

# LOCKE ON ENTHUSIASM

*Mark Boespflug and Robert Pasnau*

## 1 Enthusiasm in its context

Although the *Essay* went through four editions in Locke's lifetime, he was reluctant to make substantial additions, adding new chapters only three times. The first was the chapter 'Of Identity and Diversity' (2.27), added to the second edition of 1694. The fourth edition of 1700 contained two new chapters, one at the end of Book 2, the other near the end of Book 4. These two chapters share a common aim: to explain how and why human beings are prone to go so egregiously wrong in their understandings of the world. The first, 'Of the Association of Ideas,' seeks to explain why people are prone to be rigidly attached to their own prior opinions even in the face of contrary reasonings 'as clear as daylight' (2.33.2; see Kathryn Tabb, in this volume). The other chapter, 'Of Enthusiasm' (4.19), takes up the human tendency to go astray with regard to faith, the 'ground of assent' that Locke distinguishes from reason in the final chapters of Book 4.

Why would Locke add a whole new chapter on mistaken cases of divine inspiration? After looking more closely than have previous discussions at how these alleged enthusiasts defended themselves, we find that this seemingly esoteric topic raises foundational questions for Locke's epistemology. Ultimately, a careful consideration of these issues points toward a clearer understanding of where Locke locates the ultimate grounds of rational belief.

In a series of letters from 1695 between Locke and his confidant William Molyneux, Locke announced his intention to write a chapter on enthusiasm (*Correspondence* 1976–89, V:287, V:317, V:352; see Ruth Boeker, in this volume). By the end of 1697, he had completed a draft (Anstey 2019). Locke does not explain, either to Molyneux or elsewhere, exactly what impelled him to write this new chapter, but we can get some sense of his motivation by considering what exactly enthusiasm is. The term comes straight from the Greek ἐνθουσιασμός, meaning an inspiration or frenzy, and was taken up into the various European vernaculars in the sixteenth century. In principle, the term might have positive connotations, but in practice it was used to describe a misguided conviction of some special inspiration, characteristically accompanied by grandiloquent rhetoric and a claim to authority in contravention of orthodoxy. In a broad sense, such enthusiasm could and did manifest itself in various domains – including art, science, philosophy, and politics – but in the strict sense enthusiasm is a religious phenomenon.

Locke's principal interest is that strict religious sense. It is, he says, a confident reliance on a supposed revelation based on 'the ungrounded fancies of a man's own brain' while at the same time 'laying by reason' (4.19.3) – that is, setting reason aside. Locke explains this in more detail in a 1682 letter to Damaris Cudworth (see Jacqueline Broad, in this volume):

A strong and firm persuasion of any proposition relating to religion for which a man has either no or not sufficient proofs from reason but receives them as truths wrought in the mind extraordinarily by God himself and influences coming immediately from him seems to me to be Enthusiasm, which can be no evidence or ground of assurance at all nor can by any means be taken for knowledge.

(Correspondence 1976–89, II:500; this formulation also appears in Locke (1997, p. 289)

By definition, then, enthusiasm is a form of intellectual malpractice. Paradigmatically, it results from irrationally supposing oneself to have received immediate divine inspiration, though Locke sometimes extends the phenomenon to the secondhand case of irrationally following the authority of someone who claims this sort of inspiration (e.g., *Essay* 4.20.10).

Enthusiasm had been a problem for Protestantism from the start. Its sober injunction to rely on Scripture alone ran headlong, time after time, against 'enthusiasts' who thought that they could contribute to the great cause of Church reformation by contributing their own personal experience of inspiration from God. Among Lutherans of the later sixteenth century, 'enthusiast' (in Latin, as well as in German and other vernaculars) became the standard term to refer to such troublesome eccentrics (Knox 1950). In England, the term was employed to refer to various dissenting Protestant sects, and above all to the Quakers, whom Henry More (1656) described as 'the most melancholy sect that was yet in the world' (§25) – melancholy, an overabundance of black bile, being the preferred medical diagnosis for the malady of enthusiasm.

