

Locke's Offices¹

There is a curious moment in Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) when he turns to the question of what discourses on ethics a young English gentleman in the making should be encouraged to read. This is a question of some importance, one would have thought, in a treatise whose stated goal is an education to virtue and service to one's country, especially given Locke's claim that education "is that which makes the great difference in mankind;" . . . of all the men we meet with," he says, "nine parts of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education." (&1) But the brevity of his treatment here--earlier in the treatise he has spent at least ten times as long on proper methods of toilet training and five times as long on the question of whether children should be allowed to eat melons and plums or apples and pears--as well as the brevity of his actual reading list, occasion some surprise. Indeed, Locke explicitly recommends reading just two books in the sphere of morality:

The knowledge of virtue, all along from the beginning, in all the instances he is capable of, being taught him, more by practice than rules; and the love of reputation, instead of satisfying his appetite, being made habitual in him; I know not whether he should read any other discourses of morality, but what he finds in the Bible; or have any system of ethics put into his hand, till he can read Tully's Offices, not as a school-boy to learn Latin, but as one who would be informed in the principles and precepts of virtue, for the conduct of his life. (&185)

Even allowing for the primary beneficiaries of this advice--budding English gentlemen--we might think that Locke's list is rather slim. But more important, one may well wonder how, armed with these two texts in particular, anyone² could hope to formulate a set of coherent and sufficiently well-grounded moral principles and precepts of the sort needed to embark on the business of being a virtuous member of civil society. Minimally, for Locke, civic virtue involves obeying society's laws, of course, and it also requires attempting to serve one's fellow citizens to one's utmost, since, as Locke puts it, such service is "an indispensable duty which separates men from cattle" (*STE*, preface). A further prerequisite for virtue, however, is some understanding of the principles that guide one's obedience and service to society, and it is this demand especially that raises questions about Locke's choice of these two texts.

If I take to heart the principles of virtue I find in Cicero's *De Officiis*, I am supposed to view myself, above all, as part of a larger rational community which includes not only all men but the gods as well. This natural community is bound by the rational dictates of divine law, and my reason for obeying those dictates is that they furnish me with principles and precepts of virtue that not only help me to best fulfill my own rational nature and achieve my own happiness and ultimate good, but they also impel me to benefit my fellow rational creatures. Juxtapose this view of the grounding principles of our conduct with some central commitments of Locke which he takes to be rooted in a biblical conception of moral motivation, and it is hard

¹ I am indebted to Tony Long for first alerting me to connections between Locke and Cicero, and this paper is in many ways an extended footnote to his groundbreaking "Stoic Philosophers on Persons, Property-Ownership, and Community," *BICS*, suppl. 68 (1997) pp.13-31. I also would like to thank Peter Koritansky, Jon Miller, Brad Inwood, Jerry Schneewind, Myles Burnyeat, Joe DeFilippo, and Mary Clapinson, Keeper of Special Collections and Western Manuscripts, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

² See J.W. Yolton, *Locke and Education* (New York, 1971) p.31 for the claim that Locke's account is meant to cover not just gentlemen, but all men.

to suppress the thought that at least with respect to our budding gentlemen's moral diet, Locke seems to be getting his plums and apples confused. For Locke, the law of nature is not to be identified with right reason; rather, it is simply a declaration of God's superior will. In his earlier *Essays on the Law of Nature*, for instance, Locke explicitly distinguishes his own view from that of the Stoics and Cicero, claiming that . . . "reason does not so much lay down and decree this law of nature as it discovers and investigates a law which is ordained by a higher power . . ." "Nor is reason the maker of this law, but its Interpreter--unless we are willing to diminish the dignity of the supreme lawgiver and attribute to reason that received law which it only investigates." (*An Detur Morum Regula sive Lex Naturae*; *Essays on the Law of Nature* I).

So too, Locke's account of our reasons for obeying God's will run directly counter to one of the most strongly held principles of Cicero's *De Officiis*. Cicero begins and ends his advice to Marcus with an attack on hedonism, a doctrine which, he says, one must fight "with horse and foot" (*Off.* 3.116) if one is to guard and preserve the virtues, since "all pleasure is contrary to honourableness (*honestas*)" and it undermines human sociability, liberality, friendship, and even courteousness (*Off.* 3.118). For Locke, of course, things "are good and evil, only in reference to pleasure and pain" (*Essay* ii.xx.2). But matters get even worse. None of the ancient hedonists Cicero attacks ever had the temerity to actually try to ground the pursuit of pleasure in the workings of divine providence itself, as Locke does. Thus, one can only imagine Cicero's response to the following claim from Book two, chapter vii of the *Essay*:

Beyond all this, we may find another reason why God hath scattered up and down several degrees of pleasure and pain, in all the things that environ and affect us; and blended them together in almost all that our thoughts and senses have to do with;--that we, finding imperfection, dissatisfaction, and want of complete happiness, in all the enjoyments which the creatures can afford us, might be led to seek it in the enjoyment of Him with whom there is fullness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore." (ii.vii.5)

