

# Jean Leclerc's and John Locke's Assault upon ‘False Rhetoric’, c. 1688-c. 1701

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## I

In 1689, in the wake of a revolution, which unceremoniously jettisoned James II but preserved the institution of monarchy in England, John Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding* attacked the scholastic rhetoric which had, Locke claimed, helped the absolutist regime stay in power. His *Essay* declared that ‘the Governments of the World owed their Peace, Defence, and Liberties’ to ‘the unscholastick Statesman’ whereas the ‘artificial Ignorance, and learned Gibberish’ of scholastic ‘Disputants, these all-knowing Doctors,’ had ‘prevailed mightily in these last Ages’ to mislead the citizenry.<sup>1</sup> A year and a half before the publication of the *Essay* in London, Locke's critical attitude towards scholastic learning had been publicized in the Amsterdam-based, French-language journal *Bibliothèque Universelle et Historique*.<sup>2</sup> In the January 1688 issue of the *Bibliothèque*, edited by Jean Leclerc,<sup>3</sup> there appeared an abridgement of Locke's manuscript of the *Essay*, translated into French by Leclerc.<sup>4</sup> The abridgement was published under Locke's supervision: he travelled from Rotterdam, where he was staying with Benjamin Furly, to Amsterdam in order to supervise the process of printing.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford, 1979), book III, chapter x, paragraph 9, p. 495. Hereafter the abbreviation ‘E’ stands for this edition of the *Essay* in footnote references. Where appropriate, it is cited by book, chapter, and paragraph as well as page number.

<sup>2</sup> Jean Leclerc *et al.* (eds.), *Bibliothèque Universelle et Historique* (25 vols. Amsterdam, Jan. 1686–Dec. 1693). In the footnotes this journal is hereafter cited as ‘BUH’. The most comprehensive study of BUH is H. Bots, H. Hillenaar, J. Janssen, J. van der Korst, L. van Lieshout, *De ‘Bibliothèque Universelle et Historique’ (1686–1693), een periodiek als trefpunt van geleterd Europa* (Amsterdam, 1981).

<sup>3</sup> The editors of the volumes of BUH are listed in Jean-Pierre Lobies, *Index multiplex ad La Bibliothèque Universelle et Historique, 1686–1694* (3 vols. Osnabrück, 1968–82), i, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> BUH, viii (Jan. 1688), Art. II, pp. 49–142: ‘Extrait d'un Livre Anglois qui n'est pas encore publié, intitulé ESSAI PHILOSOPHIQUE CONCERNANT L'ENTENDEMENT, où l'on montre quelle est l'étendue de nos connoissances certaines, & la maniere dont nous y parvenons. Communiqué par Monsieur Locke.’

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., Locke to Furly, 9/19 Jan. 1688, in John Locke, *The Correspondence of John Locke* (8 vols. to date. Oxford, 1976–89), iii, pp. 330–1; and 16/26 Jan. 1688, *ibid.*, p. 337. Hereafter the abbreviation

Locke, Furly, and Leclerc belonged to a network of friends which was knit together, most conspicuously, by their direct or indirect association with the journal *Bibliothèque*, and which may be termed the ‘*Bibliothèque* circle’. This loose network formed after the *Bibliothèque* had begun appearing in 1686, and it outlasted the run of the journal, which ended in 1693. That the *Bibliothèque* circle originated in the Dutch Republic, depended on the fact that the Republic was relatively tolerant of various Protestant strands in the 1680s. Most members of the *Bibliothèque* circle had endorsed heterodox opinions; most of them arrived in the Republic as outcasts, rejected by the religious or political hierarchy of their native communities. Leclerc, for instance, left Geneva, his native city, because of his aversion to rigorous Calvinism. He travelled to London in 1682, but left England in the midst of the Tory reaction which ended Charles II's reign, settling, like Locke, in Amsterdam in the autumn of 1683. In Amsterdam Leclerc obtained a post at the Remonstrant College where he taught until he suffered strokes, which finished his career almost fifty years later.

In the aftermath of William III's arrival in England, everyone in the *Bibliothèque* circle defended what they perceived to be the principles of 1688–9, but none saw the Revolution as the consummation of their aspirations. A constitutional revolution, perhaps dangerously reminiscent of a mere dynastic coup, could not, on its own, solve the problems of royal and clerical hubris, which generated their opposition movement to the Stuart regime. It is a distinctive feature of Leclerc's and Locke's thinking that they hoped civil society would be cleansed of false cultural practices, which engendered false politics. In particular, for free and rational argumentation to prevail in politics, they held the discourse of politics must be purified of ‘false rhetoric’, and society purified of such cultural conventions and institutions which sustain ‘false rhetoric’—such as the teaching of poetry to the youth. Thus the political manifesto Locke presented, famously, in his *Two Treatises of Government* and in his *Letter Concerning Toleration* in 1689, was paralleled by the manifesto of cultural reform presented in his *Essay*. Seen together, these three works offered the citizenry