Locke associates enthusiasm with 'groundless opinion' and 'odd action' (*Essay* 4.19.6), charges that were both routinely lodged against the Quakers. They took themselves to be guided by a special inner light that shaped their views about both religion and politics, and their dissenting views in these domains were accompanied by various eccentricities in behaviour (Hill 1972, ch. 10). These ranged from the mildly scandalous, such as a refusal to take their hats off as a sign of respect and an insistence on using the informal pronoun 'thou,' to more impactful commitments such as fasting and a refusal to swear oaths. At the extreme end was behaviour that seemed wholly bizarre, such as the notorious seizure-like fits that would accompany their inspirations.

By the later seventeenth century, the Quakers had rid themselves of these most extreme behaviours, but remained committed to their dissent from the Church of England and insistent on their possessing an inner light to which others are blind. Locke had long observed their movement, and interacted with many prominent Quaker intellectuals (see Anstey 2019). Moreover, the decade following the publication of Locke's *Essay* saw the Quakers and other dissenting groups obtain a dramatically greater share of legitimacy in England, thanks to the Toleration Act of 1689 (see Israel 1991) and the expiration of the Licensing Act in 1695 (see Tortarolo 2016, ch. 2). The first of these measures allowed Quakers to practice their religion much more openly, while the second led to a dramatic increase in publications that, from Locke's vantage point, would have seemed manifestly the products of enthusiasm. Locke was himself a leading proponent of religious toleration, even if his support was highly qualified (see Doug Casson, in this volume). Moreover, Locke played a direct role in the decision to let the

Licensing Act expire (Astbury 1978). Even so, it is easy to imagine that, in the years following his return to England in 1689, after six years in exile, Locke would have found much to be concerned about in the wild cacophony of English religious practices. The climate of the time can be felt, at least in caricature, from a letter Locke received in 1692 from Benjamin Furly, himself a prominent Quaker, describing a new French history ‘in which not only the Quakers are horribly treated but the English nation in general as fantastic melancholy fools and Enthusiasts’ (*Correspondence* 1976–89, IV:414).

The historical context surrounding enthusiasm helps explain why Locke devoted a whole new chapter to the subject, and also highlights just how difficult it was to know where to draw the line between foolish enthusiasm and genuine religious insight. Consider that Locke himself, in the same year in which he announced his intention to write this chapter on enthusiasm, experienced what he took to be a kind of religious illumination. In a letter from May 1695 he writes,

For this winter, considering diligently wherein the Christian faith consists, I thought that it ought to be drawn from the very fountains of Holy Writ, setting aside the various opinions and orthodoxies of sects and systems. From an intent and careful reading of the New Testament the conditions of the New Covenant and the teaching of the Gospel appeared, as it seemed to me, clearer than the noonday sun, and I am supremely confident that a sincere reader of the Gospel cannot be in doubt as to what the Christian faith is.

(*Correspondence* 1976–89, V:370)

Writing in Latin, Locke uses the superlative – *mihi persuasissimum est* – to indicate that he could not be any more confident. Accordingly, he published in that same year the fruits of this illumination as *The Reasonableness of Christianity*. It was at this same time, however, that he resolved to attack the unreasonable Christianity of the enthusiasts. What made Locke so ‘supremely confident’ in his own experience of enlightenment, even while attacking others for being overly confident?

Virulent disputes arose in Locke’s day over how to address such questions, disputes that were liable to culminate in exile, imprisonment, or worse. As we will see, Locke offers a philosophically nuanced solution, but to appreciate its force requires saying more about the historical context. As is typically the case with entrenched disagreements, the issues surrounding enthusiasm turned in part on divergent attitudes toward various prior questions. One such question concerned the probability of the hypothesis that modern Christians have ongoing access to some kind of immediate revelation. The assumption of mainstream Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant, was that such events are rare, and should be trusted only if they cohere with Scripture and are accompanied by what Locke calls ‘marks which reason cannot be mistaken in’ (*Essay* 4.19.14). By this he means that we should look for miracles, the sort of miracles that accompanied revelations of old, but which Locke, like many of his contemporaries, hardly expects to find in his era (Walker 1988). Locke’s own inspiration, in contrast, is of the sort that mainstream Protestants would find acceptable, one grounded not in some sort of immediate revelation from God, but in contemplation of received biblical teachings.

