

JOHN LOCKE'S IMPACT ON THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY WRITERS: POPE, DEFOE AND RICHARDSON

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that John Locke's An Essay Concerning Human Understanding has impacted the philosophy and literature of the eighteenth century and beyond as a whole and the poetry in Pope's Essay on Man, the fiction in Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, and Richardson's Pamela in particular. Locke's empirical experience has taught the writers above mentioned to write to the moment by recording crisis, events as the persona in a poem, or a character in a novel develops. Man as an individual in Pope's Essay of epistles is a reflection of the poet's views and of the culture of the age as a whole. In fiction, the same attitude was shared by Defoe and Richardson. Robinson Crusoe and Pamela as individuals made their way in the world by recording their personal experiences – Crusoe's sea and land journals. Pamela's letters and journals. These forms of writing had been employed as a result of Locke's philosophy of realism.

KEYWORDS

The Essay on Man, Robinson Crusoe, Pamela and Essay Concerning Human Understanding, the eighteenth century

1. INTRODUCTION

Wiley(1961) calls the century "the silver age of the European Renaissance" (p.1). The implication of this is so inspiring that it invites many critics of the period to study and produce a host of researches on the epoch. Wiley is one of the pioneers who has studied the impact of the eighteenth century philosophers and scientists on literary writers: poets and novelists of the same period and beyond. For Wiley: "This was the Golden Age of natural theology and deistical freethinking: the age of Spinoza and Bayle, of the Cambridge Platonists, of Locke, Toland, . . . Tindal and the rest "(p.3). Consequently, the age produced great men like John Locke who influenced the minds and works of poets, novelists, philosophers and thinkers such as Pope, Defoe, Stern, and Richardson. However, Wiley in the whole book has not mentioned the fathers of the new genre of the age, the novel such as Defoe, Fielding and Richardson. He gave a good credit to Swift, Pope, Mandeville, Wordsworth and Coleridge. Wiley's study is too broad when it comes to the impact of Locke's An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690), which was published after his death. The age was also called the Enlightenment partly because, according to Kitson(1999) "The writers and thinkers of the Enlightenment imagined themselves as emerging from centuries of darkness and ignorance into a new age enlightened by reason, science and a respect for humanity" (p.35). This assertion is both a statement of fact and a definition of Enlightenment. Kitson affirms that the pillars of this movement was led by Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Isaac Newton. Most important of all, it was Locke's Essay which "laid the foundations of an Enlightenment theory of mind" (p.36). Thus, Locke "comports with and helps codify the movement of his times away from the authority of traditions of medieval, scholastic

philosophy," according to Greenblatt & Abram (p.2151). Finally, Varney (1999) describes the literary world in the age as " the real world, the world of common experience and cultural recuperation is, however, barren without the cultural products – narratives, plays, poems – in which people represent themselves, construct a picture of their world and articulate their anxieties" (preface vii). This real world was depicted in the works of the writers above mentioned.

