several popular notions—the concept behind a “knowledge economy,” the Rawlsian notion of the state as a suitably neutral agent (in a pluralistic society) for the management of this economy, and (again) the notion that the value of higher education lies in its creation of commercial or material prosperity. The relevant question becomes, “What does one do with one’s prosperity once created?” “It could of course be spent on personal gratification—more holidays, more visits to pubs and restaurants, more fashionable clothes, computer games, gossip magazines, DVDs, television quiz programmes and so on.” When we have had our fill of pubs, however, it may be that a good life might also include a “cultural infrastructure” in which religion was meaningful. The difficulty here, Graham cautions, is that secular man is unprepared to think religion relevant to either a good life or intellectual culture. Perhaps, however, religion finds an unlikely ally in the natural sciences. In the face of a hubristic, Protagorean culture where man is the measure of all things, these sciences study inescapably real things unmade and unmastered by man. “This is precisely what the religious founders of our ancient universities thought—that in the life of the mind and the explorations of the intellect, we reach beyond the human and begin to see and to appreciate, albeit dimly, the mind that made the world we occupy, a world which we certainly cannot fashion but which, mysteriously, we can hope to understand [his emphasis].” This latter point, made gingerly and briefly (too briefly), raises the fascinating prospect of a form of natural theology for a secular age.

Resembles to Newman’s seminal work on higher education are many, even if Graham sets aside several of the clergyman’s concerns and differs with him about others. Not only is the structure oddly reminiscent of that earlier classic, but so too is the incisive application of genuine philosophical argument to immediate educational practices and the habits of mind they foster. The greatest—most important—resemblance, however, remains the forceful rearticulation of the essential purposes of higher education—of the inherent value or good of intellectual culture, of learning, of understanding for its own sake. While Graham’s own gritty realism does not permit him to be brushed off as either irrelevant or romantic, neither does his presentation of the case for intellect itself allow him to be dismissed as surrendering to fad and fashion. Others might make his case with less reliance on the language of wealth and value, and still others would amplify arguments having to do with cultural patrimony and inherited wisdom. Few, however, have presented so apt a corrective to the teleological drift in modern academic consciousness. And about such correctives, there can be no Prufrockian exhaustion.

Micrographia
Christopher O. Blum

Locke: A Biography by Roger Woolhouse

The early Fellows of the Royal Society of London felt themselves to have embarked upon a high adventure. Their motto, Nullius in verba, would prove to be an easy target for the satirist, but in the 1660s, it signified all the boldness of youthful enterprise. Let the benighted Scholastics across the Channel take heed: the authority of Aristotle’s terminology no longer had any hold upon
these intrepid explorers. From thralldom to substance and quiddity, Bacon, “like Moses, led us forth at last,” wrote Abraham Cowley, the Royal Society’s first laureate, in an ode of 1667. These new students of Nature were armed not with words, but with instruments: new tools like the barometer, the vacuum pump, and the microscope. Their hope, as Robert Hooke expressed it in his 1665 manifesto Micrographia, was that “by rectifying the operations of the Senses,” these instruments would put knowledge on a new and more certain foundation.

John Locke was made Fellow of the Royal Society in 1668 and was certainly not the least of its luminaries. His Essay Concerning Human Understanding [1690] might well be understood as the completion of Bacon’s most cherished project: to refashion the art of reasoning in order firmly to anchor our knowledge in the perception of the senses. To put Locke himself under the microscope, as Professor Woolhouse has done, is thus to peer into the wellsprings and sources of the modern mind. Yet the microscope, as an instrument, raises its own difficulties. For as Hooke testified, a razor to our eyes seems “neat,” while under a microscope “we may observe its very Edge to be of all kinds of shapes, except what it should be.” And as with the razor’s edge, so also with the sharp tool that was John Locke’s mind. A careful inspection under magnification reveals unexpected details, but risks the loss of our grasp upon the whole.

Woolhouse’s micrography does reveal a new Locke. The painstaking examination of his correspondence, manuscript notes, and journals sheds ample light on the character of the man whom his last biographer, Maurice Cranston, called “elusive” and “extremely secretive.” Locke sometimes wrote in a shorthand that approximated a code, employed a sufficiently Jesuitical rhetoric as to be judged “dissembling” more than once by his admiring biographer, and is known to have experimented with invisible ink. His prominent role in the Whig opposition to Charles II and then James II is well-known; it earned him more than one brush with the Crown and an enduring habit of reserve. Piercing this veil, Professor Woolhouse has revealed a more human Locke, a man who knew what it was to admire and to be admired, to take the risk of offering his friendship, and to suffer from such poor health for so long that one would be inclined to call him frail had he not achieved so much. It is the private Locke that we see here: playfully writing under the name “Atticus” to his Oxford valentine Elinor Parry; later earnestly dreaming with his Parisian friend Toinard of escaping the “wickedness of our Europeans” by moving to “Carolina, where there is a very fine island which they have done me the honour to name after me”; and, towards the close of his life, rhapsodizing to the youthful radical Anthony Collins “I thought myself pretty loose from the world, but I feel you begin to fasten me to it again. For you make my life, since I have had your friendship, much more valuable to me than it was before.”