For the Quakers, in contrast, as for earlier proponents of an inward light obtained directly from God, the prior probabilities are quite different. For them it is to be *expected* that if Christianity is the true religion, then our access to such revelation will continue today just as it did in earlier days. Robert Barclay, the leading theorist of the Quaker movement, draws a comparison to Old Testament Judaism, when once a year the high priest could enter the holy tabernacle

and communicate directly with God. Those who mock the Quakers as enthusiasts suppose that Christians now have even less access to the word of God:

But Jesus Christ has promised us better things, though many are so unwise not to believe him, even to guide us by his own unerring spirit, and has rent and removed the veil [Hebrews 10:19–22], whereby not only one, and that once a year, may enter, but all of us at all times have access unto him, as often as we draw near unto him with pure hearts.

(Barclay 1678, p. 27)

Barclay's remarks point toward a second area of prior disagreement regarding the boundary between true illumination and mere enthusiasm. Champions of immediate revelation expected that their inner light, although available in principle to everyone, would in practice be grasped by only a privileged few, those of 'pure hearts,' as Barclay puts it here. For an earlier example of this sort of thing, we can look to John Smith, whose *Select Discourses* is the very example of enthusiasm that Locke had in mind in his earlier quoted remarks to Damaris Cudworth. There Smith writes that

I cannot think such black oblivion should possess the minds of some as to make them question that truth which to good men shines as bright as the sun at noonday, had they not foully defiled their own souls with some hellish vice or other.

(1660, p. 5)

Smith speaks here, just as Locke did earlier, of an intellectual clarity to rival the 'noonday sun,' but Smith *expects* the many Christians who are 'defiled' to reject such illumination as mere enthusiasm.

From Locke's perspective, more probable than this kind of 'black oblivion' is the risk that an overzealous believer might reach beyond the available evidence. This might arise out of 'a derogation from the love of truth as such' (4.19.1), but it might also have extrinsic causes. Unlike some of his contemporaries, Locke is not very interested in a medical diagnosis for enthusiasm (Heyd 1995), but he does invoke the sort of explanation that was ubiquitous in earlier attacks on enthusiasm, warning that to fail to adhere to the proper epistemic rules in this domain is

to put ourselves in the dark, or in the power of the Prince of Darkness, and by our own consent to give ourselves up to delusion to believe a lie. For if strength of persuasion be the light which must guide us, I ask how shall any one distinguish between the delusions of Satan and the inspiration of the Holy Ghost?

(4.19.13)

Philosophers from antiquity all the way to Descartes had invoked the prospect of evil demons (Pasnau 2017, ch. 6), but in most contexts this stood only as a remote sceptical scenario. In the present context, in contrast, the risk of demonic influence looks much more like a live possibility. Whether or not Locke took it seriously, many of his readers would have, and this caused great scepticism regarding claimants to some special illumination.

Of course, the prior credences of modern readers will lie very much on Locke's side, and so will judge putative revelations to be much more likely the result of 'a warmed or overweening brain' (4.19.7) than a direct revelation from God. Yet, to understand Locke's arguments in their context, and to see why they are of such epistemic significance, it is important to recognize

how easily, at the time, disagreements might arise among highly intelligent people. Damaris Cudworth, for instance, was surprised to find Locke characterizing John Smith as an enthusiast. And Anne Conway, to take another example, came gradually over the last years of her life to embrace Quakerism. In a letter from 1675 she warned her friend and former teacher Henry More against letting his opinion of the Quakers be formed by ‘the reports of others, who either through prejudice or ignorance had doubtlessly misrepresented them to you’ (Conway 1992, n. 253). More, as we have seen, had dismissed the Quakers in print, several decades earlier, as the worst of enthusiasts. Conway, famously independent in her judgments, reached a different conclusion. Yet she worried, and her next letter expressed concern over ‘the great difference of opinion in this point among the learned and experienced, [which] occasions much perplexity in minds less exercised, and so not well fitted for judging’ (Conway 1992, n. 257). What then is one to do? In this same letter, which contains Conway’s last surviving reflections on the subject, she remarks only that ‘I pray God give us all a clear discerning between melancholy enthusiasm and true inspiration, that we may not be imposed upon to believe a lie’ (Conway 1992). One might reasonably wonder about the cogency of praying for illumination to distinguish true from false illumination. Yet perhaps our epistemic situation allows for no better strategy.

What is so interesting about Locke’s discussion in *Essay* 4.19 is that he thinks we have the epistemic resources to do better. To see how this story goes, we need to look in detail at the foundational structure of his epistemology.