Moreover, when in His infinite wisdom and goodness, Locke's God joins the perception of pleasure and pain to the objects of our thought so that we are not left "unemployed" and "unmotivated", He does so in a way that would strike, not just Cicero, but even the ancient hedonists themselves as being harmful to our natures and careless of our ultimate good. For Locke, the joys and pleasures of heaven serve as our ultimate hedonic reward, but they are not our *summum bonum* in the sense that they fulfill and perfect our nature or correspond to our final good. Indeed, Locke denies that God's divine law mandates any objective universal content for human pleasure and happiness either in this life or in the next; pleasures and pains are simply subjective states, and he thinks that nothing could be more evident than the fact that such states of pleasure vary widely from individual to individual. The celestial pleasures awaiting at God's right hand are therefore conceived by Locke as being unmixed with any perceptions of pain; they still arise, however, from sources that remain relative to individual tastes and they offer witness, as it were, to the irreducible and eternal diversity of human desire.³ This is because Locke takes it as both fundamental and evident that we enjoy our pleasures in different ways and come to associate pleasure and pain with different objects. "Hence it was, I think, that the philosophers of old did in vain inquire, whether *summum bonum* consisted in riches, or bodily delights, or virtue, or contemplation: and they might have reasonably disputed, whether the best relish were to be found in apples, plums, or nuts, and have divided themselves into sects upon it." (*Essay* ii.xxi.56) So much then for one of the deepest structuring principles not only of Cicero's *De Officiis*, but of almost all ancient ethics. But Locke's comment here raises a further problem. If it is vain to dispute about whether the best relish is to be found in apples or plums, at least some gentlemen who have undergone the regimen prescribed in *Of Education* might be driven to reflect back on why they were forbidden even any knowledge of the sweet temptations of plums (&20) and encouraged to choke down their apples, if tastes and pleasures "are very different things" to different men. (cf. *Essay* ii.xxi.56) Presumably, it was because, as Locke claims, apples "never did any body hurt" whereas plums can be unwholesome. Yet Locke is perfectly prepared to leave the pursuit of health to the whims of an individual's subjective hedonic calculus:

³ Colman, John, *John Locke's Moral Philosophy* (Edinburgh, 1983) pp.242-243.

And therefore it was a right answer of the physician to his patient that had sore eyes:--If you have more pleasure in the taste of wine than in the use of your sight, wine is good for you; but if the pleasure of seeing be greater to you than the drinking of wine, wine is naught. (*Essay* ii.xxi.55)

Accordingly, given his voluntarism, his hedonistic account of the springs of human action, and his subjectivism about human happiness, it is puzzling that Locke, when thinking how best to mold human desire and behavior through education, singles out a Ciceronian text that furnishes principles for the systematic guidance and understanding of one's moral conduct so deeply contrary to his own and to those he finds in Scripture. One might, perhaps, point to the relentlessly practical nature of much of his educational regimen and argue that Locke believes that the real work of education depends on habituating children in the mastery of their appetites--something best effected, he believes, by carefully managing their love of reputation, not by subjecting them to the "learned noise and dust" of book learning and academic dispute. Yet, although Locke continually emphasizes that the object of education is to live and not to dispute, and although this particular recommendation of reading in the sphere of morality seems to be given almost grudgingly, he certainly expects the recipients of his training to learn to make moral judgments, since their proper calling is service to their country, for which they need both moral and political knowledge. Such judgments, in turn, require an understanding of how to apply moral precepts to particular moral situations and to relate precepts to their foundational principles.⁴

Clearly, there are severe problems facing Locke in this regard arising from his subjectivist and relativist theory of the good. As his early critics complained, his account of moral principles seems to provide no lack of incentive for our obedience without, however, being sufficiently forthcoming about the actual content we need to structure particular moral decisions and give shape to our overall moral and political conduct. But even as our budding English gentleman encounters these difficulties, he faces a number of other epistemological hurdles on the road to furnishing himself with even a minimal set of appropriate moral propositions for regulating his moral life. Locke began the first draft of *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* in 1684 (BL; Add. MS 38,771) while he concurrently was working on the *Essay*, and it is clear that the epistemological doctrines of the *Essay* figure in his account of moral development. Children he considers "only as white paper, or wax, to be moulded and fashioned as one pleases" (&216); they are as free of innate moral tendencies as the mind is of intellectual content. In order for them to make progress in moral understanding they must first be furnished with simple moral ideas and they must begin to observe the connections among these ideas in their experience. First and foremost, and crucial to the course of their future moral lives, Locke says, is having an idea of God imprinted on their minds "by gentle degrees." (&136-7) This "true notion of God, as of the independent Supreme Being, Author and maker of all things, from whom we receive all our good, who loves us, and gives us all things . . ." is best settled in the mind of children, Locke believes, not by abstruse explanations of God's ineffable nature, but by pointing out to them simply that God made all things and "does all manner of good to those that love and obey him." Reading comes to play a part in the progress of children's moral understanding when they begin to learn to form more complex moral propositions and precepts. To borrow the more technical terminology of the *Essay*, a child begins, as it were, to construct mixed-mode moral ideas (cf. e.g. III. ix. 5). Again, this is to be done, Locke argues, "by gentle degrees" since parents often make the mistake of heaping too many complex rules and precepts on children when they are too young to understand them (&65). Parents and tutors also make the mistake of allowing children, for example, to read too promiscuously in the Bible, a mistake that Locke says is a likely reason that some men have never been able to attain clear and distinct thoughts of religious ideas. (&158) Children should only be allowed to read stories such as David and Goliath and Joseph and his brothers so that they absorb easy and plain moral rules such as 'What you would have others do unto you, do you the same unto them' (&159. cf. *STG* ii.5). The tutor, moreover, is to make use of these Biblical exempla and rules not only for reading but also for instruction; and as they become fixed in a child's memory they begin to serve as "the standing and sacred rules of his life and actions." (&159)

⁴ On these issues, see the incisive discussion of John Colman (1983) pp. 69-75.