2. THE IMPACT OF LOCKE'S *ESSAY* ON THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY LITERATURE

Some critics of the eighteenth century have devoted a good bulk of literature on the implications of Locke's *Essay* on the philosophers and the thought of the age. Woolzley (1964), a moral philosopher, argues that the "whole *Essay* was devoted to the aim of distinguishing knowledge from belief" and Locke "finds it necessary to dispose of the doctrines of innate ideas and of innate propositions" (pp.15-16). Unlike Woolzley, Dussinger (1974) discusses the relationship between the philosophers and novelists of the eighteenth century and the common grounds between them. He argues: "One of the most endearing aspects of the Enlightenment is its genuine humility to doubt the individual's self-serving fiction in the judgment of daily phenomena" (p.11). He draws heavily on Locke's theory of the mind in the *Essay* and its impact on Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, Johnson's *Life of Savage*, *The Vicar of Wakefield* and *A Sentimental Journey*. He examines how eighteenth century narrative fiction sets forth the problem of knowledge for narrator, character, and the reader alike" (p.13). He believes that eighteenth century discourse "required a fiction that represents the paradox of self as the object caught in the momentary flux of consciousness and as the subject, freed from time, viewing discriminately past experience." He as well believes that "the letter, journal, and essay allowed greater freedom for written discourse than other literature genres"(pp21-2). Thus Dussinger concerns himself less with poetry and novels. My paper ,however, discusses not the problem of knowledge or epistemology of the eighteenth century but of Locke's empirical experience recorded in the selected works of the writers above mentioned. Consequently, any researcher of the eighteenth century fiction and philosophy will never do without reading in depth Watt's (1986). It is the foundation of studying the impact of philosophical realism of particulars on fiction. This philosophy is "opposed to that of common usage, to the view held by the scholastic Realists of the Middle Ages that it is universals, classes, or abstractions, and not the particular, concrete objects of sense perception, which are the true realities" (p.12) He analyzes the works of authors who represent Realism in the fiction of the eighteenth-century under the influence of Locke whose ideas and philosophy have been a yardstick for the whole age and the nineteenth century-Romanticism and probably for ages to come. According to McCormick (1996), "the frequent re-publication of Locke's *Essay* attests to its influence in the period 1725-65. This is an excellent description of the range and variety of Locke's impact on the eighteenth century" (p.442). Following the title of the paper, Pope's *Essay on Man* will first receive discussion and analysis from Lockean empirical experience.

Dussinger traces the difference basic between philosophers and poets depicting human nature - from Plato to the eighteenth century in reflecting the thought structure of the age. He cites Pope to support his stand.

That each from other differs, first confess;
Next Nature's, Custom's, Reason's, Passion's strife,
An all opinion's colours cast on life. (Moral Essay I, ii.19-22)

Dussinger sees the Age of Enlightenment as having a tendency "to doubt the individual self-serving fiction in the judgment of daily phenomena no matter what physical laws could be discovered by observation and mathematical method, Man, Nature, and God were, as before, metaphysical profundities" (p.11). He expresses his reaction toward Locke as a philosopher and

Newton as a scientist; their "discourse on man's relationship to God" and fiction as represented by a writer who is "caught up in his verbal creation in ways that pattern his choices teleologically" (p.12). Dussinger mentions the sources of fiction in the eighteenth century. It "will borrow materials from local resources, whether of the author's peculiar mind or in his culture's peculiar norms of order. His whole book is "to examine how eighteenth-century narrative fiction sets forth the problem of knowledge for narrator, character, and the reader alike"(p.13). His main thesis is to explain how the "new species of writing" represents the mind in the act of perceiving and ordering the signs of reality" (p.14). It is very clear that he means Locke's philosophy. However, my paper examines Lockean impact on the writers above mentioned.

3. THE IMPACT OF LOCKE'S EMPIRICAL EXPERIENCE ON POPE'S *ESSAY ON MAN*

By way of introducing Pope as an Augustan poet, Rousseau(1972) claims that Pope "was a great poet; great not only among his contemporaries, but among poets of all times and all nations" and Pope "stands unequalled in his poetic craft" (p.2). These assertions show the poetic status of Pope whose medium of writing poetry is "usually the iambic pentameter rhymed couplet"(p.18). His poetic diction differs from that of his predecessors and contemporaries. "His verse paragraphs when completed partake of a felt coherence and sense of shape not usually achieved by poets" such as those "in the first two epistles of *An Essay on Man* (p.21). Rousseau finds Pope's *Essay* "optimistic philosophical poem" and there is a possibility of Lockean on the poem (pp.24, 26). Since the subject of the poem is Man, Willey explicates the context of Man in the age of reason as explained by deists in the eighteenth century, who divinizes nature, and their motto then was "follow nature: "But, for our deists, 'natural' meant what is congenial to the mind of an abstract Man whose traits correspond to those of *bonnete homme*, the man of parts and sense, who had become the moral norm of the age" (p.10). One can infer that "the dreams of philosophers and poets seemed to be confirmed by fact" (p.14). A good example of this is that "Locke's vindication of the Whig Revolution inspired both the American and the French Revolution, both of which accompanied by declarations of the natural and inalienable Rights of Man" (p.17). Here the question asked: "how did critics and poets in the eighteenth century especially Pope treat Man in the context of "Nature as their standard?" "It was to reconcile adherence to Nature with the rules of Art. . . , that of Rapin and Pope, was to identify Nature, the ancients, the rules, and sound reason, so that to follow any was to follow all" (p.18). Consequently, Willey argues: "Most of the English writers of the time felt they were living in an age of enlightenment. The universe had been explained. . . by such men as Shaftesbury, Pope, Addison, Thomson, or Chesterfield [or Locke]" (p.45). These assertions are necessary to understand Pope's verse and thought in the context of the age.