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‘*Correspondence*’ stands for De Beer's edition of Locke's correspondence in footnote references. E. S. de Beer, ‘Introduction’ in *Correspondence* (1976), i, pp. xv–lxxix, at pp. xxvi–xxvii; Maurice Cranston, *John Locke: a biography* (London, 1957), pp. 289–93. - On Furly, see William I. Hull, *Benjamin Furly and Quakerism in Rotterdam* (Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, 1941); and Johan A. van Reijn, ‘Benjamin Furly. Engels koopman (en meer) te Rotterdam, 1636–1714’, *Rotterdams Jaarboekje* (1985), pp. 219–46. On

an education to liberty by instructing them both in the principles of politics and in the art of political discourse. Alongside other members of the *Bibliothèque* circle, Locke can be seen to have engaged in what might be termed a *Kulturkampf*, pervading politics, education, and religion.

My research project examines the civil philosophy in the *Bibliothèque* circle, focusing on the era of William III's reign over England and the Dutch Republic. I approach this strand of theorizing as an attempt to replace the culture of authoritarianism with a culture in civil society, which emancipates citizens to follow reason. This paper falls into two main parts. It begins by sketching the way in which Leclerc's and Locke's works on theoretical philosophy exhibit a quasi-Platonic antagonism towards rhetoric. It then turns to outline one aspect of their civil philosophy, which helps explain why a free state should be free of 'false rhetoric'. My key argument is that, in a broad sense, Leclerc's and Locke's assault upon 'false rhetoric' derives from a standard Cartesian attack upon scholasticism, but that they move beyond Cartesian anti-dogmatism, grafting a classical notion of liberty onto it. What they inherited from the 'new philosophy' of Descartes, Hobbes, Malebranche, and Arnauld, was an understanding of the need to suspend assent to any authoritative belief until it has been thoroughly examined; but they coupled this anti-dogmatism with an understanding of politics inherited from classical sources.

## II

The arts of logic and rhetoric saturated the intellectual world inhabited by Leclerc and Locke. There was also a world in which various efforts had been made to break the boundaries of the Aristotelian-scholastic tradition and to develop a new logic, a less technical and plainer logic which would reflect, and govern, men's natural inward process of reasoning.<sup>6</sup> Central to the Cartesian anti-scholasticism was the claim that syllogistic logic moves on the plane of words whereas the process of reasoning actually concerns ideas. Reflecting his anti-scholasticism, Locke's *Essay* asserts that a person unconstrained by academic education, who could be termed the 'natural man', has no need for the rules of syllogistic logic in order to

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Leclerc, see Annie Barnes, *Jean Le Clerc (1657–1736) et la république des lettres* (Paris, 1938); and Samuel A. Golden, *Jean Le Clerc* (New York, 1972).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Craig Walton, 'Hobbes and the Reform of Logic', *Hobbes Studies*, iv (1991), pp. 115–30, esp. at pp. 122–3.

reason well.<sup>7</sup> The natural man reasons by making a comparison between two ideas which either agree or disagree with one another. The art of natural reasoning turns on whether one can form a valid judgement on the agreement or disagreement of two ideas in each step of the process of reasoning.

The task Locke sets his readers—and himself—at the end of his *Essay* is that of devising ‘another sort of Logick and Critick, than what we have been hitherto acquainted with’.<sup>8</sup> This task is picked up in Leclerc's *Logica*, published in 1692.<sup>9</sup> Leclerc maintains that in order to judge whether an argument is valid, one must learn not only to syllogize according to the customary rules but also to turn one's attention to comparing ideas. One must move from the plane of words into the plane of ideas by grasping the meanings of the terms, which express an argument, as clearly as possible.<sup>10</sup> Since valid syntactic reasoning is natural to men, the principal source of errors in reasoning is that men found their inferences upon terms, which they fail to define. This results either from an intentional, deceitful use of inexact terms or from the negligent use of obscure terms one cannot understand.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> E IV.xvii.4, p. 670: ‘If we will observe the Actings of our own Minds, we shall find, that we reason best and clearest, when we only observe the connexion of the Proofs, without reducing our Thoughts to any Rule of Syllogism. (...) He that will look into many parts of Asia and America, will find Men reason there, perhaps, as acutely as himself, who yet never heard of a Syllogism, nor can reduce any one Argument to those Forms: and I believe scarce any one ever makes Syllogisms in reasoning within himself.’ Locke added the last clause on man's inward reasoning to the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Essay*. Cf. E III.x.10, p. 495, on ‘unlearned Men’.

<sup>8</sup> E IV.xxi.4, p. 721.

<sup>9</sup> Jean Leclerc, *Logica: sive, ars ratiocinandi* (1692). Hereafter the abbreviation ‘*Logica*’ stands for this work in footnote references. My references to the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of the *Logica* are to the London edition, published by Awnsham and John Churchill; where appropriate, it is cited by part, chapter, and paragraph as well as page number. There is also an Amsterdam edition of 1692, published by Johannes Wolters; a notice of the Amsterdam edition, probably by Leclerc himself, appeared in BUH, xxii (Mar. 1692), Art. XIII, pp. 159–75.