Locke is fairly clear about the kinds of ideas and moral propositions he wants children to gain from their reading of the Bible. He fails to explicitly set out, however, what he thinks is to be gained from a reading of *De Officiis*. His reference to its providing a 'system of ethics', though, suggests a further stage of moral understanding that is analogous to how the improvement of one's understanding proceeds in the *Essay*. There, one's understanding improves and one can competently begin judging the reasoning and coherence of what one hears when one begins to discover the foundations upon which various propositions rest-- to see that is, where any proposition advanced ultimately "bottoms" and to trace out all the intermediate steps. But if this, or something like it, is Locke's intent in his recommendation of the *De Officiis*, it is hard to see how one can hope to take the simple moral propositions that one gains from one's reading of the Bible and "bottom" them in Cicero's text. That God has created us and offers us the hope of eternal reward for our obedience is not, at first blush, the sort of proposition that would seem to have much hope of being grounded in the *De Officiis*. Even if one were able to perform some of the more fanciful interpretive maneuvers on Cicero's text practiced by Locke's contemporaries--think, for instance, of Cudworth turning Cicero into a proponent of monotheism--it just seems too far-fetched, even with the help of some Cudworthian legerdemain, to suppose that one could find in the *De Officiis* the kinds of foundational principles Locke needs to ground his voluntarism, hedonism, and subjectivism about the good.

An obvious question that presents itself at this point is whether, given these difficulties, we should take Locke's recommendation of Cicero as having any real philosophical import. Surely, one might be excused for wondering if so much heavy weather should be made out of what for all intents and purposes appears to be nothing more than a passing comment. Perhaps Locke nodded a little, or maybe he approved of those bits of *De Officiis* in which Cicero says some like-minded things about civility and the overall comportment of gentlemen, hence his endorsement. Or perhaps he merely is indulging in a bit of donnishness which, although potentially misleading, is of the sort that can be excused in someone of his background and set. Subjecting a seemingly innocent and minor display of learning to further examination might reveal something about the man and his times, perhaps, but it hardly seems to license a search for deeper philosophical implications. Of course, judging from standard recent works on Locke, one would hardly seem justified in concluding that Cicero played even a donnishly ornamental role in Locke's thought. The authoritative *Cambridge Companion to Locke*,⁵ for instance, has no entry at all for Cicero, nor for that matter does what is probably the most probing discussion of Locke's moral theory, John Colman's book. Even in the detailed and voluble Cranston,⁶ there is not a single mention. Nathan Tarcov, in his painstaking commentary on *Some Thoughts on Education*, emphasizes Locke's historical milieu⁷ and briefly touches on our passage; but he quickly segues into a discussion of the importance of Pufendorf for understanding Locke's educational regimen. At best, Cicero sometimes gets the occasional stray mention in discussions of the general historical background to Locke's views on natural law and property. But even there he is treated as one distant historical forerunner among many--distinguished by his antiquity, perhaps, but certainly not viewed as one who was taken by Locke to be an important thinker on these issues or as someone who had any direct or palpable influence on him.⁸

I will argue that this general effacement of Cicero in Lockean scholarship is a mistake, and not just because it blurs the historical record, though, of course, getting the history straight is sufficient justification in its own right for a reappraisal. That Locke's thought on particular issues was spurred by reading particular Ciceronian texts (there is manifest evidence that it was) or that he was led to express and structure

⁵ Chappell, V., ed (Cambridge, 1994)

⁶ Cranston, M. *John Locke. A Biography* (Oxford, 1957).

⁷ Tarcov, N. *Locke's Education for Liberty* (Chicago, 1984)

⁸ The one outstanding exception is John Marshall's *John Locke. Resistance, Religion, and Responsibility* (Cambridge, 1994). Marshall gives a massively learned and historically nuanced account of Locke's intellectual development which is now the indispensable starting point for anyone interested in connections between Locke and Cicero. He amasses evidence for the role of Cicero both in Locke's earlier (chapter 5, pp. 157-204) and later (chapter 7, pp. 292-326) social thought and carefully relates this evidence to a wide range of intellectual and personal influences. Marshall offers evidence that sometimes overlaps with, though often goes far beyond, anything I can offer here. In a few places I register disagreements of detail, but my own argument is admittedly much more narrowly focussed and it certainly does not pretend to do justice to Marshall's larger claims about Locke's milieu and overall development.

his arguments in ways deeply indebted to Cicero (here too we have ample evidence) are forms of influence that are important if we wish to understand the extent of Cicero's effect on the mind of Locke. But they leave open the further question of whether Ciceronian texts, in addition, actually influenced the nature and content of any of Locke's philosophical doctrines. In what follows, I will be making this stronger kind of claim for Ciceronian influence. When Locke recommends *De Officiis* along with the Bible, it is because it has for him systematic and foundational significance in the sphere of moral education; and the force of its arguments can be felt on the actual content of some of Locke's key doctrines. Cicero's claims are not always welcome nor are they always smoothly compatible with other views that Locke defends. Indeed, his continuing attraction to Ciceronian claims, even in the face of these other commitments, at times causes real philosophical difficulties for Locke; and it is not clear that he is always able to free himself from them. But we will misunderstand the nature of these difficulties both historically and philosophically, if we fail to notice Cicero's direct and palpable influence on Locke's thinking. Or at least, so I argue. But these are large claims, obviously, and we first need to backtrack a bit in order to look at some of the general evidence for Locke's relation to Cicero, since so far we have seen only one puzzling comment.