3.1 POPE'S *ESSAY* AND THE STUDY OF MAN AND THE GENESIS OF THE POEM

Dobree (1963) starts his book with Pope's most quoted line "The proper study of mankind is man" and this "would seem to suggest that for him man was also the fittest subject for poetry. Another good reason is that" human nature does not alter radically through the ages, and Pope, with his ability to pierce through to fundamentals, coupled with his delicate appreciation of word sense, remains the poet to whom belongs the greatest number of well-known quotations in the language" (v). Greenblatt and Abrams find Pope's *Essay* "philosophical" and it "has many sources in the thought of his times and the philosophical tradition at large" (P.2541). In the same vein Williams (2005) states that Pope "in his adherence to neoclassical values, is somehow timeless. . . Even as early as 1713, when Swift, Pope, and other members of the Scriblerus Club were first brewing their ideas for mock-critical treatise on the Longinian sublime, the sublime was already

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strongly associated with the republican upheavals of the seventeenth century " (p.202). This is typical of writers in any age to criticize the thought, and habits of their predecessors.

The genesis of the poem is of four epistles: order and goodness of the universe and the rightness of our place in it, self-love, the individual in the society and happiness. In the first epistle Pope wants his readers to observe nature and follow it wholeheartedly and then one can explain "the ways of God to man" through science and reason. Pope writes

Eye Nature's walks, shoot folly as it flies,
And catch the manners living as they rise:
Laugh where we must, be candid where we can;
But vindicate the ways of God to man
(*Pope's Collected Poems, Pope's Essay on Man*, epistle I lines 13-16).

These lines above reflect Locke's empirical experience based on the senses: the eyes see and record the mind impressions they get from the external world. By so doing poets, scientists, novelists, readers and what have you, can explain this wonderful universe as ordered by God. Pope applies this method in the second epistle of his poem when he writes:

Most strength the moving principle requires;
Active its task, it prompts, impels inspires.
Sedate and quiet the comparing lies,
Form'd but to check, deliberate, and advise;
Self-love, still stronger, as its object nigh;
Reason, at distance, and in prospect lie:
That sees immediate good by present sense;
Reason, the future and the consequence.
Thicker than arguments, temptations throng,
At best more, watchful this, but that more strong.
The action of the stronger to suspend
Reason still use, to reason still attend
Attention, habit, and experience gains;
Each strengthens reason, and self-love restrains.
(*Pope's Collected Poems, Pope's Essay on Man*, epistle II, lines 67-80)

These lines depict Locke's empirical experience in which Pope's self-love is based on reason, sense perception if used in the proper ways such as attention, and habit required for empirical experience. This experience will restrain self-love as "not destroying others, by himself destroy'd" (line 66). Thanks to "the widespread devotion to the direct observation of experience established empiricism as the dominant intellectual attitude of the age, which would become Britain's great legacy to world philosophy. (Greenblatt & Abrams, p. 2063). Thereby, Locke reflected his age, and his philosophy became to be called Lockean thinking It influenced the public opinion as a whole, poets and novelists such as Pope, Defoe and Richardson. Locke's main thesis in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* is based on "that all knowledge springs from experience." Locke postulates the following premises without which we cannot understand his philosophy. The following extract reflects his thought and philosophy and the freedom of thinking to be followed.

men will not be persuaded against their senses. Knowledge is an internal perception of their minds; and if, when they reflect on it. . . . knowledge, I find in myself, and I conceive it in others, consists of in the perception of the agreement or disagreement of the immediate objects of the mind in thinking, which I call ideas: (Locke's *Essay* pp.457-8).

