Locke's Political Reason for Toleration"

3:30-4:45 Open Discussion

8:30 Conference Dinner: Spruce on Wellington (<https://spruce-wellington.squarespace.com/>)

Saturday June 24 (1145 STVH)

8:30-9:30 Coffee and Pastries

Locke and his Friends: Latitudinarians, Arminians, and Socinians (Chair: Remi Alie)

9:30-10:15 Patricia Sheridan (Guelph)

"John Locke and the Latitudinarians: Toleration as a Virtue"

10:15-11:00 Elliot Rossiter (Douglas College)

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"Natural Religion and the Ambiguity of Locke's Theological Commitments"

11:00-12:15 Open Discussion

Lunch (Catered onsite by La Noisette)

Toleration and the Ethics of Belief (Chair: Robert Stainton)

1:30-2:15 Jonathan Walmsley (Independent Scholar)

"John Locke and Toleration: New Manuscript Evidence"

2:15-3:30 Elizabeth Prichard (Bowdoin)

"Locke on Toleration and the Right Way to Believe"

3:30-4:45 Open Discussion

6:30 Dinner: Bertoldi's (<http://www.bertoldis.ca/>)

Optional Trip to Stratford Theatre Festival (leaving London, 6:00)

Sunday June 25 (1145 STVH)

8:30-9:00 Coffee and Pastries

Toleration, Tempers, and Ethusiasm (Chair: Dennis Klimchuk)

9:00-9:45 Kathryn Tabb (Columbia)

"Locke's Pyrrhonian Case for Toleration"

9:45-10:30 John Wright (Central Michigan)

"Locke on Toleration and Religious Experience"

10:30-10:45 Coffee Break

10:45-11:30 Richard Vernon (Western)

"Tempers and Toleration"

11:30-12:45 Open Discussion

Lunch (Catered onsite by La Noisette)

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Gorham (Macalester) *"Insights from the van Limborch Correspondence: God, Space, Action, and Identity"*

The Remonstrant theologian Philipp van Limborch was one of Locke's most longstanding and influential Dutch friends. This paper examines a concentrated exchange of letters from 1697-8 on the question of divine unicity. I argue that this exchange – particularly the account of omnipresence or immensity Locke develops – deserves more attention for the light it sheds on several metaphysical problems treated in the Essay of continuing interest to scholars: (i) God's relation to space; (ii) the ontology of Lockean space; (iii) action at a distance; (iv) identity and co-location.

Hickson (Trent) *"Secularism and Toleration in Bayle and Locke"*

Scholars of early modern philosophy are divided over the question of whether Bayle's and Locke's arguments for toleration are fundamentally similar or different. I approach this question by distinguishing the authors' opening moves toward toleration from their arguments for toleration, and I argue that both Bayle and Locke employ variations of the "Secular Opening." I then explore how each author managed the strategies, limitations, and traps associated with this opening.

Casson (St.Olaf) *"Toleration without Sovereignty: Locke on Reasonableness, Judgment, and Absolute Dominion"*

Much of the confusion and debate surrounding the rational basis for Locke's notion of toleration rests on the assumption that Locke seeks to establish a single, sovereign authority within the political realm. Yet this is not Locke's goal. In the *Two Treatises on Government*, he describes a polity with multiple claimants to supreme authority under changing conditions. He proposes a sovereignless state. The cohesion of this state does not rest on absolute sovereignty or dominion, but on diffuse and probable judgments concerning the reasonable use of political power. Locke's arguments in his *Letters on Toleration* can best be understood as part of this sweeping challenge to sovereignty. Locke rejects what he calls the "sovereign remedy" of persecution because he believes that individuals, while often fallible and self-interested, are nonetheless able to decipher God's reasonable intentions for humanity, and thus work out their own salvation and the limits of political authority.

Sheridan (Guelph) *"John Locke and Latitudinarians: Toleration as a Virtue"*

My discussion will look at the influence of the Latitudinarians (particularly Tillotson, Barrow, Whichcote, and Fowler) on the development of Locke's thinking on toleration. Locke moved from a pragmatic approach to toleration to a view predicated on its intrinsic

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value, both as a feature of authentic faith through good works and the perfection of one's Christian character. I will show that the Latitudinarians, who counted amongst his closest friends, provided a significant source of inspiration on Locke's thinking. My sources will include Latitudinarian sermons, Locke's writings on toleration, as well as his writings on education.