In his *Life of John Milton* (1698), John Toland indulges in the following bit of flattery, or at least what in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries could still pass for flattery.

John Locke . . . must be confessed to be the greatest philosopher after Cicero in the universe; for he is thoroughly acquainted with human nature, well versed in the useful affairs of the world, a great master of eloquence (qualities in which the Roman consul excelled) and like him also a hearty lover of his country, as appears by his treatises of Government and Education, not inferior in their kind to the divinest pieces of Tully. (1761 ed., p.136)

It would be interesting to know what Locke thought of this comparison, but it is unclear whether he ever took any particular notice of it. At least, there are no marginalia in the copy he owned, nor did he record any page lists in its back cover, which was his usual practice when something held any particular interest for him.⁹ But given Toland's self-stylization as a free thinker, and given his attempt to enlist Locke's epistemology in support of Deism, it is probably safe to suppose that Locke would have been extremely uneasy about any comparison with Cicero put in terms of religious belief. Perhaps, then, it was out of deference to Locke's sensitivity on this score that Toland makes no reference to what, for him, was especially telling and important--the similarities between Cicero's and Locke's religion. But in any case, the rest of Toland's comparison serves, in many respects, as a useful catalogue of Locke's relations to Cicero more generally and to *De Officiis* in particular.

It is likely that Locke was first introduced to *De Officiis* in school at Westminster, but it is hard to know exactly what this initial introduction might have consisted of.¹⁰ In an entry in his projected edition of the complete Cicero, Toland complains that in his day schoolboys did not actually read Cicero's texts but were merely forced to memorize a few sayings for the purpose of writing themes (*Cicero Illustratus*, 1712, I.231-232). This is a practice that Locke ridicules in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* since it forces a boy to "set his invention on the rack, to say something where he knows nothing, which is a sort of Aegyptian tyranny, to bid them make bricks who have not yet any of the materials" (&171). Locke's vehemence and evident distaste for this practice--as for much else in the commonly used methods of teaching Greek and Latin in his day--no doubt reflect his own experience both in having to write such themes and later having to

⁹ Harrison, John and Laslett, Peter, *The Library of John Locke* (Oxford, 1965) p. 38, for Locke's general practice in this regard.

¹⁰ Marshall (1994) pp.163-164 argues that much of Locke's life took place within networks of beneficence and gratitude and that *De Officiis* is a work "saturated with the celebration of the exchange of favours". This is true, but it is impossible to know whether (as Marshall seems to optimistically imply) these aspects of *De Officiis* were actually registering on Locke this early on; one needs to take into account not only his own and Toland's caveats, but also, perhaps, Locke's own persistent and self-confessed opsimathia.

mark them at Christ Church.¹¹ Interestingly, the first time we run across a reference to Cicero in Locke's letters is when Locke is nineteen and writing his first important letter to his benefactor Alexander Popham, the man who arranged for him to be admitted to Westminster School (De Beer 6). Locke, in thanking him and asking for another favor, adapts--and massacres the rhythm of-- Cicero's famous tag about it being the mark of a grateful disposition to wish to owe even more to one to whom one already owes much (*Ep. ad Fam.* ii. 6). Other Ciceronian tags appear throughout Locke's early letters, including Cicero's quotation and defense of his own poetry at *De Officiis* 1.77, "Cedant arma togae, concedant laurea laudi." But even if his boyhood knowledge of Cicero only encompassed a few well known tags, by the time of his Studentship at Christ Church, it is almost certain that Locke was actually reading and teaching the *De Officiis*, where it was the most frequently read work in the undergraduate curriculum, along with another frequently assigned work of Cicero, the *De Oratore*.¹²

We know as well that Locke began buying copies of Cicero's works at this time, his first being Erasmus' famous edition of *De Officiis*, immediately followed by a more recent Dutch edition of it as well. Indeed, by the time of his death, his library would have some nine editions of the *De Officiis*,¹³ including a popular recent translation in English. (T.Cockman, London 1699). In fact, no other book figures so prominently in his library, except for the Bible. Similarly, if we exempt the works of Locke himself, the most greatly represented author in his collection overall is Cicero, followed by Boyle.¹⁴ This is significant, since Locke's library was the working library of a scholar, not just a collection of rare and beautiful volumes. As Peter Laslett observes in this respect, as opposed to the medieval period, when books were so scarce that no one could hope to own enough to enable one to work by oneself, or our own period where there are so many books available that no one could possess all one needs to do one's writing, Locke lived in the heyday of when one could in the privacy of his study "hope to build up for himself a collection of books so complete that nearly all of his work as an author might be done with their aid alone."¹⁵ Such is certainly the case with Locke. Moreover, we know that Locke spent a lot of money--he had a lot to spend--and went to great amounts of trouble to acquire the scholarly editions of works that he needed, not because of their rarity or beauty--something for which he was vaguely contemptuous-- but because of their scholarly usefulness. His changing opinions about the value of various editions of Cicero are meticulously recorded, as just about almost everything else in his life, and near the end of his life he came to believe, for example, (*Thoughts Concerning Reading*) that the 1618 Hamburg edition by Gruyter and Gulielmus was the finest overall, followed by Elzevir's--the latter being an edition he never acquired for himself, but was able to use in the library of his friend, Benjamin Furley, when he was exiled in Holland (cf. Le Clerc to Locke, De Beer 1541).¹⁶ The extent of Locke's knowledge as well as his passionate interest in the details of various editions, I think, would be sobering to even the most bookish of contemporary classical scholars. To take just one of many instances: For years he kept up a correspondence with J.G Graevius, the Dutch scholar and book seller who had edited Cicero's letters and was bringing out a complete edition of the speeches and philosophical works as well. One can see in their correspondence an escalating attempt on the part of both men to outdo each other both in their mastery of Ciceronian style and in the breadth of their Ciceronian references, all the while chatting about what editions of classical authors are available, how much they cost, which are the best, etc. (see, e.g. De Beer, 1809). Nor is this just an isolated or random occurrence in the more than 1000 letters of Locke that survive. Rather, it is very much a part of what Toland commends in Locke, both with respect to his eloquence and with respect to his being well-versed in useful affairs of the world. Certainly to a significant extent, the way that Locke structures his friendships and relations more generally in his letters is very much self-consciously modeled on Cicero and it shares many of the same ethical views and