4. THE IMPACT OF LOCKE'S ESSAY ON DEFOE'S *ROBINSON CRUSOE*

Another aspect of the paper's argument is the impact of Locke's *Essay* on the fiction of the eighteenth century particularly on Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Richardson's *Pamela*. The Eighteenth century witnessed the rise of the novel and the impact of Locke's philosophy which was then a yardstick to evaluate the selected works of the writers above mentioned. Watt claims that "the realist tradition in philosophy was a cause of the realism of the novel." He assures that "there was some influence is very likely, especially through Locke, whose thought everywhere pervades the eighteenth – century climate of opinion" (p.32). To find Lockean empirical experience in the novel one should read the journals of Robinson Crusoe, which he recorded at sea and on the island. The journals reflect the individual experience of the protagonist of the novel. He left family and friends to make his life different from those around him by becoming a captain of a ship journeying round the globe. Watt asserts: "In all ages. . . some people have been individualists in the sense that they were agonistic, unique, or conspicuously independent of current opinions and habits" (p.62). This is exactly what Crusoe did when he left home in spite of his father's consent. Thus Crusoe obtained his "individual rights, as against the more traditional ones of Church, or Family or King" (p.64). Robinson declares his right to go see the world on his own with or without his father's consent. This is explicit at the outset of the novel: "

However, I did not act so hastily neither as my first Heat of Resolution prompted, but I took my mother, at a time when I thought a little pleasanter than ordinary, and told her, that my thoughts were so entirely bent upon seeing the world, that I should never settle to anything with Resolution enough with it, and my father had better give me Consent than force me to go without it; that I was now Eighteen Years old, which was too late to go Apprentice to a Trade, or Clerk to an Attorney; that I was if I did, I should never serve out my time, and I should certainly run away from my Master before my Time was out, and go to Sea, and if she would speak to my Father to let me go but one Voyage abroad, if I came home again and did not like it, I would go no more, and I would promise by a double Diligence to recover that Time I had lost" (p.8).

The reason behind this departure without consent, as Watt argues: "Economically, then, the patriarchal family stood in the way of individualism, and it is probably for this reason that the conjugal family system has established itself most strongly in the individualist and Protestant societies, and that is essentially urban and middle class in nature. . . It is equally sufficient that Locke. . . opposed all forms of paternalism. . . Locke is thus in one important respect a theoretician of the conjugal family" (pp.145-6). Accordingly, Oztekin (2016). argues: "Defoe is more liberal in this respect, resembling to Locke in terms of his ideas on the family and the rights of the children to be free" (p.13). On this issue. ROOT(2005) postulates that the novel is based "on Crusoe's empirically-based education" which Defoe borrowed from the reading of Locke's theory of education.

This has come about due to the economic flourish and thought structure which both developed in the Enlightenment especially of Locke's theory of mind and of education and of individualism; other philosophers contributed to the new changes in the English society, especially the changes to the personality in the course of time, education and economic growth. These forces caused Robinson Crusoe to write in his journals- at sea and on island- his experiences (the shipwreck, his slavery, his farm, his house, his thoughts of himself, of religion and of economy (his gains and losses).

Dussinger argues that" one of Locke's most controversial discoveries was that the same man does not always reveal the same person "p.(17). This discourse of the mind for Dussinger is a process with the sense of being in an involuntary process of becoming, and the fear of losing control over

these phenomena by a partially attentive judgment are characteristic of the classical episteme." Dussinger proposes writing as "therapeutic in regulating this consciousness which made Pope ask: "Why did I write?" "To help me through this long disease." The other example he gives to support his argument about writing as a mental therapy for writers as well as characters in eighteenth century fiction that "appears in Robinson Crusoe, an episode of reflective of the overall purpose of this confessional narrative. . . . the journal of Robinson Crusoe, like the narrative as a whole, is the means of saving himself from madness" (p.18). I think the same applies to Richardson's Pamela. She resorts to write her narrative in letters as escape from B's harassment and self-monologue of a person recording the daily events and personal confessions. Dussinger calls this process "the structure of consciousness" which has to do with "the discovery of memory as a creative and sustaining power of self in duration. . . . By remembering, man escapes the purely momentary"(p.19). For Locke "memory is necessary to the perception of time. . . for reflecting on the ideas passing through the mind . . . Although the discovery of memory leads to the tendency , already implied in Rousseau to the habit of mind that avoids the present and turns either to the past or to the future for the crucial moment of reflection, as with the Romantics, some of the most significant eighteenth century writers like Richardson, Sterne, and Diderot focus on the illusions on the present moment" (p.20). This is the core of writing to the moment of experiencing or observing an episode of one's life. in other words. it is Lockean method of reflecting external and internal forces through the mind as a translator of these reflections.