Is it a warm and feeling John Locke that Professor Woolhouse’s close inspection of his papers has revealed? Perhaps that would be to go too far. Yet it is true that the reticent bachelor begins to melt away, to be replaced by the awkward lover, the doting uncle, the genial fireside companion, the lover of nature who delighted in the annual return of the swallows, and, especially, the elderly gentleman concerned with the vagaries of his health. And Professor Woolhouse conveys all of this detail deftly. His Locke is a carefully crafted narrative in the old style. There is neither pleading here, nor any censoriousness. We are expected to bring an interest in the volume’s subject, and patiently to listen as the author shares with us the product of his own. As befits a study of a philosopher written by one, there is much careful dissection of texts,
including the various drafts of the *Two Treatises and Essay*. And though one reviewer has found the work cumbersome to use and has pointed out a number of minor factual errors in its lengthy course, one ought surely to be grateful that it is still possible to write a book that discusses the ideas and the life of a serious man with the gravity they deserve.¹

There is, however, a certain stoniness to Professor Woolhouse’s *Locke*. The volume ends where it artfully begins, at Locke’s grave in the small village church in High Laver, Essex. Locke himself tells us there on the epitaph he wrote for himself that he was “bred a scholar” and was “contented with his modest lot.” His biographer conveys, by way of emphasis, the provision of Locke’s will that he be buried “in a plain wooden coffin not covered with cloth or any otherwise adorned.” And the portrait that is framed by this image of the disinterested philosopher’s tomb is similarly drab. The brush strokes are very fine; the vision is, indeed, microscopic. What is missing, however, is the high drama of the life of a gifted, principled, and active man who lived through some of the most tumultuous decades of English and European history.

Where ought one to locate John Locke amidst the political affairs and intellectual currents of his age? Surely, as Jonathan Israel has argued, one sight-line ought to be fixed upon the “radical Enlightenment” coming out of the Dutch Republic.² Another, doubtless, should be the Catholic counter-offensive against Protestantism, especially as represented by the France of Louis XIV, which it was the merit of Richard Ashcraft’s study of Locke to have placed in the foreground.³ And yet, Professor Woolhouse’s biography contains not a single reference to either Spinoza or Bossuet, who respectively enjoyed European reputations as the leading representatives of the new atheism and the resurgent tradition that Locke himself so doggedly opposed. Can this be an adequate account of a man whose library at his death contained some 4,000 volumes and who pined for the conversations of London and for news from the “commonwealth of letters”? Who was offered rich preferment by England’s new king just weeks after the Dutch invasion of 1688, when as yet he had published nothing of significance and was known only as the one-time secretary to the Earl of Shaftesbury? Who was soon and lastingly regarded as the light of liberalism and one of the chief founders of modern thought? There was surely more to this Locke than the microscope reveals.

It may be readily acknowledged that the great problem for both John Locke and his age was the question of religious polity. Whether that question be expressed in terms of the problem of toleration or of the reunion of the Protestant churches, it is all one. Bossuet, Leibniz, Spinoza, and Locke all agreed: a Europe divided by confessional warfare had proven to be unstable, and a solution more fit than short-lived truces and mutual persecution needed to be found. From their opposing solutions to the problem come the principal political essays of the past three centuries. Bossuet and Leibniz are the ancestors of the varying monarchical, corporatist, and (ironically) Christian Democratic regimes that have laid down as a first principle that men are best ruled when human laws are founded upon divine ones. Spinoza, of course, is the font of the myriad revolutionary regimes that have begun with one form or another of the premise that humanity is a law unto itself. And what of Locke and of liberalism?

A biography, even a good one, cannot be expected to offer the last word on the interpretation of the thought of a man as complex as Locke. Yet the middle course that Locke attempted to steer deserves to be teased out in its full context, a context that includes the *dragonnades* of Poitou and the execution of Oliver Plunkett, the anti-Trinitarian writings of Isaac Newton and the poetry of John
Dryden, the polemics of Pierre Jurieu and the correspondence on Christian unity between Leibniz and Bossuet. Such a study would offer a sharper sense of Locke’s religious and political convictions and would show that the cautious personal life chronicled by Professor Woolhouse coexisted with a boldness of vision and a willingness to innovate that made Locke a true son of Luther and Bacon and by no means the most timid of the Fellows of the Royal Society.


Effortless Cosmopolitanism

R. J. Stove


Had opinion polls existed in 1820, they would have ranked Johann Nepomuk Hummel alongside Beethoven, Weber, and Rossini as among the greatest of all living composers. In 1820 Chopin, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Liszt, Verdi, and Wagner remained mere children, Berlioz an obscure adolescent; Schubert’s fame had not yet spread beyond Viennese connoisseurs. Hummel died in 1837, his glory intact. But within a generation it was as if he had never breathed, so wholly did captious Time obliterate his renown. Posternity seldom even troubled to censure or calumniate him; it simply forgot him; and forgotten he has largely stayed, despite modest revivals in recent years. This is the first biography of him in English. The last as well, one suspects, given its breathtaking comprehensiveness, solicitude for the smallest details, and attractively fluent idiom, all of which militate against the very idea of a subsequent author adequately essaying the topic.

If Hummel had managed nothing else, he would continue to warrant attention for his almost Mozartean precocity. Born in 1778, he had already become an exceptional pianist when just six years old, and a skilled violinist too (this secondary interest ended when he smashed his violin in ire during an inconclusive aesthetic discussion with a fellow juvenile). At the age of eight he not only began studying piano with Mozart in Vienna, but went to live with him, rent-free. No doubt today this residential arrangement would inspire charges of pedophilia, but such residences occurred quite often at the time—Mozart’s father had his own live-in pupils—with no hint of sexual relations. Hummel proceeded to arrange for chamber forces several of Mozart’s operas and orchestral works, as well as to reveal in his own pianism three Mozartean traits: a constant concern for the long, singing line (Mozart demanded that his keyboard music “flow like oil”), persistent textural clarity, and aversion to any but the most prudent use of the sustaining pedal. In short, everything epitomized in the term “classicist”: everything, also, antipathetic to the young Beethoven’s keyboard style, with its string-wrecking ebullience and pedal-heavy grandeur. Only in the field of improvisation did Hummel and Beethoven meet occasionally on shared ground, several competent judges regarding Hummel as the more gifted improviser of the two. Between both men there arose—and there survived until...