¹¹ There are some questions about Locke's diligence in this regard. Among the surviving collection of his botanical specimens are many mounted on unmarked themes. Bill, E.G.W. *Education at Christ Church, Oxford 1660-1800* (Oxford, 1988).

¹² Bill (1988) p. 276.

¹³ See the catalogue in Harrison and Laslett (1965) for an account of which editions Locke had access to at different times of his life.

¹⁴ Cf. Marshall (1994) p. 301 for a somewhat different reckoning.

¹⁵ Harrison and Laslett (1965) p.1.

¹⁶ Marshall (1994) p. 301 ff for an account of Ciceronian influences during Locke's exile in Holland.

presuppositions about the nature of friendship, liberality, gratitude, decorum, honorableness, etc.¹⁷ In part, no doubt, this is because, letter writing for Locke, as he writes in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, “has so much to do in all the occurrences of human life, that no gentleman can avoid showing himself in this kind of writing.” (&189). Letter writing, as well, lays a gentleman “open to a severer examination of his breeding, sense, and abilities, than oral discourses; whose transient faults . . . more easily escape observation and censure.” Letters, therefore, give evidence both of one’s eloquence and of one’s being versed in useful affairs of the world; and for Locke, it is Cicero’s letters that provide the “best pattern, whether for business or conversation” and his *De Inventione* that teaches the “skill and graces” of a proper style. (&189)

Of course, Ciceronian “skill and graces of style”, and a lifetime of correspondence based on Ciceronian models, and nine copies of the *De Officiis* in his library¹⁸, it might be objected, are perhaps suggestive, and may imply, at best, a variety of vague intellectual affinities here and there, but so what? One can continue multiplying evidence of this sort: the Ciceronian quotation from the *De natura deorum* on the frontispiece of the *Essay*; the fact that as an aged bachelor Locke gave an expensive copy of the *De Finibus* to his young sweetie; the ability, ascribed to various of Locke’s friends and teachers to be able to recite from memory whole works of Cicero, including all three books of the *De Officiis*.¹⁹ And if these appear a bit scattershot and hard to gauge--no doubt they are--among Locke’s unpublished manuscripts remain testimonies of an ongoing and deeper engagement with Cicero. We know that Locke worked on a commentary on *De Officiis* and also that in the last twenty years of his life he was attempting an exact chronology of Cicero’s life and major works. His only other such chronology was of the life of Jesus Christ.²⁰

We still might ask, of course, what does all of this really demonstrate? Is it evidence of a familiarity on Locke’s part with, or even fairly developed interest in, say, the writings of a figure who offered both for him and his culture certain sociologically and psychologically useful paradigms for mediating deep religious and political conflicts? No doubt. Or (if we wish to be less wholesome and less theoretically naive) did Cicero provide Locke, either consciously or subconsciously, with historical precedent for justifying and maintaining his own favored elitist social hierarchies? We could argue the point. Or (to take a tack that is more personal) did the trauma of his own exile lead Locke to increasingly identify with another misunderstood patriot and one of history’s most eloquent and important exiles? Perhaps; yet although these are all questions that might resonate in some areas of the University, I very much doubt that anything said so far will convince many of our colleagues in early modern philosophy that they need to begin citing Cicero. This is because, however interesting for intellectual historians or psychoanalysts, none of this evidence shows that Cicero had any very precise or meaningful influence on the actual nature and shape of Locke’s philosophical arguments, regardless of those nine copies of *De Officiis* sitting in his library at Oates or regardless of the hours he spent reading and commenting on his favorite pagan text.

So I want to up the ante a bit and claim that there are several key moments in Locke’s moral thinking when he, as it were, is in danger of getting knocked off what he takes to be his biblical high horse by commitments that he has picked up directly from *De Officiis*. I think this can be shown both in early works, such as the *Essays on the Law of Nature* (1663-4),²¹ as well as in later works, such as the fascinating little essay called the “Venditio” (1695).²² Its subject is modeled directly on Cicero’s account in *De Officiis* of a debate between Diogenes of Babylon and Antipater about how a good man, sailing from Alexandria to famine-stricken Rhodes, should act when faced with the possibility of making huge profits from the misery of others

¹⁷ Marshall gives a compelling account of these aspects of the relation of Locke and Cicero, see especially p. 164 ff with ft. 10.