## 2 Grounds of assent

Among Locke’s most cherished commitments is the claim that rational assent requires grounds commensurate to the strength of that assent (Boespflug 2019b). Here is one canonical formulation:

The mind if it will proceed rationally ought to examine all the grounds of probability and see how they make more or less, for or against any probable proposition, before it assents to or dissents from it, and upon a due balancing the whole, reject, or receive it, with a more or less firm assent, proportionably to the preponderancy of the greater grounds of probability on one side or the other.

(4.15.5)

Enthusiasm runs afoul of this precept. Indeed, the abiding interest of his critique of enthusiasm is that it provides one of the principal test cases for Locke’s theory of rational belief. But to understand why the theory rules enthusiasm to be ungrounded, we must come to grips with Locke’s conception of epistemic grounds.

Locke’s most considered statements on this topic suggest that there are two fundamental epistemic grounds: first, the *internal* evidence that comes to us through ideas obtained from sensation and reflection, as processed by reasoning; second, the *external* evidence that comes to us through the testimony of others. This is the view he suggests in the section immediately prior to the preceding passage, where he writes:

The grounds of it [probability] are, in short, these two following:  
First, the conformity of anything with our own knowledge, observation, and experience.  
Secondly, the testimony of others, vouching their observation and experience. (4.15.4)

Here, as elsewhere in the *Essay*, Locke speaks of ‘grounds’ when discussing merely probable belief. Knowledge, in contrast, requires no grounds, because in such cases we simply *perceive* the connection of ideas (4.1.2). But even if the theory of grounds is not a fully general statement of the sources that should govern assent, it does seem to exhaust the sources that legitimately support degrees of belief short of knowledge. As we will see, these are the cases at issue in Locke’s treatment of enthusiasm.

The first of these two grounds refers to Locke’s overarching account of how we acquire ideas through sensation and reflection and connect them through reason. This is of course a story that gets developed in nearly every chapter of the *Essay*. The second ground requires special discussion at this point in Book 4, both because testimony had traditionally been neglected in epistemology, and because Locke himself had, until now, said little about it. Accordingly, chapter 16 extends his theory of rationality to a variety of cases of testimony (see Boespflug 2019a), and then concludes the chapter by focusing on a special case: that of ‘such a one as cannot deceive, nor be deceived, and that is of God himself. This is called by a peculiar name, *revelation*, and our assent to it *faith*’ (4.16.14). From this point forward, the *Essay* gives increasing attention to the special case of religious belief, to the point that he sometimes characterizes the two grounds of assent as faith and reason (4.19.3). This is liable to mislead, because reason is officially an intellectual faculty that discovers the connection of ideas (4.17.2), and faith is, most broadly, assent to any probable proposition (1.1.3) or, more narrowly, an unwavering assent to revelation (4.16.14). If we are to speak strictly, then, it is the coherence of any proposal with our knowledge or experience that is the internal ground of assent, and revelation (and other sorts of testimony) that constitute the external grounds.

Locke describes enthusiasm as a ‘third ground of assent’ (4.19.3), but this too is liable to mislead. Most obviously, as the earlier-quoted remark to Damaris Cudworth makes clear, he does not regard enthusiasm as a *valid* ground of assent. And inasmuch as ‘enthusiasm’ is a term of opprobrium, no one could even have *supposed* that enthusiasm might ground belief. Rather, as we have seen, enthusiasm is a label for those who go wrong in a certain way with regard to their faith, which is to say that they improperly give their unwavering assent to a putative revelation. We might want to say that enthusiasm is a kind of faith, but Locke and his contemporaries cannot taxonomize in quite that way, because by common consent ‘faith’ is a success term or, less anachronistically, faith is a virtue, which cannot be used badly. So although the enthusiast is engaging in a practice that has obvious similarities to faith, depending as it does on a putative divine revelation, it is strictly speaking a distinct ground of assent or, better still, a mistaken appeal to testimony that is in fact ungrounded. With this taxonomy of grounds in place, we are now in a position to look closely at where the enthusiast goes wrong.