Rossiter (Douglas College) *"Natural Religion and the Ambiguity of Locke's Theological Commitments Concerning Toleration"*

I argue that the textual and biographical evidence concerning the precise character of Locke's theological commitments tends to be ambiguous: consequently, caution should be exercised in identifying Locke as either a Socinian or an Arminian or making attributions of influence in this area. While I think that a consideration of both Socinianism and Arminianism is useful in providing a good contextual history of the role of religion in Locke's views on toleration, I argue that it is best to understand his views on toleration within the bounds of his explicitly stated commitment to natural religion.

Walmsley (Independent Scholar) *"John Locke and Toleration: New Manuscript Evidence"*

The history of Locke's views on Toleration has been long established – his early authoritarianism in the Two Tracts on Government, his change of mind in the early Essay Concerning Toleration and the publication and subsequent defence of his mature theory of toleration in the Epistola de Tolerantia and its successors. Newly discovered manuscript evidence sheds fresh light on the circumstances, context and content of Locke's first articulations of his theory of toleration. This new evidence adds depth and colour to the established historical narrative, and raises interesting questions about the nature, scope and intent of Locke's earliest work on what would become a central element of his philosophical outlook.

Pritchard (Bowdoin) *"Locke on Toleration and the Right Way to Believe"*

Locke offers several rationales and policies for instituting religious toleration. Several of these can be threaded together to construct an "ethics of belief." Yet Locke's ethics of belief are more complex and expansive than conventional treatments which focus on the voluntaristic, epistemological and evidentiary character of belief formation. Because his efforts are directed to the establishment and maintenance of toleration, his arguments focus less on epistemic justification and more on the ethical and political stakes of the content and character of belief. Locke is clear that a viable ethical and political order depends on acceptance of certain beliefs and rejection of others. Moreover, he offers a thorough reconstruction of religious belief so as to encourage debate and reduce violence. In this paper, I assemble Locke's ethics of belief, considering especially the range and

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subtlety of harms he associates with religious belief and the insidiousness and influence of his particular rendering of belief.

Tabb (Columbia) “*Locke’s Pyrrhonian Case for Toleration*”

John Locke’s pessimistic assessment of human understanding, and his insistence on the suspension of assent as a prophylactic against dogma, have been recognized as compatible with ancient Pyrrhonism. Here I argue that Locke’s medical philosophy, particularly his ideas about the practical care of the psyche, can shed light on how his epistemic modesty is in an important sense more ancient than modern. Unlike other skeptical physicians, Sextus Empiricus was vocal in criticizing those hard-nosed empiricists who would prohibit the physician from utilizing his expert judgment. Locke, another empirically-minded physician, similarly tempered his rejection of metaphysical suppositions in medicine with a tolerance for those guiding principles that can facilitate care. Locke’s skepticism about the grounds on which moral suppositions are drawn, given our liability to a range of mental pathologies, was also mitigated by a concern for facilitating care; in the case of toleration, the care of the nation. I show that Locke embraced toleration not because he thought moral consensus was possible — the crazed dogma of the religious enthusiast, for which he had no cure, convinced him otherwise — but because of these Pyrrhonian sympathies.

Wright (Central Michigan) “*Locke on Toleration and Religious Experience*”

It is somewhat of a paradox that after publishing *A Letter Concerning Toleration* and three replies to criticisms from Jonas Proast in which Locke defended the religious rights of dissenters, he added two chapters to his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* in which he argued against the legitimacy of the kind of religious revelation claimed by many of those very same dissenters. I am of course referring to the chapter “Of Enthusiasm” and “Of the Association of Ideas” added to fourth edition of the *Essay* in 1700. It is true, as Maurice Cranston stressed, that toleration does not imply any endorsement of the beliefs and practices of those one tolerates. Nevertheless, there are important parallels between the type of religion which Locke himself advocated and that claimed by the Enthusiasts he criticized. I consider Locke’s reasons for publishing these criticisms in spite of his support for toleration of dissent—namely his increasing conviction that there are both psychological and social forces preventing people from accepting rationality in religion.

Vernon (Western) “*Tempers and Toleration*”

In the writings of Locke and his contemporaries the word “temper” survives the rejection of the ancient medical theory from which it derived. For Locke and for Latitudinarian writers peculiarities of “temper” (temperament) are an important reason for the variety of

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denominational loyalties and liturgical tastes. As in *Thoughts on Education* tempers are taken by Locke to explain innate basic dispositions and the associative preferences flowing from them. That he comes to take them seriously as factors demanding mutual respect signals a shift from the conformist doctrine of the Two Tracts to the defence of toleration. Moreover, his recognition of the desire to associate with others of like temper may help to explain his defence of toleration rather than comprehension.

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