<sup>10</sup> *Logica* (1692), IV.v.4, p. 159: ‘Conclusio, quæ continet id quod probare aggreditur is qui ratiocinatur, prius est probe intelligenda; postea Medium, quod propterea adhibetur, clare est percipiendum; quo peracto, facile intelligemus comparationem Medii cum extremis, & quid negandum, quid affirmandum videbimus, modo rem, qua de agitur, aliunde norimus.’

<sup>11</sup> *Logica* (1692), IV.v.3, pp. 158–9: ‘Sane raro ab iis qui ratiocinio pollent palam contra Regulas hasce, præsertim particulares peccatur, sed passim in aliud incommodum, qui male ratiocinantur, quod si vitetur, aut retegatur, nullum est erroris periculum, decidunt Nempe, vocabulis utuntur obscuris, quæ aut ipsi non intelligunt, aut si intelligunt, adhibent de industria, ut eos quibuscum loquuntur fallant. Deinde supponunt quasi nota, & probata, quæ neque per se nota, neque demonstrata sunt. (...) falso fundamento posito, quod fit subsidio obscurarum phrasium, consequentiæ quæ inde ducuntur, quo rectiores sunt, co falsiores evadant’.

Ibid., IV.v.4, p. 159: ‘Hic est pæne unicus fons falsorum ratiociniorum, in quæ incidunt qui non prorsus ineptiunt’.

Locke's and Leclerc's process of natural reasoning concerns men's inward process of reasoning, which precedes what Locke terms the second 'Degree' of reason, the communication of one's ideas to others. For both Locke and Leclerc, a paradigmatic form of truthful communication is a mathematical demonstration. The mathematician is guided by a 'regular and methodical Disposition of' proofs; he proceeds by 'laying them in a clear and fit Order' so as 'to make their Connexion and Force be plainly and easily perceived'.<sup>12</sup> In moral discourse it is necessary, Locke holds, that 'Men in Society' use existing words in their customary meanings or else define what they stand for.<sup>13</sup> This is, however, a moral imperative, aiming at making it possible for others to test the speaker's or writer's ideas. Actually men still retain Adam's original liberty to bridge the chasm between moral ideas and terms arbitrarily,<sup>14</sup> and in the abuse of this liberty lies the origin of 'false rhetoric'. By manipulating the meanings of words to suit themselves, rhetoricians can cover what they really think or make two incompatible ideas agree. Rhetoric Locke defined as 'an art of deceiving'.<sup>15</sup>

In Leclerc's and Locke's view, what we speak should correspond to what we think so that the words we utter are names of our ideas. Paradigmatically, man controls language, the medium that expresses his ideas as plainly as possible. 'False rhetoric' counters Leclerc's and Locke's model in two ways. First, the disingenuous rhetorician does not reveal what he thinks. Secondly, 'false rhetoric' reverses the relation between ideas and words, or between man and language. The words take the central role while man becomes subject to them. Hence 'false rhetoric' reifies language and alienates it from man's control.

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<sup>12</sup> Adapted from E IV.xvii.3, p. 669.

<sup>13</sup> E III.vi.51, pp. 470–1: 'the signification of Words are very warily and sparingly to be alter'd'. BUH, xxiii–2 (Oct. 1692), Art. II, p. 329: 'Le second défaut général du Système de Spinoza, c'est qu'il se sert très-souvent des termes, dans une signification toute différente de la signification ordinaire. Il est vrai, qu'à parler absolument, un Philosophe peut employer les termes dans un sens tout nouveau; pourvû qu'il en avertisse, & qu'après les avoir attachez à une certaine idée, il ne les employe plus, que pour signifier cette idée-là. Mais il ne faut se servir de cette liberté que dans une grande nécessité, du moins si l'on veut se rendre intelligible; & il faut prendre garde surtout, de n'employer plus ces termes pour signifier les idées qu'on y joint ordinairement, & de ne regarder point dans la suite les définitions qu'on en a données, & qui ne sont que des définitions de nom; comme si c'étoit effectivement des Définitions de choses.'

<sup>14</sup> E III.vi.51, pp. 470–1.

<sup>15</sup> E, 'Index', s.v. 'Rhetorick', p. 743, and III.x.34, p. 508.

This strand of theorizing assumes that citizens would recoil at any moral discourse which is incoherent or unwarranted if it were not for the rhetoric which makes it acceptable. In Locke's view, man's natural appetite for truth induces the authoritarians' replacement of veracity by their rhetoric because keeping the 'Subject part of Mankind' in 'Ægyptian Bondage' requires them to 'varnish over, and cover their' deformed moral ideas.<sup>16</sup> Locke's *Two Treatises* shows that the *Patriarcha* of Sir Robert Filmer, the supreme absolutist, 'tells us the Story, as he thinks fit, of this strange kind of domineering Phantom, called the Fatherhood'.<sup>17</sup> If we achieve a clear idea of Filmer's fictitious portrait of fatherhood – a portrait 'in that Gigantic Form, he had painted it in his own Phancy' – we encounter 'a very odd and frightful Figure'.<sup>18</sup> But it is difficult to see the figure of Filmer's patriarch because he has diluted it by deceptive rhetoric so as to 'cause less Aversion', or to dazzle men.<sup>19</sup> Filmer had sugared the pill with rhetorical flourish; Locke's design was to make it taste sour.