### 3 Locke’s critique of enthusiasm

Locke’s case against the enthusiasts rests on first establishing that they cannot found their beliefs on any internal grounds, and then that they cannot found their beliefs on external grounds, leaving them nothing but to reason in a circle. The framework for his argument gets laid in the chapter that precedes the new chapter on enthusiasm, in which Locke describes the separate domains of faith and reason, tied as we have seen to two distinct grounds of assent. On one hand, ‘whatever proposition is revealed whose truth our mind, by its natural faculties and notions, cannot judge, that is purely matter of faith, and above reason’ (4.18.9). Examples of such *pure faith* are the fall of the angels and the final resurrection (4.18.7). Reason, on the other hand, pertains to ‘all propositions whereof the mind, by the use of its natural faculties, can come

to determine and judge, from naturally acquired ideas' (4.18.9). These two domains are not, however, mutually exclusive. In cases where the judgment of reason is merely probable, revelation may override, yielding a case of what we might call *impure faith*. In other cases, reason may override faith. This can happen if reason's judgment is demonstratively certain, in which case faith in something contrary can gain no purchase. It also falls to reason to assess the grounds for supposing that a particular claim to revelation is legitimate, and to proportion one's belief accordingly. The place of reason here is not immediately obvious, given that the subject matter of pure faith lies 'above reason.' This is to say, however, that the *contents* of such a proposition cannot be evident to us in a way that would justify assent, which is to say that there can be no *internal* grounds of epistemic support. What that leaves, in the Lockean system, is that there may be – and indeed must be, if the mind is to proceed rationally – *external* grounds of epistemic support, in the form of testimony. And reason has a role to play here, because Locke thinks that testimony has evidential force only to the degree that reason is satisfied as to its legitimacy. In normal cases of testimony, this depends on the satisfaction of his six criteria – the number of reporters, their integrity, skill, etc. (4.15.4) – while in the case of religious faith it depends on the report's being accompanied by miracles (4.16.13–14).

It is characteristic of enthusiasm to deny the need for such rational legitimization. As Locke understands their position,

Reason is lost upon them, they are above it: they see the light infused into their understandings, and cannot be mistaken. . . . It is its own proof, and can have no other. . . . We see it as we do that of the sun at noon, and need not the twilight of reason to show it us.

(4.19.8)

This is, moreover, no mere caricature of their position. Compare this passage from Robert Barclay's *Apology* (1678), the most authoritative statement of Quaker theology (Pyper 2015) and a book that Locke himself owned:

These divine inward revelations, which we make absolutely necessary for the building up of true faith, neither do nor can ever contradict the outward testimony of the Scriptures, or right and sound reason. Yet from hence it will not follow that these divine revelations are to be subjected to the examination either of the outward testimony of the Scriptures or of the natural reason of man, as to a more noble or certain rule or touchstone. For this divine revelation and inward illumination is that which is evident and clear of itself, forcing by its own evidence and clearness the well disposed understanding to assent, irresistibly moving the same thereunto, even as the common principles of natural truths move and incline the mind to natural assent.

(*quire B3v*)

In contrast to Locke's famous declaration that 'reason must be our last judge and guide in every thing' (4.19.14), Barclay emphatically disavows reason's involvement in determining what constitutes a genuine inspiration. But this is not to say that the Quaker reliance on an inner light is *irrational*. On the contrary, an inward illumination is 'evident and clear of itself,' and no more requires further examination through reason than do 'natural truths' such as the principle of noncontradiction (the very example Barclay goes on to give).

When one takes the time to look seriously at the details of Barclay's position, it becomes clear that it is by no means absurd. His language of 'light' and 'clarity' has, after all, made other noteworthy appearances in history – not least in one of Locke's most important interlocutors, René Descartes. And although Descartes and his disciples were sometimes described as philosophical enthusiasts (Lennon 1993; Heyd 1995, ch. 4), we do not find Locke making this sort of complaint. Moreover, we have seen Locke himself speak of the light in which the Gospel newly appeared to him in the winter of 1694–95. What is it, then, about the 'internal light' of the enthusiasts that makes Locke so convinced of its epistemic bankruptcy?

The first stage in Locke's reply is to insist that their talk of seeing in an inner light is mere 'metaphor' that must be 'stripped' away (4.19.9). As a result, 'however it be called light and seeing, I suppose it is at most but belief and assurance' (4.19.10). Enthusiasts do not *see*, for instance, an imminent Second Coming – for it hasn't occurred; rather, they are in some way purportedly *told* of an imminent Second Coming by God himself. This has a technical consequence for Locke, inasmuch as it means that the enthusiast's mere 'belief' must be based not on the internal ground of a connection between ideas, but on the external ground of testimony. 'What I see I know to be so by the evidence of the thing itself,' but 'what I believe I take to be so upon the testimony of another' (4.19.10).