¹⁸ Cf. Marshall (1994) p.301.

¹⁹ Marshall (1994) p. 162 for this (implausible) claim about Sanderson.

²⁰ For an account, see Marshall (1994) p.301.

²¹ I believe that even a cursory reading of this work shows Locke continually grappling with Ciceronian texts, and at times he even seems to be paraphrasing Cicero. The best modern scholarly edition is by W. Von Leyden (Oxford, 1965). Although remarkably learned and helpful in many ways, he seems to me to systematically gloss over this feature.

²² See Locke. *Political Essays*, ed. M. Goldie (Cambridge, 1997) pp. 339-42 with the account of Dunn, John “Justice and the Interpretation of Locke’s Political Theory” *Political Studies* 16, pp. 68-87.

(*Off. iii. 50 ff.*) But since Locke never published either of these works in his lifetime, we should perhaps give him the benefit of the doubt and focus on something he actually did publish.

So let us return to children and the problem of fruit. In *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, Locke divides education into the following four, at times overlapping, parts: “Virtue, Wisdom, Breeding, and Learning” (& 134), with virtue being “the first and most necessary of those endowments that belong to a man or gentleman, as absolutely requisite to make him valued and beloved by others, acceptable or tolerable to himself. Without that, . . . he will be happy neither in this, nor in the other world.” (& 135). As mentioned earlier, Locke believes that, as the foundation of virtue, it is necessary to imprint on young minds a true notion of God—a God “from whom we receive all our good, who loves us, and gives us all things.” (& 136). This notion of God as benign and eminently providential is important for a number of key elements in a child’s moral development. This is because such development itself is supposed to go forward in a general atmosphere free from fear and anger, since, in Locke’s view, learning to be motivated by fear or to act out of anger or a desire for vengeance will severely undermine one’s capacity for exercising one’s liberty. Yet, at the same time, we might want to raise some questions about the notion of God that Locke is actually appealing to here. In the first place, there seems to be nothing in Locke’s account that is obviously Christian or that depends on the revelation of Scripture.²³ Moreover, Locke pointedly fails to mention either the fear of God or the punishments that befall those who disobey his will. When one compares this, for instance, with passages from one of Locke’s later works, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, the difference is all the more telling. In this later work there is little doubt that Scripture holds out the threat that sinners shall be cast into an eternal furnace of fire and that on the judgment day there shall be much wailing and gnashing of teeth.²⁴ God’s just wrath and one’s fear of eternal punishment serve as important deterrents to immorality.

Locke’s desire to imprint on children’s minds a “true notion of God” that is strictly benign and providential is, therefore, striking. More striking still, is the extent to which this picture of divinity corresponds to what we find in *De Officiis*. For Cicero, anger is unsuitable for any rational creature and as such should be entirely eradicated from our moral lives. He therefore strongly disagrees with Peripatetic justifications of anger (*Off.* 1.89) and argues that it is utterly incompatible with virtuous behavior or with the just administration of law. With respect to the notion that the gods get angry, Cicero claims that “all philosophers, not only the ones who say that a god is free of business himself and imposes none on others, but also those who wish the god to be active and laboring all the time, share the view that he is never angry and never does harm.” (*Off.* 3. 102) Indeed, not only do the gods never harm us, it is they who are able to bring us the greatest benefits (*Off.* 2.11. cf. *ND 2 passim*); and the duties which take precedence over all others, he claims, are those we owe to the gods (*Off.* 1.160). Thus, the purely providential and irenic notion of God that Locke thinks serves as a foundational concept of moral education has more in common in these respects with what we find in Cicero than with what we are likely to find in Scripture. But what of the further notion that god loves us and that we should love him in return? We might think that this is something exclusively biblical. However, the notion of divine love is by no means a difficult inference to make from a number of passages in other works by Cicero, for instance much of book 2 of *De natura deorum* or book 5 of *De finibus* (5.65 ff) which describe the expanding bonds of affection between rational creatures and the care that the gods display in arranging everything in the world for our benefit. Voltaire, for example, repeatedly was to attribute such a doctrine to Cicero, probably relying on Locke’s contemporary, Samuel Clarke. Clarke thought that Cicero had discovered on the basis of natural reason alone a conception of divine love and that Cicero had come to advocate the universal love and brotherhood of mankind because of it. Locke certainly knew Clarke’s work and owned several of his books in his library. But it is unclear whether he ever explicitly took on board Clarke’s particular view of Cicero, though one certainly can find all the materials for such a view in *De Officiis* as well. As in these other works, Cicero presents in *De Officiis* a doctrine of the fellowship of men and gods (1.153) and of the natural bonds of affection between rational creatures; and he argues that we naturally love all those in whom virtue is seen to reside (1.54; 2.70-75) and who benefit us—the gods, of course, being preeminent on both these scores (cf. 1.126). In a related context, moreover, Cicero quotes Ennius’ line “Whom they fear they hate” (*Off.* 2.23) and argues that gaining another’s love provides a much more powerful and effective motive than fear for those from whom one

²³ See Tarcov (1984) p. 187.