Leclerc's *Parrhasiana*, published in 1699, highlights the difference between the truthful communication of one's ideas and 'false rhetoric'. A parallel difference, according to Leclerc, 'would be found between the portraits of two painters, one of whom imitates nature and represents nothing apart from what can be seen, while the other fabricates animals which would never be seen, such as an elephant with the head of a crocodile'.<sup>20</sup> Should a painter fabricate an elephant-cum-crocodile, such a chimera could be detected by comparing it with the natural archetypes of elephants and crocodiles. Crudely, we could point at living elephants and crocodiles. By contrast, there are no such natural archetypes of moral ideas, which could

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<sup>16</sup> E IV.iii.20, p. 552: 'Nothing being so beautiful to the Eye, as Truth is to the Mind; nothing so deformed and irreconcilable to the Understanding, as a Lye.'

<sup>17</sup> John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Student edn. Cambridge, 1988), 'First Treatise', paragraph 6, lines 35–6. Hereafter footnote references to this edition of Locke's *Two Treatises* are made, where appropriate, with two-part or three-part numbers such as 'II.4' or 'II.4.2', the first part being the number of the treatise, the second the number of the paragraph within that treatise, and the third the line number. The abbreviation 'TT' stands for the *Two Treatises*. Hence the reference 'TT II.4.2' would refer to line number two in the fourth paragraph of the 'Second Treatise'.

<sup>18</sup> TT I.7.10–16. Cf. TT I.34.10–15.

<sup>19</sup> TT I.7.10–20. TT I.52.10–13: 'They who say the Father gives Life to his Children, are so dazed with the thoughts of Monarchy, that they do not, as they ought, remember God, who is the Author and Giver of Life'.

<sup>20</sup> Jean Leclerc, *Parrhasiana ou Pensées Diverses Sur des Matières de Critique, d'Histoire, de Morale et de Politique. Avec la Défense de divers Ouvrages de Mr. L. C.* (2 vols. Amsterdam, 1699 and 1701), i, p. 15: '[le difference qu'il y en] auroit entre les portraits d'un Peintre, qui imite la Nature, & qui ne représente que ce que l'on peut voir: & ceux d'un Peintre, qui feroit des animaux qu'on n'auroit jamais vu, comme seroit

guide our judgement in each situation in a similar way. Leclerc followed Locke's train of thought that the mind is at 'some kind of Liberty' to form moral ideas, and, once 'its natural relish of real solid truth' is lost, it may form 'fantastical' moral ideas, 'as if a Man would give the Name of Justice to that Idea, which common use calls Liberty'.<sup>21</sup> As the idea of justice can only exist in the mind, not in nature, entertaining a fantastical and unreasonable idea of justice means allowing one's idea of justice to remain nebulous or undefined in one's discourse;<sup>22</sup> either nebulous due to indolence, or deliberately hidden or ambiguous to deceive others. Accordingly, having a fantastical moral idea 'relates more to Propriety of Speech, than Reality of Ideas'.<sup>23</sup> Locke's *Essay* returns time and again to this argument, considered 'new, and a little out of the way'.<sup>24</sup> His argument allows us to grasp why rhetoric was believed to be so powerful in the field of civil philosophy. It implies that citizens can be swayed by 'false rhetoric' into believing in false politics because they cannot test whether the rhetoricians' words correspond to a standard existing independently in reality.

In his preface to the *Two Treatises*, Locke's apology for rebuking Filmer and speaking 'so plainly of' him is that the clergy have adopted the Filmerian doctrine and 'dangerously misled others' from the pulpit. Arrogating to themselves the role of teachers of civic ideas, they have 'done the Truth and the Public wrong'; there is 'reason to complain of the Drum Ecclesiastick', for 'there cannot be done a greater Mischief to Prince and People, than the Propagating wrong Notions concerning Government'.<sup>25</sup> Locke's

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un Elephant avec une tête de Crocodile'. Hereafter all references to Leclerc's *Parrhasiana* are to the first volume of 1699.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. E II.xxx.3-4, pp. 373-4; III.ii.8, p. 408; III.v.1-6, pp. 428-31; IV.iii.19, pp. 550-1; and IV.v.4, p. 575. Cf. BUH, viii (Jan. 1688), Art. II, p. 94.

<sup>22</sup> E III.xi.17, p. 517: 'a Definition is the only way, whereby the precise Meaning of moral Words can be known; and yet a way, whereby their Meaning may be known certainly, and without leaving any room for any contest about it'.

<sup>23</sup> E II.xxx.4, pp. 373-4. Cf. E IV.v.11, p. 578; and III.xi.17, p. 517 (the moral discourses 'are about Ideas in the Mind, which are none of them false or disproportionate; they having no external Beings for Archetypes which they are referr'd to, and must correspond with').