Dussinger sees fiction in the eighteenth century as a form of discourse created by the binary thought structure of the culture. The first part of his argument focuses on the epistemological dualities – mind and body, divided personal identity, free will and determinism –analyzed in Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and widely disseminated throughout the 18th century" (p.21).He advises us to "listen to philosophical discourse concerning mind and body to widen the context of discourse in narrative fiction." He believes that such a tendency has come about due to the "invention of physiology in this period parallels the writer's particularizing of experience in body; and the imagination placed at the junction of mind and body becomes important to discourse in fiction and non-fiction alike" (p.21). He also infers "18th century discourse required a fiction that represents the paradox of self as the object caught in the momentary flux of consciousness and as the subject, freed from time, viewing discriminately past experience. The letter, journal, and essay allowed greater freedom for written discourse than other literature forms. He makes a distinction between a "philosophical rhapsody" to suggest the spontaneous flow of thought in present time; and Richardson's "writing to the moment" makes use of these conventions of private revelation." He states that the "fiction of Defoe, Fielding, Smollett and others also reveals a central appearance-reality conflict within self" (p.22). However, one should place the novel in the context of travel in the eighteenth century when "the fascination with travel was a complex cultural phenomenon with many aspects that issue in the literary characteristics of all narratives of travel in the period, and especially, in works of such imaginative fullness as *Robinson Crusoe* and *Gulliver's Travels*" (Varney, p. 6). In addition to travel aspect, there is another aspect of autobiography. Foster (1992) concludes in "Thus, a work of *Robinson Crusoe* may have been written. . . to illustrate Puritan doctrine and a process of self-mastery by using the inherited narrative patterns of spiritual autobiography and pilgrim allegory. The autobiographical method allows for a narrative development as the retrospective narrator attempts to formulate a spiritual and moral experience" (p.180). This method of narration permeates the whole novel.

5. THE IMPACT OF LOCKE'S *ESSAY ON RICHARDSON'S PAMELA*

Since the paper discusses not only the Lockean impact on the writers above mentioned but also the subject matter of these works" man, journey and courtly love, we should follow the plan of the paper, to discuss *Pamela*

As regards Richardson's *Pamela*, Watt discusses the courtly love in this particular novel as opposed to the older romances: "In the romances. . . , while courtly love provided the conventional beginning and end, the main interest of the narrative lay in the adventures, and not in the development of the love relationship itself " (p.140). Thanks to the Lockean impact which liberated the minds and thoughts of writers and ordinary people alike from the older traditions of life, society, church and state. " Locke's view of family made marriage a civil contract between individuals" (p. 156). Consequently new forms of writing developed to express the new changes that took place in the period. He argues: The conception of the feminine role represented in *Pamela* is an essential feature of our civilization over the past two hundred years" (p.168). Kinkead-Weekes(1962) asserts what he [Richardson] invented was the dramatic novel, not the idea of writing in letters. The epistolary form is a means, not an end. It is an attempt to gain something of the immediacy of a play- goers' experience; of getting to know characters . . . Richardson called his invention 'writing to the moment. As often as he could he made his characters write during the crisis of their affairs. . . " (pp.vi-vii). This recording of experience in letters or in journals is a reflection of Locke's theory of the mind when exposed to different situations in real life experience without these causes there would not have been existed such new forms of writing. Need has always been the mother of invention in any time and place, in all ages. The question asked here, how did Richardson reflect such causes in *Pamela*, which is a by-product of his age and its Lockean philosophy? If we look through the novel we first observe the first letter; it is written by Pamela, addressed to her family. She writes: "Dear Father and Mother, I have great Trouble, and some Comfort, to acquaint you with. The Trouble is, that my good Lady died of the Illness I mentioned to you, and left us all much griev'd for her loss" (*Pamela*, p 12) and then she gets another letter from her family to comment on the news in the first letter. Pamela continues writing this way all the way through volume I. This narrative technique in letters is a reflection of Lockean method to express someone's thoughts as encountered by crisis or problems. This method allows the flow of ideas as the situation impels it on the brain. Robinson Crusoe did the same when he wrote in his sea and on land journals of what he thought and did in his long journey which extended over three decades away from his home England.