²⁴ *The Works of John Locke* (London, 1794) vol.7, p.126.

wishes to secure obedience. It would be implausible to claim, no doubt, that Cicero offers an account of divine love that plumbs the deepest nuances of Christian *agape*. But, by the same token, it is hardly clear that Locke's simple, true notion of God does any better in this respect. And there is certainly nothing in Cicero, though there is much in Scripture and in the particular biblical stories Locke specifically recommends, to contradict what Locke takes to be fundamental for the development of virtue--that is, the notion of a purely beneficent, loving, and mild divinity. Notice, moreover, the idea that we should come to love God as the one who gives us all good things fits much more smoothly with the Ciceronian notion of a purely reasonable divinity; it sits rather less well, however, with a voluntarist conception of God as a lawmaker who attaches pleasure and pain to rules and whose sanctions we come to understand and obey through divine revelation. (cf. *STE* &61 where Locke seems to assert the view that one follows god's dictates by reason). Thus, given one's initial expectations about Locke's attitudes towards the two texts he recommends, such a result, I think, is rather surprising. But it does suggest why Locke thinks that *De Officiis* offers the possibility of systematic guidance--in a way, perhaps, that edifying stories from the Bible do not-- about, what is after all for Locke, the most important foundational principle in the development of a virtuous life--i.e. a true notion of God. At the same time, though, it is hardly clear that this "true notion" which, I would argue, is deeply Ciceronian, can support Locke's official version of voluntarism and his claims about the nature of the obedience we owe to the will of God.

Any reader of *De Officiis* and *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* is likely to be struck by the patently Ciceronian way that Locke's educational regimen, as he says in another context, "compleat(s) a Man in the Practice of Human Offices" (De Beer, 3322)--offices which, at least on the surface, look every bit like a laundry list of those famously advocated by Cicero: liberality, civility, courtesy, kindness, devotion to public life, gratitude, faithfulness, decorum, industry, self-denial and self-sacrifice, courage, etc.: and certainly any comprehensive account of the influence of *De Officiis* on Locke would need to carefully chart the passages and doctrines from his works that are evidently relying on or reacting to these features of Cicero's arguments.²⁵ Moreover, one would need to keep careful track of Locke's use of Ciceronian exempla, since early on his works are filled with references to e.g. Regulus, Cato, and Curtius. But under the influence of his near mania for contemporary travel literature, he tends to begin decking out what are obviously Ciceronian moral exempla in more exotic garb, though it is fairly obvious that they still owe their origins to passages in *De Officiis*.

Obviously, such a full-scale treatment is beyond the scope of this paper. So what I want to do, instead, is to conclude with a final agonistic claim--one that again suggests that Locke's reliance on doctrines he finds in *De Officiis* derail him, as it were, from what are generally taken to be his official lines--in this case, his accounts of hedonism and the subjectivity of the good. The basic philosophical point my discussion will be turning on is hardly profound or new and I am not even sure that it is right; nor would I claim that Locke elsewhere does not have the resources for defending himself from what is, after all, a very common and traditional objection to hedonism.²⁶ My aim, however, is a more limited one: to show that because Locke subscribes to a Ciceronian analysis of certain central moral qualities, he undermines his official views of hedonism and the subjectivity of the good.

For Locke, the aim of education is to instill in individuals a love a virtue and this is brought about by developing and then manipulating a child's capacity for feeling shame and for desiring the esteem of others. First, however, children must be taught self-denial: "To make a good, wise, and a virtuous man, it is fit he should learn to cross his appetite, and deny his inclination to riches, finery, or pleasing his palate, &c. whenever his reason advises the contrary, and his duty requires it." (&52). There is certainly nothing here which crosses Cicero (cf. *Off.* 1.102) since the subordination of appetite to reason is one of his unending themes. Locke, moreover, stresses in this connection another preoccupation of *De Officiis*, the importance of the approval and disapproval of others. For Locke, a child best learns to deny his appetites, not through what is ordinarily thought of as rewards and punishments, but through praise and blame:

"What principle of virtue do you lay in a child, if you will redeem his desires of one pleasure by the proposal of another? This is but to enlarge his appetite, and instruct it to wander. If a child cries for an unwholesome and dangerous fruit, you purchase his quiet by giving him a less hurtful sweetmeat. This perhaps may preserve his health, but spoils his mind, and sets

²⁵ See Marshall (1994) pp. 303-326 for some stimulating remarks in this vein.

²⁶ Though for strong doubts on this score, see Colman (1983) pp. 177-205.

that farther out of order. For here you only change the object; but flatter still his appetite, and allow that must be satisfied, wherein, as I have showed, lies the root of the mischief: and till you bring him to be able to bear the denial of that satisfaction, the child may at present be quiet and orderly, but the disease is not cured. By this way of proceeding you foment and cherish in him that which is the spring, from whence all evil flows; which will be sure on the next occasion to break out again with more violence, give him stronger longings, and you more trouble. (&55)

“The rewards and punishments then whereby we should keep children in order are quite of another kind. . . Esteem and disgrace are, of all others, the most powerful incentives to the mind, when once it is brought to relish them. If you can once get into children a love of credit, and an apprehension of shame and disgrace, you have put in them the true principle, which will constantly work, and incline them to the right.” (&56)