<sup>24</sup> E III.v.16, p. 437.

<sup>25</sup> TT, 'Preface', lines 31-51. Mark Goldie, 'John Locke and Anglican Royalism', *Political Studies*, 31 (1983), pp. 61-85. Cf. TT I.106.1-10 on the 'great Question which in all Ages has disturbed Mankind', and II.112.8-11: 'Though they never dream'd of Monarchy being *Jure Divino*, which we never heard of among Mankind, till it was revealed to us by the Divinity of this last Age'; Peter Laslett suggests these lines may have been added in 1689 (Laslett, editorial note in John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (Student edn. Cambridge, 1988), p. 343).

view of the danger posed by such clerical rhetoric connects with his view that moral discourse can be wholly contingent and open to manipulation.

Yet Locke claimed that no rhetoric can mislead men if actions show them the true intentions of rhetoricians. He asserts that whatever you do to mislead the people – ‘cry up their Governours, as much as you will for sons of Jupiter, let them be Sacred and Divine, descended or authoriz'd from Heaven’ – they will revolt against arbitrary rule, once exposed to its effects.<sup>26</sup> Naturally those who do not feel the ill effects may continue believing in rhetoric. This is one reason why Locke, whilst granting the right of resistance to individuals, wrote that an oppressive government can stay in power ‘till the Inconvenience is so great, that the Majority feel it, and are weary of it, and find a necessity to have it amended’.<sup>27</sup> And this is partly why those who benefit from religious persecution, will not regret persecuting a minority until they are shown ‘nakedly and plainly’, as Locke's *Letter Concerning Toleration* does, the true meaning of religious dogmas ‘opposite to the Civil Right of the Community’ but hidden behind ‘a specious shew of deceitful words’.<sup>28</sup>

### III

Having seen that ‘false rhetoric’ covers invalid moral reasoning, we can now consider how it endangers civil liberty. Leclerc and Locke endorsed an understanding of civil liberty, which Quentin Skinner has recently termed ‘neo-roman’.<sup>29</sup> In the history of political thought, variants of this notion of liberty run from Aristotle to Karl Marx and beyond, and are in opposition to Thomas Hobbes's version of negative liberty, which has served to underpin what may be termed liberalism and possessive individualism. At the close of the seventeenth century, an idea of negative liberty informed the tolerationist thinking of Pierre Bayle. Bayle

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<sup>26</sup> TT II.224.3–10: ‘when the People are made miserable, and find themselves exposed to the ill usage of Arbitrary Power, cry up their Governours, as much as you will for sons of Jupiter, let them be Sacred and Divine, descended or authoriz'd from Heaven; give them out for whom or what you please, the same will happen. The People generally ill treated, and contrary to right, will be ready upon any occasion to ease themselves of a burden that sits heavy upon them.’

<sup>27</sup> TT II.168.32–4.

<sup>28</sup> John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. James H. Tully (Indianapolis, Indiana, 1983), pp. 49–50, and *ibid.*: ‘For these things, proposed thus nakedly and plainly, would soon draw on them the Eye and Hand of the Magistrate, and awaken all the care of the Commonwealth to a watchfulness against the spreading of so dangerous an Evil. But nevertheless, we find those that say the same things, in other words.’

<sup>29</sup> Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge, 1998).

assumed that an absolute monarch could maintain a tolerationist equilibrium by preventing one subject from interfering with the religious life of another. Leclerc and Locke rejected this solution to the problem of religious warfare and intolerance because they considered it incompatible with liberty. They regarded the subject of an absolute monarch as a slave, for even though he could be free to enjoy peace and pursue his own goals in civil society, this freedom was only the latent phase of slavery. His freedom was regarded as deceptive because dependent on the monarch's goodwill.

In a broad sense, Leclerc's and Locke's animus towards rhetoricians differs little from the anti-rhetorical position endorsed by Hobbes at one point of his intellectual trajectory.<sup>30</sup> In order to see how Leclerc's and Locke's assault on 'false rhetoric' goes hand in hand with their anti-Hobbesian view of liberty, I shall first consider their view of 'mental liberty'. Their definition of mental liberty can be seen to have been one factor, which propelled them towards a neo-roman understanding of civil liberty.

In Locke's view, even as citizens, 'every Man is Judge for himself'; and liberty refers to the condition in which man can govern his actions according to his own impartial judgement. He is free because his conduct is within his own mental power, not within the power of someone or something else.<sup>31</sup> Leclerc defined mental liberty as 'a faculty by which the mind can assent to a proposition or deny its assent; can desire or forbear from desiring a good or vice; cherish or discard any notion'.<sup>32</sup> The quintessential feature of liberty is that it is attributed to the mind rather than to the will, which is considered another, separate mental faculty;

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<sup>30</sup> For Hobbes's position in his *The Elements of Law Natural and Politic* and *De Cive* (first published 1642), see Quentin Skinner, *Reason and rhetoric in the philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 334 and passim.