Once the enthusiast's position has been redescribed as a case of testimony, the question then becomes whether there are grounds for endorsing an auxiliary proposition – that the testimony has, indeed, come from God himself. And Locke of course thinks that no such grounds are available:

But this testimony I must know to be given [by God], or else what ground have I of believing? I must see that it is God that reveals this to me, or else I see nothing. The question then here is, How do I know that God is the revealer of this to me; that this impression is made upon my mind by his holy Spirit, and that therefore I ought to obey it? If I know not this, how great soever the assurance is that I am possessed with, it is groundless; whatever light I pretend to, it is but *enthusiasm*.

(4.19.10)

As evidence that it is God at work, Locke accepts nothing short of the evidence of miracles (see Nathan Rockwood, in this volume), something he thinks enthusiasts will be unable to supply. But if their case cannot be grounded in testimony, and does not exhibit the internal evidentness that arises from the connection of ideas, then the result is that their beliefs are wholly ungrounded. What is left, then, is that their reasoning is circular: 'this light they are so dazzled with is nothing but an *ignis fatuus* that leads them continually round in this circle. *It is a revelation, because they firmly believe it, and they believe it, because it is a revelation*' (4.19.10).

Has Locke treated the enthusiast fairly? Early in their history, the Quakers had sought to defend themselves by a careful documentation of the miracles that attended their faith (Fox 1948). But in tamping down the more extreme elements of their religion, they found it prudent to downplay such claims to the supernatural, and so the Quakers suppressed their book of miracles. Instead, as we saw in Barclay, their preferred defence was an appeal to the irresistibility of their inner light. Locke denies that this should count as a genuine light at all, but does he have principled reasons for doing so? Here lies the epistemic heart of these issues.

As we have seen, Locke is more than happy to countenance a kind of light that can serve as the internal ground of belief. But why not think that this light too is nothing but 'belief and assurance,' ungrounded until further reasons are provided? To this sort of *tu quoque* objection



Locke has a very clear reply: he thinks that such a light can serve as its own epistemic ground, without the need of any further rational support, when that light simply is the *evidentness* of our ideas:

Light, true light in the mind, is or can be nothing else but the evidence of the truth of any proposition; and if it be not a self-evident proposition, all the light it has, or can have, is from the clearness and validity of those proofs upon which it is received.

(4.19.13)

In effect, Locke here recognizes that even his preferred talk of light is metaphorical, as it obviously must be. But in the epistemically good case, when the metaphor is stripped away, we are left with something capable of supporting itself, the evidentness of a proposition. His remarks here harken back to his earlier account of the two degrees of knowledge, intuition and demonstration (see Jennifer Smalligan Marušić, in this volume). In cases of intuition, the mind immediately grasps the agreement or disagreement between ideas. Demonstration, in turn, is a linking together of several intuitions to produce a mediated connection between ideas. ‘Whatever comes short of one of these, with what assurance soever embraced, is but faith or opinion, but not knowledge’ (4.2.14). Given, then, that enthusiasts have neither on their side – and fail, beyond this, to ground adequately their alleged access to testimony – there is simply no epistemically respectable footing for their beliefs.

In appealing to ‘evidence’ – that is, to the evidentness of a proposition – Locke invokes a concept that runs back to medieval conceptions of knowledge. No wonder, then, that Barclay seeks to claim that same concept for himself. As we saw earlier, he characterizes the Quakers’ inner illumination as ‘forcing by its own evidence and clearness the well disposed understanding to assent, irresistibly moving the same thereunto.’ This draws directly on that older scholastic tradition, according to which an evident proposition is precisely one that compels assent (Pasnau 2017, p. 33). Locke requires more than this. For a proposition to qualify as fully evident on his account, it must not just be subjectively irresistible (4.16.9), but also have the right sort of content: its constituent ideas must be perceived to agree either immediately through intuition or mediately through demonstration. And the whole point of the distinction between faith and reason is that this sort of self-evident content is not available in the domain of religious faith, where by definition the propositions at stake are ‘above reason’ (4.18.9). Here, then, no matter how much an individual may feel compelled by some sort of inner light, such talk amounts to nothing more than ‘belief and assurance’ (4.19.10). As in all cases of pure faith, the only solid ground available is testimony that can be proved to be reliable.