Dussinger analyzes Richardson's *Pamela* from Lockean thought and the narrative technique. First , he draws upon Locke's impact on his contemporaries in his *Essay* [Concerning human understanding].It is "directed not so much against Descartes' metaphysics of innate knowledge as against the long English tradition in religious thought" (p.24). Second, Dussinger uncovers the importance of the "distinction between nominal and real substance created uncertainty not only in the relationship of ideas to the real but more fundamentally in the mind-body relationship assumed by the writer of discourse, both in fiction and non -fiction" (p.25). Third, Dussinger focuses on the personal identity which features a "principal anxiety in the eighteenth-century episteme." He also reminds us that human identity in which "Locke limited the self to momentary consciousness. . . . the main difficulty in Locke's conception of multiple selves was the implicit recognition of unconscious involuntary forces in the dynamics of the mind. . . This fear of the unconscious life motivates the philosopher's and writer's discourse throughout the eighteenth century." For the process to take place, he numerates: direct observation, recording, and interpreting of the minutest fragments of daily experience are necessary to a history of the self, for personal identity was now a factor of time and place. Writers in the eighteenth century reflected such a process.

How could Richardson reflect such a situation in fiction?" Dussinger states that: "In the process of writing his first "new species" of fiction Richardson saw vividly that his subject was the perceiving mind in a temporal dimension and that his central narrative was in portraying his character's psychological growth" (p.53). This applies to Robinson Crusoe when he recorded all his experiences at sea and on island. Dussinger argues that to understand such a new method of writing influenced by Locke's theory of perception and ideas in reflecting the reality Richardson "admitted concern with rendering subjective reality in the epistolary and journal form of his fiction." This representation of reality "should be taken into consideration." Dussinger follows the process in which Pamela develops from childhood into maturity when marrying Mr. B. for such a thing to happen he believes there are two movements in the novel. Dussinger observes that "Pamela in one scene differs functionally from Pamela in another scene." He thinks that "there is a pattern. . . which discloses her identity finally with Mr. B. " He sees that Bedfordshire scenes are exemplary examples of identity discovery and maturity. He also observes that: "The central action in Pamela is, like any other identity quest in fiction, a representation of how the mind organizes experience" using a narrative technique" (pp54-55). This shows Locke's impact on Richardson's *Pamela*. *Pamela* has been created to represent the spirit of the age where uncertainty, the conflict between the mind and soul, between theology and deism, science and fiction. These are dominant issues. All these must have been on the mind of Richardson when he wrote the novel. He in fact reflects the theories of Locke who had been the yard stick to measure philosophy, poetry and fiction for most of the writers in his time such as Pope, Sterne, Defoe and Richardson. His imitation of Locke was artistic and real. Consequently, *Pamela* is an excellent example of a girl who depends heavily on Providence against the sexual advancements of Mr. B .and on her empirical experience to avoid such advancements of her master . she wised up marrying Mr. B.. This is a sign of class abolition, something new in the eighteenth century family thought and practice; a noble man marries a woman from a low class. This marriage is a product of Lockean thinking and philosophy.

CONCLUSION

John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* has influenced Pope's *Essay on Man*, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Richardson's *Pamela*. These writers in turn have influenced their contemporaries and others for ages to come. The poetry of Pope is philosophical following the epistemological doctrines of Locke. Thus, this philosophical realism helped produce a new genre, the novel with new forms of writing: epistolary and journal. The personal experiences of the characters were recorded in Richardson's *Pamela*, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, as reflections of the new theory of epistemology invented by Locke and other philosophers in the age of the Enlightenment. In addition to all that, Philosophical realism helped Defoe ,Richardson and Pope to relate life with literature.

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