<sup>31</sup> TT II.22.1–4. The will follows the dictates, whether false or true, of the understanding: *Conduct*, § 1. Cf. E II.xxi.6 and 7, p. 237: 'From the consideration of the extent of this power of the mind over the actions of the Man, which every one finds in himself, arise the Ideas of Liberty and Necessity.' Cf. *ibid.*, the reading of the 1<sup>st</sup> edition: 'the Ideas of Liberty and Necessity, which arise from the consideration of the extent of this Power of the Mind over the Actions, not only of the Mind, but the whole Agent, the whole Man'.

<sup>32</sup> Jean Leclerc, *Pneumatologia* in *idem, Ontologia; sive de ente in genere* (1692), I.iii.10, p. 83: 'Libertas est facultas, qua Mens propositioni assentiri, aut assensum negare; optare vel non optare bonum aut malum; cogitationem aliquam fovere, aut amoliri potest.' Leclerc's *Pneumatologia* stands for the second book entitled '*Pneumatologia seu de spiritibus*' (pp. 71–200) in his *Ontologia* (1692). The *Pneumatologia* is cited by book (or 'section'), chapter, and paragraph as well as page number. My references are to the London edition, published by Awsham and John Churchill. There is also an Amsterdam edition of 1692, published by Johannes Wolters; a notice of the Amsterdam edition, almost certainly by Leclerc himself, appeared in BUH, xxii–2 (Apr. 1692), Art. I, pp. 255–87.

therefore, it is improper to speak about the freedom of will.<sup>33</sup> Liberty will be compromised if one becomes subject to the will of another person without one's consent or unconditionally – enslaved, in short<sup>34</sup> – but equally if causes internal to the agent render his understanding impotent.<sup>35</sup> Locke held that ‘he is certainly the most subjected, the most enslaved, who is so in his Understanding’.<sup>36</sup> ‘False rhetoric’ hinders the agent from forming a valid judgement of an argument, and hence enslaves him.<sup>37</sup> ‘False rhetoric’ makes men become bewitched by language and entangled in a web of beliefs they would not have held otherwise. Instead of being in control of language, they become dependent on it. Ultimately, this loss of control means their loss of control over their actions, and becoming passive subjects of historical processes rather than active agents transforming their lives intentionally. It is central to Locke's view of the conjunction of mental and civil liberty that the people's representatives in the legislature should ‘hear the Debate’; they should examine and weigh ‘the Reasons on all sides’ before reaching a decision. This they should do impartially.<sup>38</sup> The art of rhetoric may, however, corrupt the free debate and the sifting of all arguments for and against a given course of action.

According to Locke, a springboard for scepticism was the humanist tradition of presenting both sides of an argument with equal rhetorical force. This kind of exercising in argument *in utramque partem* had led, it may be added, to school teachers operating a system whereby one pupil argued *pro* and the other *con*, and to the practice of physically changing seats when the time came for the pupils to swap positions. Michel de Montaigne had remarked that this practice had made him incapable of remaining true to one single view; it had steered him towards scepticism. Locke noted that

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<sup>33</sup> Leclerc, *Pneumatologia*, I.iii.11, p. 83: ‘Primum est, eam [liberty] a nobis non tribui Voluntati, sed Menti; nam cum Voluntas sit facultas Mentis, alia facultas, qualis est Libertas, ei quasi subjecto inhærere, nisi improprie, dici nequit. Improprie autem loqui hic nos nihil cogit, & potest ea in loquendo improprietas in errorem inducere, aut quæ dicimus, sine usu ullo, obscurare.’

<sup>34</sup> Cf. E IV.xvi.4, p. 660. On the Roman understanding of slavery, see Skinner, *Liberty*, p. 41.

<sup>35</sup> E IV.xix.14, p. 704 (added to the 4<sup>th</sup> edition).

<sup>36</sup> E IV.xx.6, p. 711. Cf. E II.xxi.67, p. 278 (added to the 4<sup>th</sup> edition): ‘Without Liberty the Understanding would be to no purpose: And without Understanding, Liberty (if it could be) would signify nothing.’

<sup>37</sup> From the perspective of a free man, there is little difference between the states of ‘being acted by a blind impulse from without, or from within’ (E II.xxi.67, p. 279 (added to the 4<sup>th</sup> edition)).

<sup>38</sup> TT II.222.31–48; E IV.xv.5, p. 656 (‘In this all the agreements [sic: arguments] *pro* and *con* ought to be examined, before we come to a Judgment.’); E IV.xvi.9, p. 663.