Ultimately, the problem faced by the enthusiast may be a problem that all epistemic theories must confront sooner or later. After all, many have doubted whether further reason is available for endorsing some of our most fundamental sources of knowledge, for instance, perception and memory. And Locke himself runs out of things to say when it comes to explaining just why we should trust our intuitions about the connection of ideas. In the end, he too must appeal to compulsion: ‘this part of knowledge is irresistible, and, like bright sunshine, forces itself immediately to be perceived, as soon as ever the mind turns its view that way’ (4.2.1). Yet this, as our close scrutiny of the enthusiast’s position has revealed, is precisely how they seek to ground their epistemic claims. And if it comes down to an appeal to bare phenomenology, then perhaps the enthusiast’s feeling of conviction is very much like the conviction that arises from the most respectable sorts of intuition and demonstration. Perhaps the abiding interest of the enthusiasts is that the problem confronting every epistemic theory is one that they confront right from the start.

## Further reading

- Ashcraft, Richard (1969). "Faith and Knowledge in Locke's Philosophy," in J. Yolton (ed.), *John Locke: Problems and Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 194–223.
- Jolley, Nicholas (2016). *Toleration and Understanding in Locke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Passmore, John (1986). "Locke and the Ethics of Belief," in A. Kenny (ed.), *Rationalism, Empiricism, and Idealism* (Clarendon: Oxford University Press).
- Weinberg, Shelley (2020). "Locke's Natural and Religious Epistemology," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 58: 2, 241–266.
- Wolterstorff, Nicholas (1997). *John Locke and the Ethics of Belief* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

## Bibliography

- Anstey, Peter R. (2019). "Locke, the Quakers and Enthusiasm," *Intellectual History Review* 29: 199–217.
- Astbury, Raymond (1978). "The Renewal of the Licensing Act in 1693 and Its Lapse in 1695," *The Library* (fifth series) 33: 296–322.
- Barclay, Robert (1678). *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity* (London).
- Boespflug, Mark (2019a). "Locke on Testimony," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 27: 1135–1150.
- Boespflug, Mark (2019b). "Locke's Principle of Proportionality," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 101: 237–257.
- Conway, Anne (1992). *The Conway Letters: The Correspondence of Anne, Viscountess Conway, Henry More and their Friends, 1642–1684*, ed. M. Nicolson and S. Hutton (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- Fox, George (1948). *Book of Miracles*, ed. H. Cadbury (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Heyd, Michael (1995). "Be Sober and Reasonable": *The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill).
- Hill, Christopher (1972). *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (New York: Viking Press).
- Israel, Jonathan I. (1991). "William III and Toleration," in O. P. Grell, J. I. Israel, and N. Tyacke (eds.), *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 129–170.
- Knox, Ronald A. (1950). *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion, with Special Reference to the XVII and XVIII Centuries* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- Lennon, Thomas (1993). *The Battle of the Gods and Giants* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).
- Locke, John (1976–1989). *The Correspondence of John Locke*, ed. E. S. de Beer, 8 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- Locke, John (1979). *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- Locke, John (1997). "Enthusiasm," in M. Goldie (ed.), *Locke: Political Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- More, Henry (1656). *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus or A Discourse of the Nature, Causes, Kinds, and Cure, of Enthusiasme* (London).
- Pasnau, Robert (2017). *After Certainty: A History of Our Epistemic Ideals and Illusions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Pyper, Hugh S. (2015). "Robert Barclay: The Art of Apologetics," in S. Angell and P. Dandelion (eds.), *Early Quakers and Their Theological Thought, 1647–1723* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 207–223.
- Smith, John (1660). *Select Discourses: Of the True Way or Method of Attaining to Divine Knowledge* (London: J. Flesher).
- Tortarolo, Edoardo (2016). *The Invention of Free Press: Writers and Censorship in Eighteenth Century Europe* (Dordrecht: Springer).
- Walker, D. P. (1988). "The Cessation of Miracles," in I. Merkel and A. G. Debus (eds.), *Hermeticism and the Renaissance* (Washington, DC: The Folger Shakespeare Library), 114–124.