For Cicero, of course, the question of how virtuous behavior appears to others and how it is related to reputation is a central concern of *De Officiis*. Shame is an important indicator of appropriate behavior, for “without shame,” he says, “nothing can be upright, and nothing honorable” (*Off.* 148). Moreover, this extends for Cicero, as for Locke, to all areas of behavior and comportment: “let us follow nature and avoid anything that shrinks from the approval of eyes and ears. Let our standing, our walking, our sitting and our reclining, our countenances, our eyes and the movements of our hands all maintain what I have called seemliness (*decorum*)” (1.128). But for Cicero, virtue merits esteem because it is appropriate for man’s rational nature, i.e. “just where his nature differs from other creatures.” (*Off.* 1.96) Accordingly, virtuous behavior arouses the approval of others as soon as others come to recognize it as such: “For just as the eye is aroused by the beauty of the body because of the appropriate arrangement of limbs, . . . so this seemliness, shining out in one’s life, arouses the approval of one’s fellows, because of the order and constancy and moderation of every word and action.” (1.98) Locke, too, at times speaks of the way that particular qualities provoke esteem and admiration, and he uses very similar images: “The actions from a well-formed mind, please us also . . . This seems to me to be that beauty, which shines through some men’s actions, sets off all that they do and takes with all they come near; when by a constant practice they have fashioned their carriage, and made all those little expressions of civility and respect, which nature or custom has established in conversation . . .” (& 66). For both Locke and Cicero a desire for esteem is not to be equated with the love of virtue itself, but it is “that which comes nearest to it” (&61.) However, Locke’s hedonism and subjectivity about the good create an awkwardness for his intended account of the relation between esteem and virtue²⁷ and make it unclear how he can help himself to several of the tenets that he shares with Cicero. Locke argues, for instance, that children find pleasure in being esteemed and valued (&57) and that in order “to make the sense of esteem or disgrace sink the deeper, and be of the more weight, other agreeable or disagreeable things should constantly accompany these different states.” (& 58) But it is part of the logic of shame, as Cicero recognizes, that we do not necessarily experience feelings of disgrace merely because others disapprove of us; nor do we feel shame for actions that we do not think shameful, even if others show disapproval and try to shame us. Nor does the pleasure we enjoy in being treated with esteem derive solely from the fact that others approve of our actions; it is important that we also believe that our actions actually merit their just approval.²⁸ Locke certainly (cf. &60) recognizes that children must be able to distinguish between the just and unjust disapproval of their actions, and that some of their actions that actually merit the esteem of others may not meet with the esteem that they should. (cf.&61 ff). He therefore expects children who have been brought up to love virtue to act virtuously even when their virtuous acts meet with the disapproval of others. Cicero, of course, is able to justify such actions because he thinks that we should always pursue virtuous actions, regardless of the circumstances, and that if we recognize an action to be virtuous, it is in our nature to approve of it and then to pursue it. Locke, on the other hand, denies that there are any natural connections or any innate tendencies to link virtue and esteem. A child’s esteem for virtue must be inculcated by associating the pleasure of esteem with virtuous actions. Yet, however much Locke makes use of Ciceronian views and needs them to justify actions which merit but do not actually receive esteem, his official hedonism and subjectivism about the good cannot explain why it is better for children to take pleasure in actions which merit esteem as opposed to merely taking pleasure in actions which may happen to elicit, but do not deserve, the esteem of others. Here again, as in the case with

²⁷ Here I follow Colman (1983) pp. 177-205; 228-234;

²⁸ Colman (1983) pp. 177-205

his views on divinity, *De Officiis* offers Locke principles for defending and inculcating the kinds of moral qualities that he wants, but at the cost of consistency with other of his views.

I have argued that we should take seriously Locke's claim that Cicero's *De Officiis* provides systematic guidance for understanding and developing the kinds of moral qualities he thinks necessary for a virtuous and happy life. It is not clear, however, that Locke was ever able to integrate sufficiently the particular guidance that this text offers with several key doctrines of his own moral thought. Thus, in closing, I want to look at Locke's final recorded comment about *De Officiis*, since it seems to signal a changing view of its particular usefulness. For about the last twenty years of his life, Locke continued recommending in a variety of public and private contexts the Bible and *De Officiis* as the two texts that provide us with proper guidance in the sphere of morals. However, in an extemporaneous discussion dictated to Samuel Bold in the last year of his life and later published posthumously (1720) Locke has the following to say:

The study of morality I have above mentioned as that, that becomes a gentleman, not barely as a man, but in order to his business as a gentleman. Of this there are books enough writ both by ancient and modern philosophers, but the morality of the Gospel doth so exceed them all, that to give a man a full knowledge of true morality, I should send him to no other book, but the New Testament. But if he hath a mind to see how far the heathen world carried the science, and whereon they bottomed their ethics, he will be delightfully and profitably entertained in Tully's treatises *De Officiis*. (*Thoughts Concerning Reading and Study for a Gentleman*)

Here Locke registers no doubt about the relation of his two favored texts. *De Officiis* is relegated to the dustbin of history, as it were, and holds purely historical interest for those interested in how far the heathen world carried the science of ethics. Locke has jettisoned his earlier claim that it is a text that can provide guidance in the principles and precepts of virtue for the conduct of one's life. Such a deflationary view of Cicero fits with some standard accounts of Locke's development, which see him progressively despairing of reconciling the demands of reason and revelation, and drifting further under the spell of revealed Christianity. Whatever the truth of this general view, it certainly seems to be consonant with his changing attitude towards *De Officiis*. But to the extent that he frees himself from the principles and precepts of that text, it becomes unclear what is to become of the simple ideas of the divine and of the mechanisms of approval by means of which he thinks education best proceeds--and more generally, it thus becomes unclear how he can hope to educate and set right the sort of gentlemen on whom he thinks the order and stability of civil society most depend.