‘the custome of argueing on any side even against our perswasions dims the understanding and makes it by degrees loose the facultie of discerneing clearly between truth and falshood and soe of adhereing to the right side. Tis not safe to play with error and dresse it up to our selves or others in the shape of truth.’<sup>39</sup>

The same educational custom raises the spectre of scepticism in the context of Leclerc's discussion of poetry in his *Parrhasiana*. Leclerc stresses that readers will find both good and bad passages in epic poetry, and that there is often a pernicious mixture of the two: ‘so that we ordinarily encounter arguments for and against, without the poets' giving us any means to discern the evil from the good’.<sup>40</sup> If we try to deduce moral instructions out of Homer's and Virgil's works, for example, our reasoning can legitimately lead us to diametrically opposed conclusions and manifold standards of virtue.<sup>41</sup> That Leclerc's *Parrhasiana*, in a section studded with references to Quintilian, singles Homer and Virgil out in this connection, may depend on Quintilian's advice that an orator studies these poets.<sup>42</sup>

Two implications of Locke's and Leclerc's view of liberty are worth stressing. First, since liberty denotes the freedom to follow reason after deliberation, everything, which holds man's understanding captive, may potentially be within the purview of a programme of reform. Hence ‘false rhetoric’, inimical to liberty, should be removed from civil discourse. Secondly, by stressing the extent to which men are, in making political decisions, dependent upon language, Leclerc and Locke stress that liberty depends on a truthful use of language, and, hence, on men's sincerity. Our liberty depends on our capability to make rational decisions; these decisions, in their turn, depend on our speaking the truth.

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<sup>39</sup> John Locke, *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, ed. Paul Schuurman, Ph.D. thesis, University of Keele (2000), paragraph 67.

<sup>40</sup> Leclerc, *Parrhasiana*, p. 46: ‘de sorte que l'on y voit ordinairement le pour & le contre, sans qu'ils donnent les moiens de discerner le mal du bien. C'est ce que l'on peut voir dans le Recueil de Stobée, où l'on trouve, sur divers sujets de Morale, de quoi appuier le pour & le contre, par des passages des Poëtes.’

<sup>41</sup> Leclerc, *Parrhasiana*, p. 57: ‘Or il est certain qu'il n'y a rien dans Homer, ou dans Virgile, qui nous puisse convaincre qu'ils ont eu dessein de nous instruire de certaines Moralitez. Je pose même en fait, que si en raisonnant on tire de ces Poëtes des instructions morales, conformes aux idées de vertu & de vice (...) on en tirera aussi, par de semblables raisonnemens, des conclusions toutes contraires. Cela étant, il est visible que ce qu'ils disent en faveur de la vertu, & contre le vice doit être d'une très-petite utilité.’

Leclerc's and Locke's assault upon 'false rhetoric' agrees with their attack upon the insincerity of the authoritarian culture. One of their targets is the culture of sycophancy at an absolutist court, which breeds a fashion of speaking 'no otherwise than Parrots do', producing 'insignificant Noise'.<sup>43</sup> Their commitment to love the truth, abhorrent to parroting 'insignificant noise', inevitably entailed certain outspokenness in discourse at the cost of superficial civility. The title of Leclerc's *Parrhasiana* appeals to the rhetorical figure of free speech, '*parrhesia*', a concept developed by ancient rhetoricians and a term also found in the New Testament, the meaning of which became 'licence' or 'irresponsible speech' in the hands of such critics of Greek democracy as Plato.<sup>44</sup> In Rome *parrhesia* acquired the connotations of having a private audience with the prince and speaking boldly, and became a potentially flattering or deceptive apology for free speech.

The term '*parrhesia*' was also used by Locke. In November 1688 he wrote about the persecution of Foecke Floris, a Mennonite minister suspected of Socinianism. Floris had been forced to move from Friesland close to Haarlem, but he was attacked there too.<sup>45</sup> Though Furly was not acquainted with Floris, this case of intolerance upset him so much that he waited on William just before the prince's departure for England and implored him to intervene. So warmly did Furly urge the matter that William decided to shelter Floris from his persecutors. According to Locke, Furly, 'considering that the liberty of Floris was a matter

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<sup>42</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, ed. and tr. H. E. Butler (4 vols. London, 1920-2), x.i.46, vol. iv, p. 28; and x.i.85, vol. iv, p. 48. See also Skinner, *Reason*, pp. 21-2.

<sup>43</sup> E III, passim, but see esp. E III.x.22, p. 503, x.31, p. 506, and III.ii.7, p. 408: 'because Words are many of them learn'd, before the Ideas are known for which they stand: Therefore some, not only Children, but Men, speak several Words, no otherwise than Parrots do, only because they have learn'd them, and have been accustomed to those Sounds. But so far as Words are of Use and Signification, so far is there a constant connexion between the Sound and the Idea; and a Designation, that the one stand for the other: without which Application of them, they are nothing but so much insignificant Noise.'

<sup>44</sup> M. I. Finley, *Democracy ancient and modern* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn. London, 1985), pp. 152-3. On the influence of Greco-Roman *parrhesia* on English works on rhetoric and political advice, see David Colclough, '*Parrhesia*: The Rhetoric of Free Speech in Early Modern England', *Rhetorica*, xvii (1999), pp. 177-212.

<sup>45</sup> De Beer, editorial note, *Correspondence*, iii, p. 521; cf. Locke to Van Limborch, 15/25 Nov. [1688], *ibid.*, p. 524.

of common concern to all Christians, took up his cause with enthusiasm and pursued it energetically; without his *parrhesia* there would have been no progress’.<sup>46</sup>

Locke clearly admired Furly's *parrhesia* and eagerness to devote his energy to the pursuance of the common good instead of following merely his own interest. His ardour for liberty, frankness, and unselfishness contrast sharply with the qualities associated with the schoolmen's rhetoric—their ‘curious and unexplicable Web of perplexed Words’, ‘aiming at Glory and Esteem’ and bringing ‘but small advantage to humane Life, or the Societies’.<sup>47</sup> In his *Two Treatises*, Locke expects qualities similar to Furly's *parrhesia* and *aretè*—to state them in the classical Greek idiom—from the elected representatives of the people, who ought to ‘freely act and advise, as the necessity of the Commonwealth, and the publick Good should, upon examination, and mature debate, be judged to require’.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, while Furly, having judged the cause of Floris to be of sufficient moment, could take advantage of the liberty to appeal to William, even bolder measures are required when ‘any single Man, is deprived of their Right’ but there is ‘no Appeal on Earth’: then the people ‘have a liberty to appeal to Heaven, whenever they judge the Cause of sufficient moment’.<sup>49</sup> In Locke's thinking, there is a continuum of energetic boldness from *parrhesia* to the right of armed resistance, banishing any superficially ‘Civil Respectful’ cringing to the establishment.<sup>50</sup> If there is no room for *parrhesia* in civil society, there is no civil liberty. This stress on boldness contrasts sharply with the sycophantic rhetoric of courtiers, as well as with the delusive rhetoric of enthusiastic preachers, so long as it is governed by the impartial judgement rather than by one's self-love or passions.

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<sup>46</sup> Locke to Van Limborch, 14/24 Nov. 1688, *Correspondence*, iii, p. 521: ‘Sed communem Christianorum rem in ejus libertate agi ratus Causam illius prono animo suscepit et strenue egit, si enim abfuisset παρρησια nihil promovisset.’ My translation, retaining the term ‘*parrhesia*’, departs from, but is based on, De Beer's.

<sup>47</sup> E III.x.8, p. 494.

<sup>48</sup> TT II.222.44–6. Laslett speculates that the whole passage from line 26 to the end of paragraph 222 may have been added in 1689 (Laslett, editorial note, *ibid.*, p. 413).

<sup>49</sup> TT II.168.15–18.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. TT II.235.21–6: ‘He therefore who may resist, must be allowed to strike. And then let our Author, or any Body else joyn a Knock on the Head, or a Cut on the Face, with as much Reverence and Respect as he thinks fit. He that can Reconcile Blows and Reverence, may, for ought I know, deserve for his pains, a Civil Respectful Cudgeling where-ever he can meet with it.’

#### IV

In conclusion, Leclerc's and Locke's views of rhetoric and liberty entailed that a free state should be free of 'false rhetoric'. When their assault on 'false rhetoric' is placed in the context of their opposition to the Stuart regime—or to any other authoritarian regime—its implication is that, on its own, a constitutional revolution does not guarantee civil liberty. What seemed to be required in the wake of the Revolution of 1688-9, in addition to a purely political revolution, was a wider cultural and social reform in response to the legacy of authoritarianism.

This wider cultural and social reform, or Leclerc's and Locke's *Kulturkampf*, should also be viewed in the context of early-modern intellectual traditions. From the mid-sixteenth century, a Ciceronian humanist understanding of politics had been challenged by what Richard Tuck has described as a culture of scepticism, Stoicism, and *raison d'état* thinking.<sup>51</sup> Some elements of Leclerc's and Locke's Cartesian scepticism stemmed from the early-modern challenge to Ciceronian humanism. Yet they did not attack the humanist art of rhetoric in order to replace the ethical and legal norms of politics with a 'Machiavellian', unscrupulous *realpolitik*. On the contrary, they attacked it in order to rescue a classical (and in some sense humanist) understanding of politics as deliberative co-operation among equals, which requires both truthful and frank discourse. As the agreement of men's ideas with their words could not be guaranteed by any constitution, the maintenance of civil liberty was not only a constitutional but also an educational challenge.

The traditional art of rhetoric seemed to allow of a culture of deceitful linguistic practices. If the conventional humanist education taught one to use language so as to express emotion or to cover false reasoning—to persuade, deceive, and dominate other citizens—it endangered liberty. In its extreme form, Leclerc's and Locke's project was to establish a society of what may be termed 'linguistic communism'. In a society of 'linguistic communism' the citizens, regardless of their nationality, religion, social condition, wealth, or any other accidental attributes, would be able to participate in politics and, hence, own and control their lives. In order to reach such a society, the citizenry should heed the fact that, as Locke states, 'Words... being no Man's private possession, but the common measure of Commerce and Communication,

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<sup>51</sup> Richard Tuck, *Philosophy and Government, 1572–1651* (Cambridge, 1993).

'tis not for any one, at pleasure, to change the Stamp they are current in; nor alter the Ideas they are affixed to'.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> E III.xi.11, p. 514.